

# Quotes: Reformers and their Doctrine

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## Martin Luther on Sola Scriptura

1. God's Word has been silenced, and only reading and singing remain in the churches. This is the worst abuse....A host of unchristian fables and lies, in legends, hymns, and sermons were introduced that it is horrible to see....faith disappeared and everyone pressed to enter the priesthood, convents, and monasteries, and to build churches and endow them....A Christian congregation should never gather together without the preaching of God's Word and prayer, no matter how briefly, as Psalm 102 says, "When the kings and the people assemble to serve the Lord, they shall declare the name and the praise of God." And Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:26-31 says that when they come together, there should be prophesying, teaching, and admonition. Therefore, when God's Word is not preached, one had better neither sing nor read, or even come together.

## God-Breathed Bible

2. "We attribute to the Holy Spirit all of the Holy Scripture."
3. "The Scriptures, although they are written by men, are neither of men nor from men but from God."
4. "When burgher or peasant hears a pastor, he must say: 'I do indeed hear and recognize the voice of the pastor. But the words which he utters are not his. No, he would be incapable of them. It is the sublime majesty of God that is speaking through him.'"
5. "God is speaking through the voice of the preacher who brings God's Word....This is God's Word as surely as if God Himself were speaking to you."
6. "We must make a great difference between God's Word and the word of man. A man's word is a little sound, that flies into the air, and soon vanishes; but the Word of God is greater than heaven and earth, yea, greater than death and hell, for it forms part of the power of God."
7. "For God has said, 'When the Word of Christ is preached, I am in your mouth, and I go with the Word through your ears into your heart.' Therefore, we have a sure sign and sure knowledge that when the gospel is proclaimed, God is present there."
8. "Whenever you hear anyone boast that he has something by inspiration of the Holy Spirit and it has no basis in God's Word, no matter what it may be, tell him that this is the work of the devil.... Whatever does not have its origin in the Scriptures is surely from the devil himself."

## Inerrancy

9. "If God has said it, it must also come to pass. For no one should ask whether it is possible but should only determine whether God has said it."
10. "Scripture will not contradict itself or any one article of faith."
11. "The apostles...show that one should not trust the holy fathers and the church unless it is certain that they have the Word of God...only Scripture is to be considered inerrant."
12. "God...would hold us solely to His Word that we may learn to despise the great cry: Church! Church! Fathers! Father! The church cannot err! The church cannot err!...We should learn to put out of sight church, fathers, temple, priesthood, Jerusalem, God's people, and everything, and listen only to what God tells us in His Word."
13. "Give me Scripture, Scripture, Scripture. Do you hear me? Scripture."

## Authority

14. "My dear pope, you must not lord it over Scripture, nor must I or anybody else, according to our own ideas. The devil take that attitude! We should rather allow Scripture to rule and master us, and we ourselves should not be the masters, according to our own mad heads, setting ourselves above Scripture."
15. "Scripture alone is the true lord and master of all writings and doctrine on earth. If that is not granted, what is Scripture good for?"
16. "[The preacher] must be subject to no one and have no master except the Word of God.... God does not want anything at all on your own initiative without His Word.... a good preacher invests everything in the Word."
17. "This is the sum of the matter: Let everything be done so that the Word may have free course instead of the prattling and rattling that has been the rule....We profit by nothing as much as by the Word."

## Clarity

18. "No clearer book has been written on earth than the Holy Scripture."
19. "Scripture is intended for all people. It is clear enough so far as truths necessary for salvation are concerned."
20. "I admit, of course, that there are many texts in the Scriptures that are obscure and abstruse, not because of the majesty of their subject matter, but because of our ignorance of their vocabulary and grammar; but these texts in no way hinder a knowledge of all the subject matter of Scripture."
21. "If you speak of the internal clearness, no human being sees one iota of Scripture unless he has the Spirit of God. All men have a darkened heart....The Spirit is required to understand the whole of Scripture and every part of it."

