

The Five Solas...an Introduction

“Thus says the Lord...Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it; And you will find rest for your souls...” Jeremiah 6:16a

“You may be wondering, why make a big deal about what the Reformers did and believed 500 years ago? The battle that they fought back then is still a battle that we are fighting today. What makes our battle so amazing, compared to the 16th century, is this...”

Back then, the common person was Biblically illiterate, due to being generally illiterate and not having a Bible to read or study. Today, there are way too many Biblically illiterate people and we don't have the same excuse. Most people can read and most people have at least one Bible in their home, in their language.”

<https://www.warsawbiblechurch.org/5-solas>

“Christendom as a whole is in dire straights...How are we to understand the process by which the church has arrived at the state it is in? How did it get so bad so quickly? David Wells says that the church is in such turmoil as a result of the extent to which modernity and secularism have shaped western culture. The world is infiltrating the church and the church does not know it; nor does it care.”

<https://www.apuritansmind.com/book-reviews/church-history-book-reviews-no-place-for-truth-or-whatever-happened-to-evangelical-theology/>

Evidence for the need to study the 5 Solas

“The disappearance of theology from the life of the Church, and the orchestration of that disappearance by some of its leaders, is hard to miss today...It is hard to miss in the evangelical world – the vacuous worship that is so prevalent, for example, in the shift from God to the self as the central focus of faith, in the psychologized preaching that follows this shift, in the erosion of its conviction, in its strident pragmatism, in its inability to think incisively about the culture, in its reveling in the irrational. And it would have made few of these capitulations to modernity had not its capacity for truth diminished. It is not hard to see these things; avoiding them is what is difficult.”

David Wells, author of No Place for Truth

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism...the most popular worldview in U.S Culture

“A popular “fake” form of Christianity—Moralistic Therapeutic Deism—was discovered to be profoundly influencing Christian teenagers in the early 2000s.

Now a groundbreaking new study from the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University shows that ***as adults, the under-50 generation still embraces the Moralistic Therapeutic Deism of their formative years.***

But what was once a rogue belief system that characterized Christian teen culture now permeates both American culture and the Christian church, making Moralistic Therapeutic Deism the most popular worldview in the United States today. And that's not good news for America.

As Arizona Christian University President Len Munsil noted, "As a nation, the biblical worldview is running on fumes."

Munsil explained, "***People see themselves as Christians, but these findings show they are actually living out a watered-down, counterfeit worldview that looks more like the culture around them than the biblical Christianity they profess.***"

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (or MTD) was initially identified and named by sociologists Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton in their book, *Soul Searching*, published in 2005. It was based on national research among the teenagers of the turn of the millennium. At that time Smith and Denton identified several core beliefs that characterized the thinking and behavior of the group. Those components included:

- Belief in a God who remains distant from people's lives
- People are supposed to be good to each other (i.e., moral)
- The universal purpose of life is being happy and feeling good about oneself
- There are no absolute moral truths
- God allows "good people" into Heaven
- God places very limited demands on people

Practitioners of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism are not anti-religion or anti-Christianity. They just are not willing to surrender themselves to authentic Christianity's demands—or to believe that a real faith would even make such demands of them.

The fact that a greater percentage of people who call themselves Christian draw from Moralistic Therapeutic Deism than draw from the Bible says a lot about the state of the Christian Church in America, in all of its manifestations." As he noted, "***Simply and objectively stated, Christianity in this nation is rotting from the inside out.***

It seems that most of these folks want to do the right thing; they simply have been led down the wrong paths toward achieving that end."

The Decline

Excerpts from the Ligonier Ministries State of Theology Survey (2020)...

"A majority of U.S. adults assume that all truth is relative. More than half of respondents to the State of Theology survey say that religious belief is not about objective reality. However, fewer people expressed this view in 2020 than in 2018.

It isn't clear why this is the case, but it may be that our chaotic cultural moment has prompted more people to turn to religion for objective truth...***While evangelicals tend to express great concern for the gospel, trends in our findings reveal that many evangelicals also express erroneous views that mirror the broader U.S. population...***Although more professing evangelicals seem to be embracing a biblical understanding of sin, ***there has been an alarming decrease in the percentage of those who express clear views on how sinful man can be justified in the sight of God.*** Given the centrality of this doctrine in the Bible, these results reinforce the need for clear teaching about the gospel and the doctrine of justification in local churches...***The unbiblical concept of relative truth has influenced every sphere of life in the United States, including the ethical issues that continue to be at the forefront of public debate.*** In 2020, a large percentage of U.S. evangelicals reject the arguments of "gender fluidity," and this has been trending in a positive direction. Yet it remains concerning that one in five evangelicals still appears to reject the Bible's teaching that our gender as male or female is given by God our Creator (Gen 1:27).

