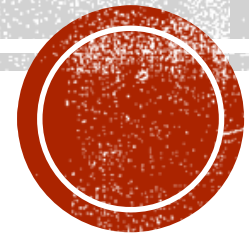
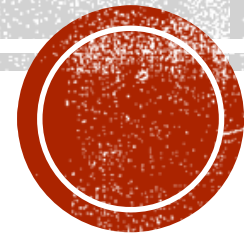


# WHAT IS REFORMED THEOLOGY?

It's Bigger Than You Might Think



# THE 5 SOLAS



# THE 5 SOLAS

**Sola Scriptura** – Scripture Alone – The Bible as God’s word is the only test of what is true and good. There is no other source from which we can know about God, his plan, and his works.

**Sola Gratia** – Grace Alone – Redemption from the guilt of sin comes to an individual by God’s grace alone. No one is qualified by works or rituals, or by anything a human or church can do.

**Soli Christi** – By Christ Alone – It’s only through Christ that we are forgiven and restored to fellowship with God. He paid our debt in full, and clothes us with his perfect righteousness. We find our ability to honor God in the power of the risen and living Savior – and in him alone.

**Sola Fide** – Faith Alone – We embrace God’s promises by faith alone. God gives us confidence in his revealed promises and provisions so that we put our full trust in him alone. We have no other object in which we put our trust regarding spiritual and eternal matters.

**Sola Deo Gloria** – For God’s Glory Alone – Everything should be done for God’s glory alone. All our thoughts, words, and work should be intended for the Glory of God.



# THE 5 SOLAS

- These 5 *solas* all stand together as the principles that define the gospel of Christ.
- The evangelical problem is not with the noun, but *sola*.

"The essence of false Christianity is the denial that each of these stands alone. People freely talk about the Bible, Grace, Faith, Christ, and God's glory. The problem many have is with the "sola" part. Only when these things stand alone, is the gospel seen as what the Bible says it is, rather than what many wish it to be." (Burridge)



***SOLA SCRIPTURA***



# ***SOLA SCRIPTURA***

- *Sola scriptura* simply means that we don't need any more words from God.
- 2 Timothy 3:12-4:5
- Definition - the Scriptures alone are the **ultimate authority** in the life of the believer and the church. It alone is to be our standard and our foundation.

"Other sources of authority may have an important role to play. Some are even established by God such as the authority of church elders, the authority of the state, or the authority of parents over children. But Scripture alone is truly ultimate. Therefore, if any of these other authorities depart from Bible teaching, they are to be judged by the Bible and rejected." (James Montgomery Boice)



# ***SOLA SCRIPTURA***

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

*Westminster Confession, 1, 6*



# ***SOLA SCRIPTURA: IMPLICATIONS***

## **Implications:**

- Sufficiency - The Bible is the only infallible rule of what we are to believe and how we are to live.
- Necessity - Scripture is "most necessary" because through it alone comes "that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation"
- Inerrancy - The Bible is free from error as it sprung from God.
- Clarity – The Bible is clear, though not easy, to understand





# *SOLA SCRIPTURA* FOUR CLARIFICATIONS

## 1. *Sola scriptura* is not the same as *solo scriptura*

“... some have used sola Scriptura as a justification for a “me, God, and the Bible” type of individualism, where the church bears no real authority and the history of the church is not considered when interpreting and applying Scripture. Thus, many churches today are almost ahistorical—cut off entirely from the rich traditions, creeds, and confessions of the church. . . The Reformers would not have recognized such a distortion as their doctrine of sola Scriptura. (Michael Kruger)



# ***SOLA SCRIPTURÆ* FOUR CLARIFICATIONS**

## **2. How does *sola scriptura* deal with tradition?**

“To summarize the Reformation doctrine of sola Scriptura, or the Reformation doctrine of the relation between Scripture and tradition, we may say that Scripture is to be understood as the sole source of divine revelation; it is the only inspired, infallible, final, and authoritative norm of faith and practice. It is to be interpreted in and by the church; and it is to be interpreted within the hermeneutical context of the rule of faith.” (Keith Mathison)



# *SOLA SCRIPTURA* FOUR CLARIFICATIONS

## 3. Does God still speak alongside Scripture?

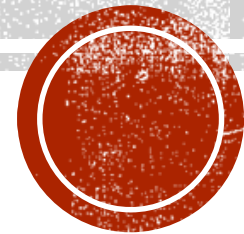
In essence this perspective is no different than the Catholic understanding of authority. But instead of tradition and Scripture being held as equal levels of authority, Scripture and the 'speaking of God to me' are equal levels of authority.