## Sufficiency

22. "Let us then consider it certain and conclusively established that the soul can do without all things except the Word of God. ...This Word is the Word of life, of truth, of light, of preaching, of righteousness, of salvation, of joy, of liberty, of wisdom, of power, of grace, of glory, and of every blessing beyond our power to estimate."
23. "What kind of God would He be if His Word, being insufficient, were in need of a supplement from men?"
24. "Whoever does not consult Scripture will know nothing whatever. Now we know...how we may escape death and the devil, who has redeemed us, and how we are to get these great treasures. These things we learn only from this book of Holy Scriptures."
25. "We should know that God has ordained that no one is to come to a knowledge of Christ or to obtain the remission of sins, which He has purchased, or the Holy Ghost without external and general means. God has deposited this treasure in the spoken Word of the ministry."

## Luther and Tyndale on the Doctrines of Grace

### The Natural Man

#### Luther

26. "It is a great teaching, to know and understand what original sin is... all the universities together have not understood what original sin is."
27. "Through his sin Adam destroyed us and made us enemies of God who are liable to God's wrath and judgment and worthy of eternal death... I feel and confess that I am a sinner on account of the transgression of Adam."
28. "Through his disobedience and transgression of the divine commandment Adam fell into sin, which polluted his body and soul, so that he was full of sin, wrath, and ungraciousness. This misery and abominable corruption he transmitted to his descendants, that is, to the entire human race. Just as Adam fell into sin and became subject to

death, so we all who descended from him must bear sin, sorrows of all kinds, and death, sin's penalty, simply because we were born from the sinful flesh which was Adam's since the Fall."

29. "We are not sinners because we commit this or that sin, but we commit them because we are sinners first. That is, a bad tree and bad seed also bring forth bad fruit, and from a bad root only a bad tree can grow."
30. "Original sin really means that human nature has completely fallen; that the intellect has become darkened, so that we no longer know God and His will and no longer perceive the works of God; furthermore, that the will is so extraordinarily depraved, so that we do not trust the mercy of God and we do not fear God but... follow the desire and the impulses of the flesh."
31. "Original sin... it is not only a lack of a certain quality in the will, nor even only a lack of light in the mind or of power in the memory, but particularly it is a total lack of uprightness and of the power of all the faculties both of body and soul and of the whole inner and outer man. On top of all this, it is a propensity toward evil. It is a nausea toward the good, a loathing of light and wisdom, and a delight in error and darkness, a flight from and an abomination of all good works, a pursuit of evil."
32. "Scripture... represents man as one who is not only bound, wretched, captive, sick, and dead, but in addition to his other miseries is afflicted, through the agency of Satan his prince, with this misery of blindness, so that he believes himself to be free, happy, unfettered, able, well, and alive."
33. "Our nature is so corrupt and we are so inclined to presumption and security in prosperous times that it would be impossible for us to stand if the Holy Spirit did not change our hearts."

### *Tyndale*

34. "The fall of Adam has made us heirs of the vengeance and wrath of God, and heirs of eternal damnation; and has brought us into captivity and bondage under the devil."
35. By nature, through the fall of Adam, are we the children of wrath, heirs of the vengeance of God by birth, yea, and from our conception. And we have our fellowship with damned devils, under the power of darkness and rule of Satan, while we are yet in our mother's wombs; and though we do not show the fruits of sin [as soon as we are born,] yet we are full of the natural poison, whereof all sinful deeds spring, and cannot but sin outwards, (be we never so young,) [as soon as we are able to work,] if occasion be given: for our nature is to do sin, as is the nature of a serpent to sting.
36. Whatsoever we do, think, or imagine, is abominable in the sight of God. [For we can refer nothing unto the honor of God; neither is His law, or will, written in our members or in our hearts: neither is there any more power in us to follow the will of God, than in a stone to ascend upward of his own self.]
37. Of nature we are evil, therefore we both think and do evil, and are under vengeance under the law, convict to eternal damnation by the law, and are contrary to the will of God in all our will.
38. Our nature cannot but sin, if occasions be given, except that God of His special grace keep us back.
39. The devil is our lord, and our ruler, our head, our governor, our prince, yea, and our god. And our will is locked and knit faster unto the will of the devil, than could a hundred thousand chains bind a man unto a post.
40. The text is plain: we were stone dead, and without life or power to do or consent to good. The whole nature of us was captive under the devil, and led at his will. And we were as wicked as the devil now is ... and we consented unto sin with soul and body, and hated the law of God.

### **Sovereign Election**

#### *Luther*

41. "He ordains by His own counsel which and what sort of persons He wills to be recipients and partakers of His preached and offered mercy."