<https://thestateoftheology.com/>

Reasons for the decline

No Place for Truth: or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology? (Excerpts)

How are we to explain the fragmentation of evangelical faith today and the current turmoil in the churches? According to David Wells, the answer lies in seeing how modernity is reshaping the whole of Western culture, including that part of it which is religious...While the modern world has produced astonishing abundance, it has also taken a dreadful toll on the human spirit, emptying it of meaning, depth, and morality.

...People today have increasingly turned to religions and therapies centered on the self. And, whether consciously or not, evangelicals have taken the same path, refashioning their faith into a religion of the self. Because the modern churchgoer is so often a consumer, pastors are redefining their roles in terms of their own marketability.

Evangelicals, argues Wells, have largely lost the truth that God also stands outside all human experience, that he still summons sinners to repentance and belief regardless of their self-image, and that he calls his church to stand fast in his truth against the blandishments of the modern world."

<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/No-Place-for-Truth%3A-or-Whatever-Happened-to-McNeil-Wells>

Experience Still Eclipses: ‘No Place for Truth’ 25 Years Later (Excerpts)

December 19, 2018 | Caleb Greggson

Truth in the Church

...Wells warns how secularism’s undermining of tradition and authority has left only one “sinew” holding the body of Western society together: power. That observation is demonstrably true in the decline of social discourse, whether evidenced in Twitter “shame wars” or the Machiavellian combat in halls where honor, tradition, and patriotism used to be constraining elements.

But Wells also evaluates how ***secularization, modernization, and postmodernism have infiltrated and infected our thinking about church and ministry. There is no place for truth in the church, not just in the world.*** According to Wells, ***the influence of postmodernism has left the church suspicious of robust theologizing. Delegating its doctrinal responsibility to the academy, the evangelical church has taught its leaders caution toward the pastoral tools Christ gave them.***

“The new script for study is human experience, not the teaching of the Bible, or for that matter, of the church,” Wells warns. ***People increasingly view their experience not just as one legitimate voice guiding their worldview, but as the only qualified voice. When human experience is treated with such inflated regard, we’ll continue underestimating the influence of human depravity on our ability to discern truth apart from divine revelation.***

The effect is that people ask for tools to interpret their experiences instead of focusing their lives around God’s Word. This priority shift is evident even in official ministerial training. Increasingly, professional practicalities demand more time, thought, and preparation than grounding in theological method and doctrinal devotion. “Leadership is now substantially in the hands of the managers,”

Wells observes. The world, the people in your church, and even your own conscience may tell you that shepherding people through their experiences is the whole of your job. Meanwhile, growing wise in the Word and equipping saints with life-giving doctrine is sidelined.

Wells also discusses the decline of functional literacy. The rise of television has given the lion’s share of the public square to populist opinions both half-baked and easily digested. How much truer is this 25 years later, in the day of social media? As thoughtful discussion is diminished and rendered irrelevant, fewer and fewer people even know how to engage in it.

Wise in the Word

Why does this matter? How does this affect ministry? Wells points out that ***doctrine is central to the task of a minister, since the Word is the cornerstone of Christian life.*** Experience is a useful servant, but a terrible master. ***But the cultural air we breathe tells us experience must be the master...***

Awareness of the problem is half the cure. No Place for Truth is so useful because it will equip you to spot the subtler symptoms of postmodernism in your own mind and heart, as well as in the culture around you. ***Ministers and shepherds of God's people are to be wise in the Word. Otherwise, we will have nothing of lasting value to offer them. May we be on guard against any suggestion that caring for people means there is no place in our churches for truth.***

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/no-place-truth/>

Dynamics of the Decline

Modernity in the Church- The challenge of modernity: Os Guinness on the church and civilization

Joseph Sunde January 11, 2017

In a recent talk for the C.S. Lewis Institute, Os Guinness laments the influence of (modernism) on the Western church. "It isn't ideas which have caused the main damage to the church," Guinness says. ***Modernity itself, not ideas...has done more damage to the church than all the persecutors put together, and yet many Christians don't even know what I'm talking about.*** ***Across cultural spheres, we've shifted from a stance of authority to one of preference, from a mindset of integration to one of fragmentation, and from a supernatural orientation to a secular worldview.***

<https://blog.acton.org/archives/91110-os-guinness-on-the-church-and-the-challenge-of-modernity.html>

"Modernity claims that man can now live 'by bread alone,' or rather by science, technology, management and marketing alone. Secularists do not want God, whereas the secularized [the result of modernity] have no need of God, and that is only one of the many seductions and distortions of modernity."

