

# From Sola To Nulla Scriptura

by David Lee Burris



## When *Sola Scriptura* is Undermined...



- When the testimony concerning Christ originates outside of scripture
  - Personal experience
  - Extra-biblical books (LDS)
  - Man-made rituals
- When a rational or communal authority presides over scripture
  - Protestant Liberal Criticism
  - Christian Naturalism
  - Papacy
- When Scripture is handled in a way that destroys proper understanding
  - Out-of-context bible verse
  - Applying scripture to personal situation it does not address
  - Applying scripture to suit preconcieved doctrinal positions

## Sola Scriptura in scripture:

MARK 7:9

"And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."

2 TIMOTHY 3:15

"And that from a child thou hast known **the holy scriptures**, which are **able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.**"

2 TIMOTHY 3:16

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:" (infallible as inspired word for word)

**If the scriptures have all we need for salvation, it means the rites, rituals and traditions that are man-made add-ons can't possibly save & are furthermore therefore proven to be superfluous to salvation.**

**You must understand that the Roman Catholics & Eastern Orthodox really don't like the concept of "sola scriptura" as it confirms the promise of John 3:16. They want to glue their "add-ons" to the gospel that saves... penances & priestcraft salvation rituals. Basically, they want to deny the concept of a "saving faith." Thus, sola scriptura must be either denied, or modified into a strawman definition so it can then be denied more easily. – Internet Sourcing**

## Early Church Leaders and the Apologists held to sola Scriptura

The view promoted by the Council of Trent contradicted the belief and practice of the Early Church. The Early Church held to the principle of sola Scriptura. It believed that all doctrine must be proven from Scripture and if such proof could not be produced, the doctrine was to be rejected.

The Early Church Fathers taught doctrine and defended Christianity against heresies. In doing this, their sole appeal for authority was Scripture. Their writings literally breathe with the spirit of the Old & New Testaments. In the writings of the apologists such as Justin martyr and Athenagoras the same thing is found. There is no appeal in any of these writings, to the authority of Tradition as a separate and independent body of revelation.

## Irenaeus and Tertullian both specifically held to sola Scriptura

It is with the writings of Irenaeus and Tertullian in the mid to late second century we first encounter the concept of Apostolic Tradition (tradition handed down in the Church from the apostles in oral form). Irenaeus and Tertullian state emphatically that all the teachings of the Bishops that was given orally was rooted in Scripture and could be proven from the written Scriptures.

Both men give the actual doctrinal content of the Apostolic Tradition that was orally preached in the churches. From this, it can be seen clearly that all their doctrine was derived from Scripture. There was no doctrine in what they refer to as apostolic Tradition that is not found in Scripture.

**In other words, the apostolic Tradition defined by Irenaeus and Tertullian is simply the teaching of Scripture.**

It was Irenaeus who stated that while the Apostles at first preached orally, their teaching was later committed to writing (the Scriptures), and the Scriptures had since that day become the pillar & ground of the Church's faith. His exact statement is as follows:

"We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith."

Tradition, when referring to oral proclamation such as preaching or teaching, was viewed as the oral presentation of Scriptural truth, or the codifying of biblical truth. There is no appeal in the writings of Irenaeus or Tertullian to a Tradition on issues of doctrine that are not found in Scripture.

Rather, these men had to contend with the Gnostics who were the very first to suggest and teach that they possessed an Apostolic oral Tradition that was independent from Scripture. Irenaeus and Tertullian rejected such a notion and appealed to Scripture alone for the proclamation and defense of doctrine.

The Bible was the ultimate authority for the Church of the Early Church. It was materially sufficient, and the final arbiter in all matters of doctrinal truth.

