



"Drowning in the Tiber (Part 7)"
Responding to Francis Beckwith's *Return to Rome:*
Confessions of an Evangelical Catholic

Sola Scriptura 1
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Selected Scriptures



Introduction:

- Sola scriptura is the "formal principle" of the Reformation.
- Sola _____ is the "material" principle.

I. What is Sola Scriptura?

"The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience, although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterward for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased." [1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith]

II. Compare this to the Roman Catholic Position on the Bible and Authority

A. 16th Century Council of Trent (Fourth Session):

"Furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall,--in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, --wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church,--whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures,--hath held and doth hold; or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers; even though such interpretations were never (intended) to be at any time published. Contraveners shall be made known by their Ordinaries, and be punished with the penalties by law established."

B. Vatican I (1870)

C. Vatican II (1965)

"Sacred tradition and sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal. Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit. And Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching. Thus it comes about that the Church does not draw her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Hence, both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal feelings of devotion and reverence."

D. The Relationship between Tradition and Scripture

Partim-Partim View	Material Sufficiency View
Oral tradition is a separate and different revelation	Oral tradition does not contain other revelation
Oral tradition is necessary, inspired revelation	Oral tradition is necessary for the proper interpretation of the Bible
The Bible itself is materially insufficient	The Bible itself is materially sufficient
<i>* Adapted from James White, <u>The Roman Catholic Controversy</u>, page 80</i>	

III. What Sola Scriptura does not mean

IV. Sola Scriptural means that the canonical Scriptures are sufficient to serve as the *regula fidei*, or the infallible rule of faith for the believer and the church

V. Beckwith's View

"One may wonder where the Protestant doctrine of sola scriptura (or "scripture alone") factored in all this. To be blunt, it didn't, primarily because over the years I could not find an understanding or definition of sola scriptura convincing enough that it did not have to be so qualified that it seemed to be more a slogan than a standard." [79]

He later admits that he "for some time accepted a weak form of sola scriptura" which he defines as: ". . . any doctrine or practice inconsistent with scripture must be rejected, though it does not follow that any doctrine or practice not explicitly stated in scripture must suffer the same fate, for the doctrine or practice may be essential to Christian orthodoxy. This seemed to me to be the only defensible understanding of sola scriptura, though it certainly left much to be desired." [81]

"As a Baptist colleague of mine said in an email to me in May 2008: "[M]any things essential to Christian belief and practice are not mentioned in Scripture—for example, prohibitions of euthanasia, abortion, pedophilia, necrophilia. Hence [is] the wisdom of the Catholic Church in regarding tradition, not as a contradiction but as an extension of Scripture[, such as] in its formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, etc. Purgatory is therefore to be understood as an extension of the biblical doctrine of sanctification, for no one is permitted (or would want) to enter God's presence without being fully cleansed of all sin and thus to be fully sanctified."