Os Guinness

"The Five Solas teach us some very important theology about the place of the Bible in our lives, how we are saved and what our purpose, on this earth, is."

<https://www.warsawbiblechurch.org/5-solas/>

Background...the Reformation

"The Reformers were guided by the conviction that the church of their day had hidden the true Gospel, and the original teachings of Christianity found in Scripture, especially in regard to its core teaching about salvation and grace..."

<https://gracechapeltn.com/the-five-solas/>

The 5 Solas: History & Implications For The Church – Introduction (Excerpt)

Joe Griffo

The Reformers did not start with the five solas intending to implement them as time moved on. No, in fact, Martin Luther's initial concern had to do with the exploitation of the sale of Indulgences. That was it.

But as things progressed, and the opposition became more intense, he and others were driven to the Scriptures. As they got back to the Word, they discovered what had been there all along! They did not read these things into Scripture, but simply took what Scripture gave them—what it teaches- what the Bible teaches about itself as the revelation from God, what the Bible teaches regarding the nature of Salvation (that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone). That God only is to receive all honor and glory. If you read the Bible consistently, prayerfully, thoughtfully—you cannot miss these teachings. They are very evident.

Yet, in essence, what the Church at that time was teaching ran counter to what is taught in the Bible. For instance, ***while the Church held a high view of Scripture, it also taught that tradition is on par with Scripture in terms of authority—with huge implications. Also, that, while salvation is by faith, it is not by faith alone...there needs to be more in order to get into heaven.***

So, as the reformers, beginning with Martin Luther, but including others such as Huldrych Zwingli, Philip Melancthon, Martin Bucer, John Calvin, John Knox, and others, dug deeper into Scripture they were confronted with a choice—to take their stand on the Word of God or simply allow the status quo to continue.

Thank the Lord that these and many other courageous men took their stand on the Word of God, knowing how much it would cost them, yet at the same time, most likely not knowing just how much of an impact and benefit it would have on Christianity even to this day!

<https://www.redeemerchurchofsouthhills.org/the-5-solas-history-implications-for-the-church-introduction>

Overview of the Five Solas

The Five Solas (Excerpt)

Matthew Barrett

The five *solas* of the Reformation, which distinguished the Reformers from the teachings of Rome, include *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone), *solus Christus* (Christ alone), *sola fide* (faith alone), *sola gratia* (grace alone), and *solus Deo gloria* (glory to God alone).

These five statements of the evangelical faith lay at the center of what distinguished the theology of the Reformation from the theology of the Roman Catholic church in the 16th century.

Sola scriptura is the conviction that because Scripture is God’s inspired Word, it is the only inerrant, sufficient, and final authority for the church. ***Solus Christus*** is the assertion that Christ alone is the basis on which the ungodly are justified in God’s sight. ***Sola fide*** maintains that the believer receives the redemption Christ has accomplished only through faith. ***Sola gratia*** proclaims that *all* of our salvation, from beginning to end, is by grace and grace alone. Because of these things, the Reformers held fast to the phrase- ***solī Deo gloria***, that only God receives glory for our salvation.

The five solas form the nucleus of the evangelical faith. They not only capture the gospel of Jesus Christ and explain how that gospel takes root in the sinner, but they also define where the authority of that gospel resides and to what end that gospel is preached and proclaimed.

Although the phrase “five solas” may be more recent in its usage, the concepts are rooted in the 16th century Reformation. These five solas distinguished Reformers like Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, John Calvin, and so many others from the teachings of Rome. ***...at the heart of this divide was not merely a theological dispute, but a celebration of the gospel itself. The reformers were willing to lay their lives down for these solas first and foremost because they believed the gospel itself was at stake.***

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-five-solas/>

Semper reformanda

Semper Reformanda –“always reforming.” The church must continually re-examine itself in order to maintain its purity of doctrine and practice.

<https://www.semperreformanda.com/>

As one biblical faithful church has affirmed...***“In this age of relativism, complacency and universalism, we have vowed to rightfully reject all things contrary to the word of God and plant our flag in protest to serve the Lord Christ as faithful soldiers in his church militant.”***

Why study the 5 Solas?