## 3. What about different interpretations? Doesn't that destroy *sola scriptura*?

The Reformers believed that the corrective to multiple interpretations is to investigate the history of interpretation.



**THE SUPREMACY OF  
GOD IN ALL THINGS**



# SUPREMACY OF GOD IN ALL THINGS

God has all life, glory, goodness, and blessedness in and of himself. He alone is all-sufficient in and unto himself, nor does he need any of his creations or derive any glory from them. Rather, he manifests his own glory in, by, unto, and on them. He is the only source of all being, by whom, through whom, and to whom everything exists. He has completely sovereign dominion over all things and does with, to, or for them whatever he pleases. Everything is revealed and completely open to him. His knowledge is infinite, infallible, and does not depend on any created being, so that to him nothing is conditional or uncertain. He is completely holy in all his purposes, works, and commands. To him is due whatever worship, service, or obedience he is pleased to require from angels, human beings, and all other creatures.

Westminster Confession, 2, 2



# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SUPREMACY?

“Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all”

1 Chronicles 29:11-12

The sovereignty of God is his absolute, independent right of disposing of all creatures according to his own pleasure.

Jonathan Edwards



# THE SUPREMACY OF GOD IN ALL THINGS

This means:

- God is under no external constraints of any kind as he relates to his creation
- The only constraints he is under are his nature and will
- God's sovereignty applies to **all** things – including salvation

God is the creator and therefore the owner, possessor, and Lord of all things, apart from him there is no existence or ownership. He alone has absolute authority. Always and everywhere his will decides. . . . That will is the final ground of all things, of their being, and of their being as they are.

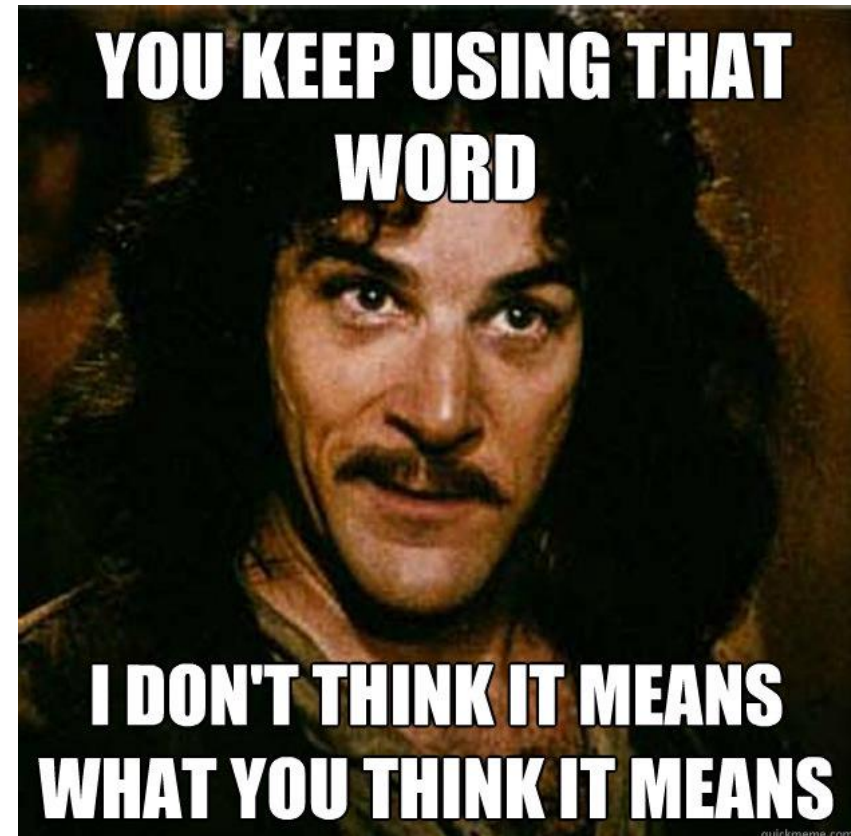
Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation*



# NOT ALL AGREE...

## Arminians:

- The issue is NOT *that* God is in control, but *how* he exercises that control. (General vs. specific sovereignty)
- God is in control of his directives; beyond that his control is (merely) permissive but not determinative.
- “God may and no doubt sometimes does bring about some event by placing people in circumstances where he knows what they will freely do because he needs them to do that for his plan to be fulfilled.” (Olson)





# NOT ALL AGREE...

Arminian theologian Roger Olson articulates what he calls “a relational view of God’s sovereignty”:

“a relational view of God’s sovereignty is one that regards God’s will as settled in terms of the intentions of his character but open and flexible in terms of the ways in which he acts because he allows himself to be acted upon. Only such a view of God’s sovereignty does justice to the whole of the biblical drama, to God as personal, to human persons as responsible actors and potential partners with God in God’s mission.”



