



# WHAT IS SOLA SCRIPTURA?

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## PROTESTANT UNDERSTANDING OF SOLA SCRIPTURA

### Sola Scriptura—A Definition

By *sola Scriptura* Protestants mean that Scripture alone is the primary and absolute source for all doctrine and practice (faith and morals). *Sola Scriptura* implies several things. First, the Bible is a direct *revelation* from God. As such, it has divine authority. For what the Bible says, God says.

### **Sola Scriptura—The Sufficiency of Scripture**

Second, the Bible is *sufficient*: it is all that is necessary for faith and practice. For Protestants “the Bible alone” means “the Bible only” is the final authority for our faith.

### **Sola Scriptura—The Authority of Scripture**

Third, the Scriptures not only have sufficiency but they also possess *final authority*. They are the final court of appeal on all doctrinal and moral matters. However good they may be in giving guidance, all the fathers, Popes, and Councils are fallible. Only the Bible is infallible.

### **Sola Scriptura—The Clarity of Scripture**

Fourth, the Bible is *perspicuous* (clear). The perspicuity of Scripture does not mean that everything in the Bible is perfectly clear, but rather the essential teachings are. Popularly put, in the Bible the main things are the plain things, and the plain things are the main things. This does not mean — as Catholics often assume — that Protestants obtain no help from the fathers and early Councils. Indeed, Protestants accept the great theological and Christological pronouncements of the first four ecumenical Councils. What is more, most Protestants have high regard for the teachings of the early fathers, though obviously they do not believe they are infallible. So this is not to say there is no usefulness to Christian tradition, but only that it is of secondary importance.

### **Solo Scriptura—The Interpretiveness of Scripture**

Fifth, *Scripture interprets Scripture*. This is known as the analogy of faith principle. When we have difficulty in understanding an unclear text of Scripture, we turn to other biblical texts. For the Bible is the best interpreter of the Bible. In the Scriptures, clear texts should be used to interpret the unclear ones.

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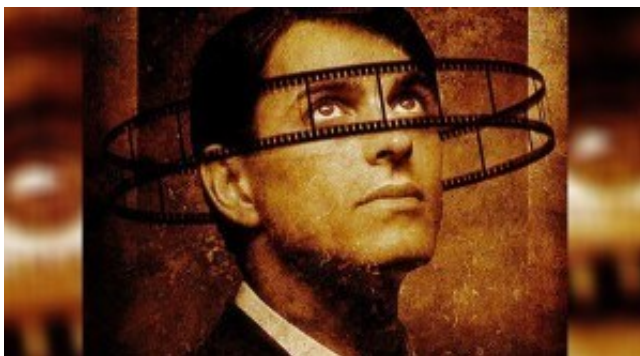
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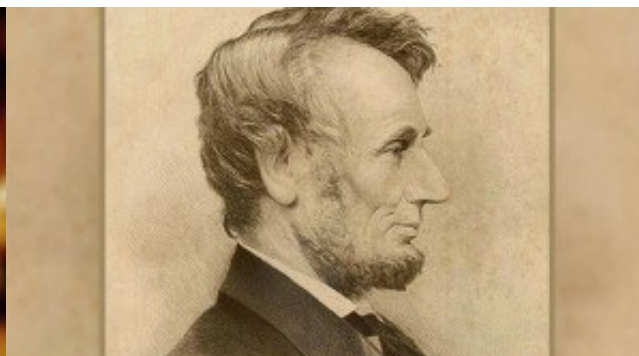
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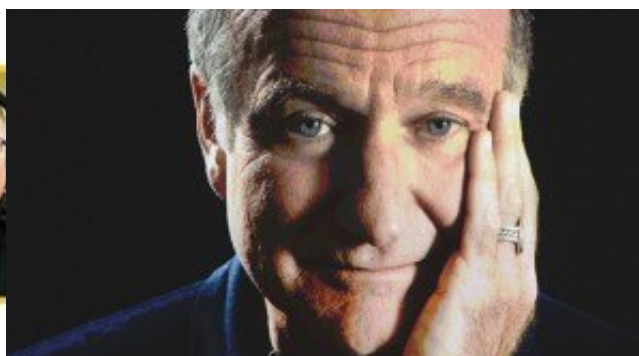
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