The Cambridge Declaration of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals

Formulated April 20, 1996, by a group of conservative evangelical theologians and pastors, The Cambridge Declaration of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals is ***a call to recover the historic Christian faith. The Five Solas of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation form the outline of the declaration.***

“Evangelical churches today are increasingly dominated by the spirit of this age rather than by the Spirit of Christ. As evangelicals, we call ourselves to repent of this sin and to recover the historic Christian faith.

In the course of history words change. In our day this has happened to the word "evangelical." In the past it served as a bond of unity between Christians from a wide diversity of church traditions. Historic evangelicalism was confessional. It embraced the essential truths of Christianity as those were defined by the great ecumenical councils of the church. In addition, evangelicals also shared a common heritage in the "solas" of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation.

Today the light of the Reformation has been significantly dimmed. The consequence is that the word "evangelical" has become so inclusive as to have lost its meaning. We face the peril of losing the unity it has taken centuries to achieve. Because of this crisis and because of our love of Christ, his gospel and his church, we endeavor to assert anew our commitment to the central truths of the Reformation and of historic evangelicalism. These truths we affirm not because of their role in our traditions, but because we believe that they are central to the Bible.”

ACE Council Members (note the backgrounds represented)

The ACE council members at the time of the declaration were:

- Dr. John Armstrong
- Rev. Alistair Begg
- Dr. James M. Boice
- Dr. W. Robert Godfrey
- Dr. John D. Hannah
- Dr. Michael S. Horton
- Mrs. Rosemary Jensen
- Dr. R. Albert Mohler Jr.
- Dr. Robert M. Norris
- Dr. R. C. Sproul
- Dr. G. Edward Veith
- Dr. David Wells
- Dr. Luder Whitlock
- Dr. J. A. O. Preus, III

<https://www.theopedia.com/the-cambridge-declaration-of-the-alliance-of-confessing-evangelicals>

Why are the 5 Solas Important?

These five declarations summarized the Reformers break with the Roman Catholic tradition in the 16th century.

Rome and many contemporary Protestant Churches hold to grace, Christ, faith, Scripture, and God and his glory. But, they reject the adjective alone.

The contention of the Reformers was that if the adjective alone was eliminated, then the noun (Grace, Christ, Faith, Scripture, and God and His Glory) and the Gospel would be completely redefined into something different. The reason for emphasis of “alone” is to clarify that our faith is the product of a supernatural God.

Benjamin Warfield, the 19th Century Presbyterian scholar, captures the essence of this:

“The core of the Christian profession is the confession of a supernatural God, who may and does act in a supernatural mode, and who acting in a supernatural mode has wrought out for us a supernatural redemption, interpreted in a supernatural revelation, and applied by the supernatural operations of his Spirit.”

Therefore, when the adjective “alone” is eliminated from salvation, a sense of naturalism is implicitly introduced into the individual’s salvation. This makes justification the product of an infused righteousness, instead of the imputed righteousness of Christ.

An example of this is in Eastern Orthodoxy, which proclaims that both faith and works save us. However, Acts 4:12 refutes this: “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”

Furthermore, if alone is vacated from Scripture alone, like the Roman Catholic Church believes, then church councils and the teaching authorities are co-equal with Scripture in authority. This would imply that Scripture, God’s word, is not sufficient. Would this imply that God is not sufficient enough?

The Gospel, the good news that God has provided a way of escape in Jesus Christ, who is the entire provision for our salvation, is also re-defined. ***The Gospel, and faith in Jesus Christ, becomes a way, but not the only way.***

When alone is eliminated from Grace, Christ, Faith, Scripture and God and His Glory, individuals begin to believe the fallacy that imperfect, corrupted man and his institutions have a part in qualifying themselves for eternal salvation.

Are corrupt individuals and their institutions sufficient enough to achieve salvation and glory?

No.

Furthermore, when alone is eliminated, Christian theology runs the risk of becoming another self-help religion like all of the other religions of the world. It ceases to be unique and the sole product of God.

Over time and in degree, naturalism becomes man's religion. We just need to be good and moral. That is enough. God's word has an answer for this in Acts 4:12.

In Conclusion...

The Five Solas and the adjective alone were a primary reason for the 16th century Protestant Reformation.

The Church had retreated into moral and theological darkness and it needed light. That is why the motto of the Protestant Reformation was "Out of darkness Light" (*Post Tenebras Lux*).

Unfortunately, many churches and denominations are in opposition to the Five Solas, and some churches in the Reformed confessional tradition are silent in their pulpits.

