

SUMMARY OF THE REFORMATION PRINCIPLES—THE FIVE SOLAS

1. Sola Scriptura: The Authority for Faith is Scripture Alone

- i. The authority of Scripture as Special Revelation (SR) is opposed to the authority of all other forms of special revelation (including the opinions of men or of private spirits).
- ii. Sola Scriptura (SS) is not opposed to the use of reason in making good and necessary consequences but assumes it.
- iii. SS is not opposed to the clarity of General Revelation (GR) but assumes it (see the five point relation between GR and SR below).
- iv. SS is not opposed to historically cumulative insight, the work of the Holy Spirit leading the church into all truth, summed up in its creeds and confessions, but anticipates it.
- v. SS requires all of the Scriptures and only the Scriptures, understood with good and necessary consequences, to be used in interpreting the Scriptures. Interpretation therefore is contextual, not literal or allegorical—in light of foreign assumptions.

2. Sola Fide: Justification is by Faith Alone

- i. Justification is based on a person having righteousness.
- ii. This righteousness is from Christ, whose righteousness is perfect and complete, and not from oneself.
- iii. Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer. This act of imputation assumes that Adam's sin is imputed to all men and that man's sin is imputed to Christ.
- iv. The righteousness of Christ is received by faith alone.
- v. Justification is not sanctification; imputation of righteousness is not infusion of righteousness; forgiveness of sin is not cleansing from sin, but cleansing flows from forgiveness.

3. Sola Gratia: Salvation is by Grace Alone

- i. Salvation is by grace alone, from beginning to end, without any admixture of human works. Both faith and works that glorify God are by grace.
- ii. The grace of salvation is sovereignly bestowed, by God's predestination, apart from any condition in the person.
- iii. The context of the bestowal of grace is summed up in the acronym TULIP (see [here](#)).
- iv. In the order of application of redemption (*ordo salutis*) God's act of effectual calling (regeneration) precedes man's conversion (repentance and faith).
- v. Predestination is not opposed to but upholds freedom properly understood as liberty to do what one desires, rather than ability to do otherwise.

4. Solus Christus: Salvation is by Christ Alone

- i. Salvation is through Christ alone, and not through Christ and the church as mediator of grace.
- ii. Salvation is through Christ alone and not through Christ and the merits or intercession or mediation of any other.
- iii. Salvation is through Christ alone and not through Christ and any practice of penance in this life or in the next or through any supposed good deeds.
- iv. Salvation is through Christ alone and not apart from Christ; there is no salvation without atonement, or without the vicarious atonement of Christ.
- v. Salvation is through Christ alone and in this life alone, after which is the final judgment, which vindicates the divine justice in judging man in unbelief.

5. Soli Deo Gloria: All of Life is for the Glory of God Alone

- i. God's glory which is intrinsic in his being cannot be added to but is only manifest in, by, unto and upon all his creatures. (WCF 2.2)
- ii. God manifests his glory in all his works of creation and providence, which purpose is extended to the fall of man. (WCF 4.1, 5.1, 6.1)
- iii. Man's chief end is to glorify and enjoy God in all that by which he makes himself known, in all his works of creation and providence. (SCQ 1, 101 WCF 4.1, 5.1)
- iv. The purpose of the work of dominion in the creation mandate and of the work of Christ in making disciples of all nations is the knowledge of God which is eternal life. (Genesis 1:28; Matthew 28:20, John 17:3)
- v. The outcome of Christ's work through the church is that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9)

The Relationship between General and Special Revelation

- i. If there is no clear General Revelation (cGR) then there is no consistent possibility of any meaningful belief regarding GR or SR (nihilism).
- ii. If there is no cGR then there is no possibility of inexcusability or moral evil and therefore no necessity of SR as Redemptive Revelation.
- iii. GR, in understanding the problem of moral and natural evil, shows the necessity for SR (see [here](#)).
- iv. SR and Historic Christianity (HC) presuppose and teach cGR.
 - v. SR must be consistent with cGR and must show how God is both just and merciful to man in sin.
- vi. The steps from GR to SR must show first the necessity of SR, then its content, origin, existence, transmission, completion, translation, clarity, sufficiency and interpretation (see [here](#)).