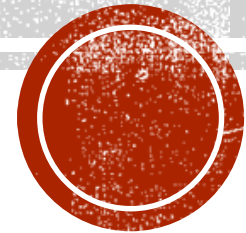
# THE SUPREMACY OF GOD IN SALVATION

- Edwards – “it [God’s Sovereignty] implies that God can either bestow salvation on any of the children of men, or refuse it, without any prejudice to the glory of any of his attributes, except where he has been pleased to declare, that he will or will not bestow it.”
- Three key texts in relating Gods supremacy in all things to salvation:
  - Ephesians 1
  - Romans 9
  - John 6



# THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE

TULIP



# OVERVIEW

- **Total depravity – Radical corruption** – Due to Adam's sin, human nature is corrupt, and every person stands condemned in God's sight. If God does not act directly upon an individual, that person has no hope of being saved.
- **Unconditional election – Sovereign election** – God elects certain persons to be saved, based solely upon *his* determination, apart from anything the person may do or not do.
- **Limited atonement – Particular redemption** – The full, saving work of Christ is directed specifically to the elect.
- **Irresistible grace – Effectual calling** – God acts in grace upon the elect so that they are able to come to faith in him (regeneration). They do not resist this movement of the Spirit.
- **Perseverance of the Saints – Preservation of the Saints** – God ensures that his people will remain his saved people throughout their lifetime.



# INTRODUCTION

- The Reformed understanding of salvation is **NOT** a product of an external system, nor is it attributed to only a few theologians, nor is it the implication of a narrow view of God, nor is it the result of a philosophical system, nor is it the result of over-emphasizing a few proof-texts.
- It is, **instead**, a result of biblical realities, from Genesis to Revelation, properly understood.



# INTRODUCTION

These five points do not define for us what the Reformed Faith or Calvinism is. The Reformed Faith is a system of truth and is much more comprehensive than any five points that might be enumerated, however important in it or essential to it these five points might be. In these five points attacked by the Arminians, however, the system of truth known as Calvinism may said to be crystallized.

John Murray



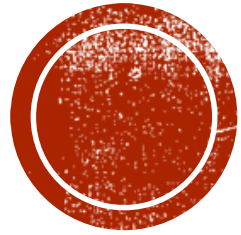
# INTRODUCTION

The key difference between a **Calvinist** and an **Arminian** is how they understand how we get saved; that is, how we move from a condition of spiritual unbelief to a condition of heartfelt belief or faith in Christ. And the key difference is this: **Calvinists** believe that God has to produce in us the decisive desire for Christ. And **Arminians** believe we must produce in ourselves the decisive desire for Christ. The **Arminians** say that God helps us. He helps all people, but we provide the last, decisive impetus and desire for that belief.

John Piper

■





# **RADICAL CORRUPTION**

aka. Total Depravity



# RADICAL CORRUPTION

Since Adam and Eve are the root of all mankind, the guilt for this sin has been imputed to all human beings, who are their natural descendants and have inherited the same death in sin and the same corrupt nature.

This original corruption completely disinclines, incapacitates, and turns us away from every good, while it completely inclines us to every evil. From it proceed all actualized sins.

Westminster Confession, 6.3-4



# **RADICAL CORRUPTION: OVERVIEW**

- Man is spiritually dead. Because of the fall, man has become spiritually dead, blind and deaf to the things of God and is therefore unable of himself to choose spiritual good and determine his own destiny.
- As Christopher Blum states, "Because man's will is not free - for it is in bondage to his evil nature - he will never, and in fact can never, choose the goodness of God over the sinful desires of the flesh."
- Thus we can never speak of man having "free will" since it is always in bondage to sin apart from salvation in Christ.



# RADICAL CORRUPTION

This doctrine is agreed upon by both Arminians and the Reformed alike:

- Article III of the Remonstrance, 1610
- John Wesley, "I believe that Adam, before his fall, had such freedom of will, that he might choose either good or evil; but that, *since the fall, no child of man has a natural power to choose anything that is truly good*. Yet I know (and who does not?) that man has still freedom of will in things of indifferent nature"
- Roger Olson, "With Calvinists I can affirm that we are all spiritually dead apart from supernatural grace..."