"Scripture and tradition were for the Early Church in no sense mutually exclusive: kerygma (the message of the gospel), Scripture and Tradition coincided entirely. The Church preached the kerygma, which is found in toto in written form in the canonical books. The tradition was not understood as an addition to the kerygma contained in Scripture but as handing down that." - *Heiko Oberman*

## THE 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.

- Norman L. Geisler and Ralph E. MacKenzie

**NULLA SCRIPTURA.** Contemporary culture seems bent on removing the last vestiges of biblical authority and morality. Its battle-cry is “no Scripture” instead of “Scripture only.” The liberal Protestant wing has already welcomed the lower view of the Bible. Quite alarming, however, is the downward spiral within some more conservative, evangelical segments of Protestantism.

The Evangelical Theological Society, founded in 1949 to promote conservative biblical scholarship, illustrates this point. Annually, its members must submit a signed affirmation that “the Bible alone in its entirety is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs.” Within thirty years, however, some members had begun to express serious doubts about the statement.

In 1983 one of the members was forced to resign from the Society because he published a commentary on Matthew that described the infancy narratives of Matthew as if containing non-historical events as well as historical facts. He argued Matthew was using a Jewish literary form (genre) called *midrash*. This view, however, was denounced as unorthodox.

Today, more intensely than ever, the Bible’s trustworthiness and integrity are being questioned. One might hear, “We don’t possess a single original manuscript of any book of the Bible; then, how can we affirm that the ‘autographs’ were ‘inerrant’ (free from error)?” Or, “A book like 2nd Peter does not even belong in the Bible.” And, “The phrase ‘the Word of God’ only applies to the oral word, not the written word.” Finally, “The Holy Spirit still speaks to us today by means of those who now possess charismatic gifts.” Such statements are not intended to build confidence in the Scriptures and their all- sufficiency.

*– Truth Workbook*

# The All-Sufficiency Of The Scriptures

“All-sufficiency” is a compound term composed of two words: (1) all; (2) sufficiency. “Sufficiency” signifies: enough, equal to the end proposed,” and “all” means: totally, wholly, completely, without limitation. To speak of the “all-sufficiency of the Scriptures” is to say that they are completely equal to the accomplishment of the end for which they were designed by the God of Heaven. We must regard it as axiomatic that: whatever God institutes for specific purposes is always totally adequate for the accomplishment of those purposes. Otherwise, God would not be God. Other articles in this special issue of Guardian of Truth address themselves to: “The Validity of the Restoration Principle” and “The Restoration of Respect for the Authority of the Bible.” If one believes in the infinite wisdom, power, goodness of God, the verbal inspiration & authority of the Scriptures, and in the validity of the “restoration Principle,” he cannot escape the necessity of his embracing the conclusion that the Holy Scriptures are all-sufficient. The premise is irresistible. It never ceases to amaze, when those who profess to accept our first three propositions, theoretically and/or practically deny their obvious conclusion — the postulate that is the subject of this article. Yet, they do!

It should be obvious to them that: to deny, either theoretically or practically, the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures is tantamount to affirming that God was not wise enough to produce a revelation of Himself and His will that would complement man’s nature, capacity, spiritual and fleshly needs in his present environment, and his eternal destiny in the world to come.



On the other hand, if it be acknowledged that God was wise enough to” produce such a revelation, we may conclude that He did not possess the power to do so. If it be admitted that He had the power to do, so, but did not, we are forced to conclude that He did not will to do so. This would impeach His benevolence — His goodness. It is almost universally agreed among believers that man is a responsible and accountable being who will one day answer to God in judgment for “the deeds done in the body” (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:12). Hence, to repudiate the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures would be to impugn the justice of God. Under a system of justice, responsibility and accountability emanate from and their extent determined by a universally available, intellectually intelligible, and totally inclusive standard of human conduct. Therefore, it is with supreme confidence that we affirm the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures with reference to the conviction and conversion of the alien sinner and the sanctification, and eternal salvation of the child of God, believe implicitly, as we do, in the infinite wisdom, power, justice and goodness of God.

Amplifying this point, it should be noted that one who believes in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is obliged to acknowledge their authority, unless he is prepared to repudiate the right, of God to rule his life. If he acknowledges the right of God to rule his life, the verbal inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, and human fallibility – the proneness of human beings to err from the Divine standard, he is then compelled to acquiesce in the validity of the “Restoration Principle”; that is, a return to the original, Divine standard in his faith and practice.