42. All things take place according to God's election. Jacob was loved by God because he had been elected, and he obtained mercy because it thus pleased God from eternity, just as also He said to Moses: "I will show mercy, etc." (Ex. 33: 19)... It is solely because of a merciful God that anyone is chosen or is righteous, inasmuch as all men are equally a part of the mass of perdition and no one is righteous before God unless he receives mercy... that everything depends on a merciful God and not on someone's will is evident and proved by the fact that in order that God might show this to be the case and that man might know that it is not due to his own running but to the mercy of God, that he wills and runs.
43. In chapters 9, 10, and 11 he teaches of God's eternal predestination— out of which originally proceeds who shall believe or not, who can or cannot get rid of sin— in order that our salvation may be taken entirely out of our hands and put in the hand of God alone. And this too is utterly necessary. For we are so weak and uncertain that if it depended on us, not even a single person would be saved; the devil would surely overpower us all. But since God is dependable— His predestination cannot fail, and no one can withstand Him— we still have hope in the face of sin.
44. "It is thus for the sake of the elect that these things are published, in order that being humbled and brought back to nothingness by this means they may be saved. The rest resist this humiliation, indeed they condemn this teaching of self-despair, wishing for something, however little, to be left for them to do themselves; so they remain secretly proud and enemies of the grace of God. This, I say, is one reason, namely, that the godly, being humbled, may recognize, call upon, and receive the grace of God."
45. No man can be thoroughly humbled until he knows that his salvation is utterly beyond his own powers, devices, endeavors, will, and works, and depends entirely on the choice, will, and work of another, namely, of God alone. For as long as he is persuaded that he himself can do even the least thing toward his salvation, he retains some self-confidence and does not altogether despair of himself, and therefore he is not humbled before God, but presumes that there is— or at least hopes or desires that there may be— some place, time, and work for him, by which he may at length attain to salvation. But when a man has no doubt that everything depends on the will of God, then he completely despairs of himself and chooses nothing for himself, but waits for God to work; then he has come close to grace, and can be saved.
46. "The matter of predestination and election... is not as deep a subject as is commonly thought, but rather is a wonderfully sweet thing for those who have the Spirit."
47. "God wills it so, and in so willing He is not evil. For all things are of Him, as the clay is the potter's. Therefore He gives commands that the elect might fulfill them and the reprobate be enmeshed in them, so that He might show both His anger and His mercy. Then 'the prudence of the flesh' says: 'It is harsh and wretched that God should seek His glory in my misery.' Note how the voice of the flesh is always saying 'my,' 'my'; get rid of this 'my' and rather say: 'Glory to Thee, O Lord!' And then you will be saved."

### *Tyndale*

48. Predestination ... and salvation are clean taken out of our hands, and put in the hands of God only ... for we are so weak and so uncertain, that if it stood in us, there would of a truth be no man saved; the devil, no doubt, would deceive us.
49. In Christ God chose us, and elected us before the beginning of the world, created us anew by the word of the gospel, and put His Spirit in us, for because that we should do good works.
50. By grace (that is to say, by favor) we are plucked out of Adam, the ground of all evil, and grafted in Christ, the root of all goodness.
51. In Christ God loved us, His elect and chosen, before the world began, and reserved us unto the knowledge of his Son and of His holy gospel.
52. When Christ is ... preached ... the hearts of them which are elect and chosen, begin to wax soft and melt at the bounteous mercy of God.
53. Why does God open one man's eyes and not another's? Paul (Rom. 9) forbids to ask why; for it is too deep for man's capacity. God we see is honoured thereby, and His mercy set out and the more seen in the vessels of mercy.

But the popish can suffer God to have no secret, hid to Himself. They have searched to come to the bottom of His bottomless wisdom: and because they cannot attain to that secret, and be too proud to let it alone, and to grant themselves ignorant, with the apostle, that knew no other than God's glory in the elect; they go and set up free-will with the heathen philosophers, and say that a man's free-will is the cause why God chooses one and not another, contrary unto all the Scripture.