As the contemporary church separates itself from the principles of the Protestant Reformation and the doctrines of the sovereign grace of God, it begins a slow retreat back into theological darkness.

The church begins to believe the individual, has a part in salvation. That is why it is important for *you* to attend a church that upholds the theology of the Reformation. It is the clear teaching of the Bible.

Succinctly, the truth preserves the church. In our Lord's high priestly prayer in John 17:17, Jesus says: "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth."

<https://gracebiblechurch-okc.com/five-solas>

We Need Reformation in 2022 (Excerpts)

January 7, 2022 | Douglas A. Sweeney

The church stands in need of reformation once again. Our pastors and our people need revival.

I say this as a Lutheran who has never been a fan of the slogan *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda* (the church reformed, always being reformed). ***I do not think churches should always be reforming...Only the most trendy and rootless evangelicals want to reinvent the church incessantly.***

I also say this as a historian of Christianity. I teach students all the time about seasons of despair and renewal in the church....

Our Churches Are in Crisis

...Since the time of the Reformation, we have debated when and in what conditions we need change—difficult change that requires hard work and a risky sort of witness. It's been concluded that in times of acute persecution, when the gospel is at stake, when the church is on the ropes, we must stand up and fight for costly discipleship...

Many Christians, young and old, have misplaced priorities. Many of us spend more time on sports than we do reading the Bible. We make more time for media than meeting others' needs. We pray very little, and not very hard. Our plans for retirement are mostly R&R. We are hedging our bets regarding life in the world to come, investing more of our free time and excess income in mundane pastimes than in the kingdom of God. Many of us today would pay as much we can afford to extend our worldly lives for just a few more months. ***To use the language of the Puritans, we don't seem to have weaned our affections from the world.***

This is not lost on others. Many wonder how to account for the discrepancy they see between what Christians profess and what we do with our lives. They wonder just how deeply we believe what we say. And if *we* don't believe it, why should anybody else? Many wonder how to account for the discrepancy they see between what Christians profess and what we do with our lives.

I'm concerned that too few Christians are growing anymore. Too few of us are ready for the Bridegroom's return. Many in the West are too comfortable to give much thought to the world to come, let alone to keep our lamps lit and yearn for it.

There are wonderful exceptions to the rule I'm describing..Many of you are spending yourselves in lives of costly discipleship and doing all you can to encourage other disciples. Still, I bet you're discouraged by what passes for discipleship in society at large. And I hope you'll agree that something drastic needs to be done—and that none of us can do it on our own.

How Reformation Begins

The Bible and church history show us over and over again that when God's people come together, repent of their sins, cry out to him for mercy, and expect him to respond, God uses them to bring about needed reformation. And when their leaders help each other to promote such behavior, there's no limit to the scale on which the Lord will bless his people. There's no simple *quid pro quo* in the history of redemption. But there is a correlation between mortifying sin and walking by the Spirit, between humbling ourselves in God's sight and being exalted.

When [church] leaders help each other to promote [godly] behavior, there's no limit to the scale on which the Lord will bless his people.

How many of us have abandoned the attachments of this world? We need to hear these words again as we pursue real discipleship amid our era's false gospels.

...We must demonstrate a kind of faith known not for power and "success" but for weakness; scandalous not for hypocrisy but for hardship.

As the apostle Paul wrote,

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; he chose what is low and despised...

...even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 1:27–31)

And as Christ himself exhorted in the Gospel according to Matthew:
If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. (Matt. 16:24–27)

O Lord, have mercy. Please help us not to forfeit our souls. Help us to promote reformation in our time. May we be found ready when you come.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/we-need-reformation/>

Appendix...

What Are the Five Solas?

Ryan McGraw
OCT 27, 2021

The five solas were not exactly Reformation slogans, but they serve as a good summary of the Reformed faith. Neither Martin Luther nor John Calvin nor any other Protestant Reformer summarized his teachings in a tidy list including Scripture alone, Christ alone, faith alone, grace alone, to the glory of God alone. Taking flight in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this fivefold summary became the shorthand version of what is known as Reformed theology. While this description of the Reformed faith came later, it still captures well the core of the gospel in all its graciousness and Christ-centeredness, just as it is revealed in the Scriptures.

These five solas show the glory of God’s gracious way of salvation in a way that sets the tone for true theology, resounding in how we think and live in this world.

Sola Scriptura

Theology must be Scripturally grounded. God’s life-giving speech reveals to us His salvation and calls us to faith and repentance. We were once darkness, but now we are light in the Lord (Eph. 5:8). Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers, lest they see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4).