## The Scriptures Attest Their Own All-Sufficiency

It has been established that the acceptance of the verbal inspiration and authority of the Scriptures demands an acceptance of their all-sufficiency. The Scriptures profess to be Divinely revealed and verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit. Note the following passages:

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11, 12).

But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost ("the Spirit," ASV) teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual ("words," ASV) (1 Cor. 2:9-13).

The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21).

It has also been established that the recognition and acceptance of the Scriptures as authoritative in the realm of religious faith & practice demand an acceptance of their “all-sufficiency.” Being Divinely revealed and verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures represent themselves as being infallible, imperishable, and authoritative. The New Testament Scriptures characterize themselves as an inerrant and complete record of the word of Christ, either spoken in His own person while on earth or thru His Holy Spirit inspired apostles and prophets after He ascended to His throne in heaven. They likewise represent themselves as being the standard of eternal judgment. Jesus Christ affirmed the inerrancy and immutability of Scripture in general when He said: “Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture can’t be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?” (Jn. 10:34-26) The expression “the Scripture can’t be broken,” affirms inerrancy and immutability.

It is acknowledged that the quotation of Jesus is from the Old Testament, yet His statement concerning Scripture is an appeal to a general principle governing all of the sacred writings. Jesus made it clear on many occasions that such was true of His words. Note several of these instances:

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Mt. 24.35). “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

“Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things I commanded you. . .” (Matt. 28:18-20). “I testify to every man that heareth the words of the book of this prophecy, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18,19).

The inspired apostles and prophets of Jesus likewise emphasized the inerrancy, inviolability, and authority of the words which the Lord spoke from heaven through them. They also set them forth as the standard of eternal judgment. Note several examples of this in the following Scriptures:

“If any man among you think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37). “If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:9). “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). “Whosoever goeth onward, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.” (2 John 9). “So, speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty” (Jas. 2:12).

On the basis of the preceding considerations, the conclusion is irresistible that: The gospel as God gave it is perfectly adapted to man as God made him & totally adequate for the accomplishment of the purposes for which God gave it, hence “all-sufficient.” To the correctness of this conclusion, Paul & Peter, apostles of Christ, gave their inspired testimony: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16,17). “Grace & peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God & our Savior Jesus Christ, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:2,3).

### **The All-Sufficiency Of The Scriptures Practically Repudiated By Professed Christians**

Many constituents of so-called “Christendom” give lip service to the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures while repudiating the principle in their practice. Roman Catholics do this. They profess to honor the Scriptures as the inspired word of God, but repudiate their all-sufficiency by recognizing two sources of authority, the “written word” and “the unwritten word.” By “unwritten word,” they mean Roman Catholic “tradition.” They believe that “the word” was delivered to the church at the beginning in unwritten form & that she was made the guardian & preserver of this “body of doctrine,” that the church has “infallibly” kept this body of doctrine “free from any admixture of error, from its foundation to the end of the world.”

This is accomplished, they believe, through “tradition.” This body of tradition they call “the deposit of faith,” and they insist that all Scripture be understood and applied by an “analogy of faith.” This simply means Roman Catholic “tradition” supercedes the obvious, literal meaning of any statement of Scripture relative to matters of faith, and morals. This point of view is well illustrated in the decree of the Council of Trent in its fourth session: “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 the sense which holy mother Church - whose it’s to judge the true sense & interpretation of the holy Scriptures — hath held & doth hold; or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers. . . .” Joseph-Dixon, Archbishop of Armagh and primate of all Ireland, explains this decree as follows: “The sum of this decree is, that no one is to presume, to interpret the scripture against that sense which the church has held and holds, nor against the unanimous consent of the fathers.” He goes on to say later, “We must not by any means, attach to any text of scripture such a sense, as would be irreconcilable with any portion of the doctrine, which the church teaches” (Introduction to the Sacred Scriptures, pp. 196-198).