## Atonement

### *Luther*

54. "For in an absolute sense Christ did not die for all, because He says: 'This is My blood which is poured out for you' and 'for many'— He does not say: for all— 'for the forgiveness of sins' (Mark 14: 24, Matt. 26: 28)."
55. In the first place, He [Christ] did not make a testament for all, because "He disinherits some," as He says in John 17: 9: "I am praying for them, not for the world." Likewise in John 17: 20: "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who are to believe in Me through their word." Likewise because He did not say "for all" but "which will be shed for many" (Mark 14: 24; Matt. 26: 28). And here (Heb. 9: 15) we read: "So that those who are called may receive the promised eternal salvation."

### *Tyndale*

56. "Christ's blood has purchased life for us, and has made us the heirs of God; so that heaven comes by Christ's blood. If you would obtain heaven with the merits and deservings of your own works, yea, and shame the blood of Christ; and unto you were Christ dead in vain."
57. "Christ's works only justify you, and make satisfaction for your sin, and not your own works."

## The New Birth

### *Luther*

58. "Granted that they attribute very little to 'free will,' yet they teach that we are able to obtain righteousness and grace by that 'very little.'"
59. "If God works in us, the will is changed, and being gently breathed upon by the Spirit of God, it again wills and acts from pure willingness and inclination and of its own accord, not from compulsion, so that it cannot be turned another way by any opposition, nor be overcome or compelled even by the gates of hell, but it goes on willing and delighting in and loving the good, just as before it willed and delighted in and loved evil."
60. "We are people who have been born, not fashioned by man, but 'begotten.' This is not our work. As little as a child contributes to its being born, so little do we contribute to our being spiritually born. God is the Father... the 'Word of Truth' is the mother."

### *Tyndale*

61. Of the whole multitude of the nature of man, whom God has chosen, and to whom He has appointed mercy and grace in Christ, to them sends He His Spirit; which opens their eyes, shows them their misery, and brings them unto the knowledge of themselves; so that they hate and abhor themselves.
62. We are, in ... our second birth, God's workmanship and creation in Christ; so that, as he which is yet unmade has no life or power to work, no more had we, till we were made again in Christ.
63. Faith springs not of man's fantasy, neither is it in any man's power to obtain it; but it is altogether the pure gift of God poured into us freely, without all manner of doing of us, without deserving and merits, yea, and without seeking for us; and is ... God's gift and grace, purchased through Christ."
64. True faith is ... the gift of God; and is given to sinners, after the law has passed upon them, and has brought their consciences unto the brim of desperation and sorrows of hell.

- 65. Beware of the leaven that says, we have power in our free-will, before the preaching of the gospel, to deserve grace, to keep the law of congruity, or God to be unrighteous.... And when they say our deeds with grace deserve heaven, say thou with Paul, (Romans 6) that “everlasting life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
- 66. Scripture ascribes both faith and works, not unto us, but to God only, to whom they belong only, and to whom they are appropriate, whose gifts they are, and the proper work of His Spirit.
- 67. The will has no operation at all in the working of faith in my soul, no more than the child has in the begetting of his father: for Paul said, “It is the gift of God,” and not of us.
- 68. “Is it not a forward and perverse blindness, to teach how a man can do nothing of his own self; and yet presumptuously take upon them the greatest and highest work of God, even to make faith in themselves of their own power, and of their own false imagination and thoughts?”

## Preserving Grace

### *Luther*

- 69. “When you have Him as your Shepherd, you will surely not want. Yes, you already have what you shall have— eternal life. Nor will you ever perish. Nor shall any power be so great and mighty that it could snatch you out of His hand. Of that you can be sure. For this Shepherd’s voice will surely not lead you astray.”
- 70. “He saves us... and exposes His elect to as many rapacious forces as are mentioned here, all of which are striving to pull the elect down into damnation so that they might be lost, in order to show that He saves us not by our own merits, but purely by His own election and immutable will, in the very face of so many rapacious and terrifying adversaries who try in vain to harm us.”
- 71. “God exposes His saints to so many evils, which are all like grasping hands, and yet He does not lose His saints. In this way He shows sufficiently clearly the firmness of His election, that it cannot be hindered by any creature, although He leads every creature up against it.”

### *Tyndale*

- 72. “God’s elect cannot so fall that they rise not again, because that the mercy of God ever waits upon them, to deliver them from evil, as the care of a kind father waits upon his son to warn him and to keep him from occasions, and to call him back again if he be gone too far.”
- 73. “Life eternal and all good things are promised unto faith and belief; so that he that believes on Christ shall be safe.”