# RADICAL CORRUPTION

Pervasive depravity means that: [Anthony Hoekema, *Created In God's Image*]

- The corruption of original sin extends to every aspect of human nature: to one's reason and will as well as to one's appetites and impulses; and,
- There is not present in man by nature love to God as a motivating principle of his life.



# RADICAL CORRUPTION

This doctrine does **NOT** mean that:

- The unregenerate person is totally hardened to matters of the conscience (matters of right and wrong);
- The sinful person is as sinful as possible - there are genuine benevolent unregenerate people who show better 'fruit' than some believers do;
- The unregenerate person is unable to perform certain actions that are good and helpful in the sight of others;
- The sinner engages in every possible sin.



# RADICAL CORRUPTION

- Sin is a matter of the whole person
- The unregenerate person's good acts always contain an element of sinfulness
- Sinners are completely unable to do anything about their sinful condition
- There are a plethora of biblical pictures that affirm this corruption:
  - spiritual blindness and darkness (Ephesians 4:18);
  - spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1-2, 5; Colossians 2:13);
  - slavery to sin (Romans 6:20);
  - polluted or corrupted (Psalm 51, 58)
- Our rebellion is totally deserving of eternal punishment



# EXCURSUS: FREE WILL & DEPRAVITY

- The case of Jerry and Ed
- Does the Bible teach that people have the power and initiative within their own will to believe the gospel?
  - The question is **NOT**, “Are people morally responsible for their actions?”
  - The question is also **NOT**, “Do people have the opportunity to believe?”
  - The question, rather, is this: “Do people have a free and unfettered will by which they are able to believe?”



# EXCURSUS: FREE WILL & DEPRAVITY

- Total depravity means that no matter how “civil” or “compassionate” or “industrious” or “law-abiding” someone might otherwise be in his dealings with other people, he is utterly and willfully loath to all that Christ is and says.
- What this means in terms of the gospel is that left to himself a person will invariably, inevitably, and without pause reject the truth.

“I might borrow the eloquence of Demosthenes or of Cicero, but ye will not come unto Christ. I might beg of you on my knees, with tears in my eyes, and show you the horrors of hell and the joys of heaven, the sufficiency of Christ, and your own lost condition, but you would none of you come unto Christ of yourselves unless the Spirit that rested on Christ should draw you. It is true of all men in their natural condition that they will not come unto Christ” (Charles Spurgeon)

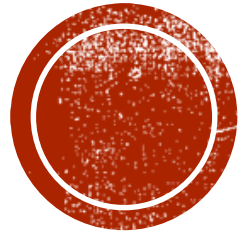




# EXCURSUS: FREE WILL & DEPRAVITY

- What, then, of human freedom?
- It means we have free agency but not free will (compatibilism)
  - **Free agency** – the ability to act according to one's desires and inclinations without being compelled to do otherwise by something or someone external.
  - **Free will** – our will is the extension and invariable expression of his nature. As he is, so he wills. A man is therefore **not** free to act or to will or to choose contrary to his nature.





# SOVEREIGN ELECTION

aka. Unconditional Election

# SOVEREIGN ELECTION

From all eternity and by the completely wise and holy purpose of his own will, God has freely and unchangeably ordained whatever happens. This ordainment does not mean, however, that God is the author of sin (he is not), that he represses the will of his created beings, or that he takes away the freedom or contingency of secondary causes. Rather, the will of created beings and the freedom and contingency of secondary causes are established by him.

Although God knows whatever may or can happen under all possible circumstances, he has not ordered anything because he foresaw it in the future as something which would happen under such circumstances.



# SOVEREIGN ELECTION

Before the creation of the world, according to his eternal, unchangeable plan and the hidden purpose and good pleasure of his will, God has chosen in Christ those of mankind who are predestined to life and to everlasting glory. He has done this solely out of his own mercy and love and completely **to the praise of his wonderful grace.**

According to the hidden purpose of his own will, by which he offers or withholds mercy at his pleasure, and for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, it pleased God not to call the rest of mankind and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin **to the praise of his glorious justice.**