Yet the God who commands light to shine out of darkness shines in our hearts, giving us the light “of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). God always does this by the Spirit working through the Word. The Holy Spirit is the Author of Scripture, and He speaks through Scripture (Heb. 3:7).

The Scriptures teach us everything that we need to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ and to be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:15–17). This

is why those who do not speak according to the rule of Scripture have no light in them (Isa. 8:20). Yet without the Spirit, even the Scriptures cannot help us. We are dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1–2), our minds and hearts are darkened (Eph. 4:18; Rom. 1:21), and we need someone to raise us from the dead and turn on the lights (Eph. 5:14). If Scripture is sufficient to make us wise for faith and life in Christ, then Scripture alone can be our guide to walking with God. Everything else is both useless and superfluous. Yet we must be born of the Spirit in order to see God's kingdom (John 3:5). Only through the Spirit working by and with the Scriptures in our hearts can we walk in the light with the God who is light (1 John 1:7).

Solus Christus

Theology must be Christ focused. We should believe everything Scripture teaches us because it is God's Word (John 8:47). Christ is the main point of the Bible, and the whole Bible testifies to Him (John 5:39; Luke 24:27; 1 Peter 1:10–12). Without the Spirit, we could not receive God's testimony in Scripture; without Christ, even God's words cannot save us.

Theology is Christ-focused because no one comes to the Father apart from Him (John 14:6) and because the Spirit seeks to glorify Him for our salvation (John 16:8–14). Jesus is truly God and truly man. He alone can reconcile God and man, killing animosity and creating friendship (Gen. 3:15). The Father is well pleased with His Son (Mark 1:11), and He is well pleased with us only when we are in the Son (Eph. 1:6). Jesus alone can save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21) because He alone is their Prophet revealing to them by His Word and Spirit the will of God for their salvation; He alone is their Priest who offered Himself as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice for them; and He alone is their King who subdues them to Himself, rules and defends them, and restrains and conquers all His and their enemies (WSC 24–26). There is no fellowship with God apart from Christ, and we count all things loss compared to the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord (Phil. 3:8).

Sola Fide

Theology must be faith driven. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). Like the empty hand of a beggar, faith reaches out to receive Christ. By faith, we believe that He who has promised is able to perform that which He promises (Rom. 4:21). God will fulfill His purposes, but if we do not believe, then we will not be established (Isa. 7:9; 45:17). Faith has no merit before God. We are justified by faith without the works of the law (Rom. 3:28). We are not saved by good works but are saved for good works (Eph. 2:8–10). Knowledge of Christ through Scripture, assent to these truths in our minds, and Spirit-wrought trust from our hearts characterize saving faith. We live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us (Gal. 2:20).

Sola Gratia

Theology must be grace-saturated. If we are saved by faith, then we are saved not by works but by grace alone (Rom. 11:6). Grace is God's generous disposition by which He lavishes us with good things that we do not deserve.

Everything we receive from God is by grace, from our daily bread to the final resurrection of our bodies (Ps. 145:8). The grace of God is vested in Christ and He alone gives saving grace to those whom the Father pities in His mercy (Ps. 103:13). This is why the Apostle Paul's letters begin, "Grace and peace to you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2). The Holy Spirit teaches us through Scripture that salvation is by grace alone because salvation is by faith in Christ alone. Grace is not a sentimental idea leading us to ignore our sins, not caring how we live. "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works" (Titus 2:11–14).

Soli Deo Gloria

Theology must be God-dominated. Each of the three persons of the Trinity saves us in harmonious unity in a way that leads to worship all three divine persons. We have fellowship with the Son in grace, with the Father in love, and with the Holy Spirit in strength and comfort (2 Cor. 13:14; Acts 9:31).

Because we have nothing that we have not received (1 Cor. 4:7), we should do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (Col. 3:17). We live by the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). If we should live to God's glory, then should we not listen to the Spirit speaking in His Word, receiving God's grace through faith alone in Christ, all to God's glory alone?

Ultimately, the five solas are not merely a summary of Reformed theology. They guard and clarify the gospel, mounting a friendly offensive attack on an unbelieving world, transforming Christ's enemies into His friends. The word alone is important in the solas. Alone secures the God-centered character of the gospel and of the Christian life. The five solas do not say all that needs to be said about true theology, faith, and life, but they are a good start and a clear guide to keep us on the right track.
<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/what-are-the-five-solas>

Since the solas are true to Scripture, all Christians in every generation ought to remember, embrace, and proclaim them

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