## Calvin and Knox on the Sovereignty of God

### *Calvin*

- 74. “God is the disposer and ruler of all things,— that from the remotest eternity, according to His own wisdom, He decreed what He was to do, and now by His power executes what He decreed.”
- 75. “We maintain, that by His providence, not heaven and earth and inanimate creatures only, but also the counsels and wills of men are so governed as to move exactly in the course which He has destined.”
- 76. “Whatever men or Satan himself devise, God holds the helm, and makes all their efforts contribute to the execution of His judgments.”
- 77. “The will of God is the supreme rule of righteousness, so that everything which He wills must be held to be righteous by the mere fact of His willing it. Therefore, when it is asked why the Lord did so, we must answer, because He pleased.”
- 78. “The most important truth of all [is] that God governs the world by His providence.” “Nothing is more useful than a knowledge of this doctrine.”

### *Knox*

79. "The doctrine of God's eternal predestination is so necessary to the church of God, that, without the same, can faith neither be truly taught, neither surely established; man can never be brought to true humility and knowledge of himself; neither yet can he be ravished in admiration of God's eternal goodness, and so moved to praise Him. And therefore we fear not to affirm, that so necessary as it is that true faith be established in our hearts, that we be brought to unfeigned humility, and that we be moved to praise Him for His free graces received; so necessary also is the doctrine of God's eternal predestination."
80. There is no way more proper to build and establish faith, than when we hear and undoubtedly do believe that our election ... consisteth not in ourselves, but in the eternal and immutable good pleasure of God. And that in such firmity that it cannot be overthrown, neither by the raging storms of the world, nor by the assaults of Satan; neither yet by the wavering and weakness of our own flesh. Then only is our salvation in assurance, when we find the cause of the same in the bosom and counsel of God.
81. Enemies of free grace in his day "most furiously raged against that doctrine, which attributeth all praise and glory of our redemption to the eternal love and undeserved grace of God alone."

## **Calvin and Knox on the Goal of Doctrine**

### *Calvin*

82. "Doctrine without zeal is either like a sword in the hand of a madman, or ... else it serves for vain and wicked boasting."
83. "In one word, not to dwell longer on this, give heed, and you will at one perceive that ignorance of Providence is the greatest of all miseries, and the knowledge of it the highest happiness."
84. Our assurance, our glory, and the sole anchor of our salvation are that Christ the Son of God is ours, and we in turn are in him sons of God and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven, called to the hope of eternal blessedness by God's grace, not by our worth.
85. Almighty God, our heavenly Father, seeing that since antiquity it has always pleased You to extend Your grace toward Your people, as perverse and rebellious as they were; and that You have never ceased to exhort them to repentance, but have always taken them by Your hand through Your prophets; grant us also Your grace today, that Your same Word may resound in our ears; and, if at first we should not profit from Your holy teaching as we ought; nonetheless, do not reject us; but by Your Spirit subdue and so reign over our minds and affections, that being truly humbled and brought low, we give You the glory that Your majesty is due; so that being clothed by Your love and fatherly favor, we may submit ourselves totally to You, while at the same time embracing that goodness which You have provided and offered us in our Lord Jesus; that we might never doubt again that You alone are our Father, until that day that we rejoice in Your heavenly promise, which has been acquired for us by the blood of Your only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.
86. Let our chief goal, O God, be your glory, and to enjoy You forever.
87. It is a very important consideration that we are consecrated and dedicated to God; it means that we may think, speak, meditate, or do anything only with a view to his glory.

### *Knox*

88. "I sought neither preeminence, glory, nor riches; my honor was that Christ Jesus should reign."
89. None have I corrupted. None have I defrauded. Merchandise have I not made—to God's glory I write—of the glorious Evangel of Jesus Christ; but, according to the measure of the grace granted unto me, I have divided the Sermon of Truth in just parts, beating down the rebellion of the proud against God, and raising up the consciences troubled with the knowledge of their sins, by declaring Jesus Christ, the strength of His Death, and the mighty operation of His Resurrection, in the hearts of the Faithful. Of this, I say, I have a testimony this day in my conscience, before God, however the world rage.