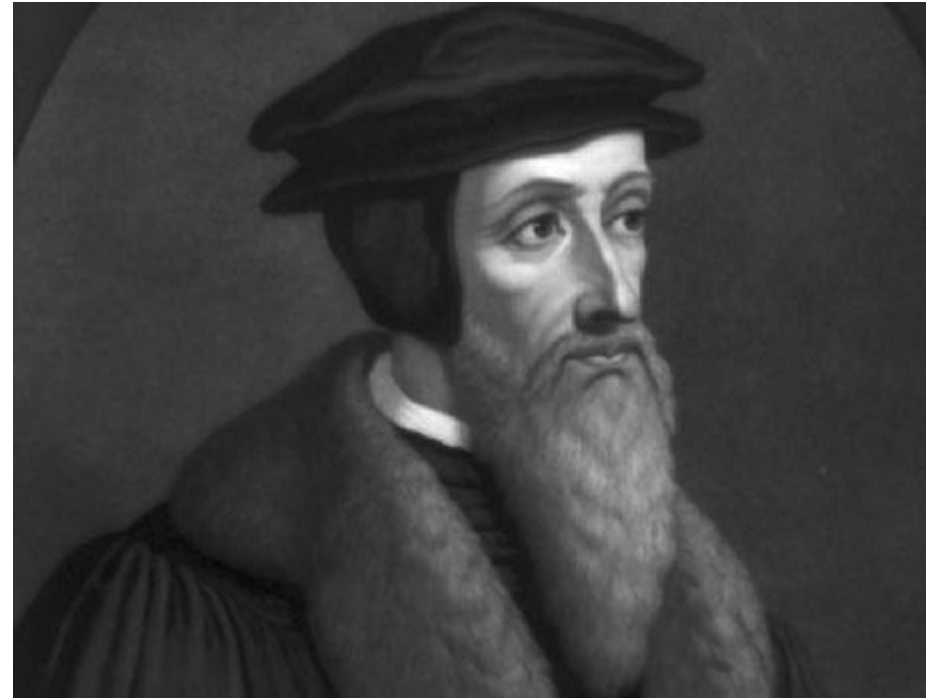
Westminster Confession, 3.5, 7



# SOVEREIGN ELECTION

“It is better to limp along this path than to rush with all speed outside it.”

John Calvin  
*Institutes* 1.6.3



# SOVEREIGN ELECTION

Essentially there are three options:

1. God elects those who are good.
2. God elects some who are bad, but he elects them since they have exercised faith in Christ. This is Arminianism.
3. God elects some who are bad, and who are not able to save themselves. Thus his election is according to his sovereign good pleasure alone. This is Reformed.



# SOVEREIGN ELECTION

- The question reduces to this: Does God elect people **because** they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, or does God elect people **in order that they will** believe in Christ? (cf. Storms)
- Or to put it even more simply:
  - The Calvinist says that God elects unbelievers and predestines them to become believers.
  - The Arminian says that God elects believers and predestines them to become his children.



# SOVEREIGN ELECTION: OVERVIEW

- God's election is unconditional. God's choice of certain individuals for salvation was not based on any foreseen response of obedience, future faith, repentance or any other action.
- From eternity past, God the Father chose certain individuals from every tongue, tribe, nation and generation of humanity to redeem - the elect - and passed over the rest of mankind - the reprobate.
- Thus God's choice of who he would save was rooted entirely in His sovereign, transcendent, perfect will, the nature or specifics of which the Bible leaves as a complete mystery to us. No one deserves salvation, since "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).
- Salvation is, therefore, entirely of God's grace to save some out of the mass of perdition.





# SOVEREIGN ELECTION

Aspects of divine election that are key to understand:

- It is God's choice alone - he saves whomever he pleases according to his own will and for his own purposes.
- It is an unconditional choosing - God's choice of who will be saved rests on his sovereign decision alone - it lacks external conditions (such as an act of faith seen in the future).
- Election is **monergistic** (God alone is responsible for our salvation)



# SOVEREIGN ELECTION

**Romans 9** - "Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue not because of works but because of his call, she was told, "The elder will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'" (vv. 11–13)

**Ephesians 1:3-14** - "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace." (vv.4–6); "We who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory" (v. 12).

**2 Thessalonians 2:13** - "We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth"



# SOVEREIGN ELECTION

**2 Timothy 1:9** - God is the one “who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago.”

**Revelation 13:7** - “And authority was given it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain.”

**Revelation 17:8** - “The dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to behold the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.”



# SOVEREIGN ELECTION: OBJECTIONS

1. Why wouldn't God save everyone if he has the power to do so?
2. Romans 8:29, "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son." Does this not suggest that God's election is a result of seeing our faith?
3. Election is fatalistic / mechanistic; it makes people into robots who simply do what they were eternally programmed to do.
4. If everything is fixed and certain, why pray, evangelize, or do anything at all?
5. Election is not fair!
6. If election is true, then there are unbelievers who die in sin who never had a chance to believe.
7. The Bible says that God wills to save everyone.