**In the formation of human creeds as bases of communion and fellowship, protestant denominations, despite their protestations to the contrary, repudiate the all-sufficiency of the revealed word of God. “Sola Scriptura” was one of the mottoes of the “Reformation” of the sixteenth century.**

**This means “Scripture only,” yet those who originated it were flagrantly guilty of repudiating it in their practice by formulating human creeds around which their followers rallied and upon the basis of which they formed separate communions of professed believers.**

We pose the following objections to human creeds in religion: (1) They are unreliable, because they are based on the mere inferences of fallible human wisdom & understanding; (2) they're incomplete and inadequate, because, in the very nature of the case, they can contain no more than the combined wisdom and knowledge of the fallible men (however dignified) who formulate them; (3) they impeach, as we have previously established, the wisdom, power, and/or goodness of God because the sense of necessity that gave them birth is, within itself a repudiation of the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures; (4) they disparage, in the face of their very existence, the revelatory work of the Holy Spirit – i.e., they are formed and promoted on the assumption of the inadequacy of the Holy Spirit's revelation; (5) they aren't apostolic in origin – the apostolic church had only the words of the Holy Spirit; (6) and they are either evil or unnecessary – if they contain only that which Scripture teaches (as denominational scholars insist) they are unnecessary & if they contain less or more than the Scriptures, they are condemned (see Galatians 1:6-12). It is often argued that they are essential to unity. This is absurd. With the formulation of every human creed in history, a new sect has been born. Jesus' prayer for unity (John 17:20,21) was predicated on the words of the apostles as its basis.

Unity was attained in the apostolic age without human creeds, hence why should they be needed now to achieve it?

Modern cults such as: so-called “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” Seventh Day Adventists, Mormons, and so-called “Christian Scientists,” while professing to recognize the Scriptures as inspired of God, repudiate their all-sufficiency by the reverence which they manifest toward the writings of The Watchtower Society, Ellen G. White, Joseph Smith, and Mary Baker Patterson Eddy.

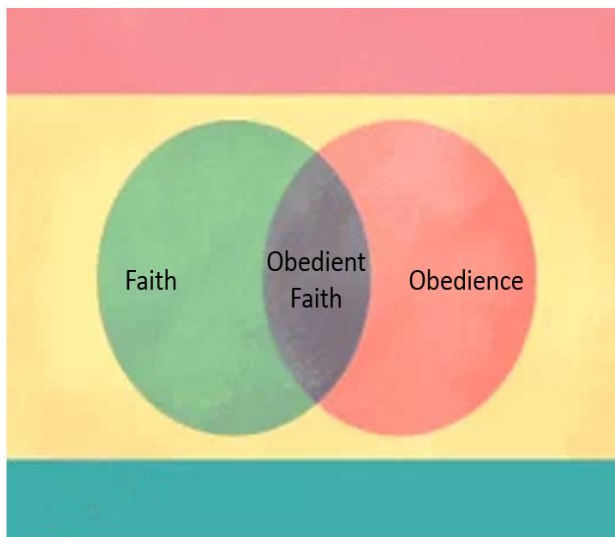
The only course consistent with the all-sufficiency the Scriptures is that expressed in the slogans which animated the churches in days. past: “To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is not light in them (Isa. 8:20); a thus saith the Lord for every act of Christian work or worship; let us call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways; let us speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent.” Sad it is that brethren once dedicated to this course in religion, seek now for justification of religious faith and practice in a mythical “law of expediency” or smugly excuse obviously non-authorized teaching and practice with a shrug of the shoulders and a glib, “We do many things for which we do not have Scripture.” - *Guardian of Truth*



## AT THE NEXUS OF GRACE & GLORY

# Five Steps For Saving:

- HEARING:
- Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- BELIEVING:
- Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16
- REPENTING:
- Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3
- CONFESSING:
- Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37
- BAPTISM:
- Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 – 38



*O That Will Be Glory*

2. *Wh* O that will be glory for me, e grace,

*I an* Glory for me, glory for me; ce,

*When by His grace I shall look on His face, e*

*That will be glory, be glory for me. me.*

