

THESES ON "SOLA SCRIPTURA"

In the theses which follow, an attempt is made to set forth as clearly as possible a number of the more important basic principles of Sola Scriptura. Several of these have been taken over verbatim from the Sola Scriptura sentences adopted in 1947 at joint meetings of the Missouri Synod Committee on "A Statement" and a committee chosen to represent the signers of this document, and subsequently mailed by the Praesidium to all pastors of the Missouri Synod. The last thesis was formulated in its entirety by the undersigned, accepted by two of the other three members of the sub-committee on Sola Scriptura of the "Ten and Ten", but rejected by its fourth member, and was therefore never presented to any of the sixteen full-day joint sessions of these two committees.

I. Sola Scriptura means that the sacred writings of Scripture, and all of them, are the sole source from which all doctrines proclaimed in the Christian Church must be taken, and, therefore, too the sole rule and norm by which all teachers and doctrines must be examined and judged.

II. The principle of Sola Scriptura, which concerns itself with the applicability of Scripture in determining religious truth, rests upon the objective fact that every single word of the Bible is infallibly true because it was written by inspiration of God.

III. The principle of Sola Scriptura demands that all Christians be careful not to offend in any way against the inviolability of the Bible, since the Holy Scriptures and every word of it is to be accepted and believed by everyone without change or addition.

IV. Faithfulness to the principle of Sola Scriptura forbids the applicability of any text of Scripture to be narrowed down beyond that which may be directly indicated in the Bible itself.

V. When dealing with two Scripture passages or truths which seem to be in conflict, it is not the function or prerogative of human reason to eliminate or modify one passage or truth. Each passage or truth must be allowed to stand and must be accepted as binding, since each is divinely inspired. This principle must be observed whenever the effort is made to harmonize or to reconcile seeming discrepancies.

VI. Such conclusions drawn from the difficult passages as are not in agreement with the clear passages, or augment what is there taught, cannot be placed on the list of theological "open questions" concerning which open questions we can grant freedom of teaching.

VII. Difficult passages also have only one intended meaning, which alone is the authentic one. Such passages, if interpreted at all, must be interpreted in the light of the clear passages. The failure on the part of individuals to understand certain texts may be due either to difficulties connected with the text itself or to difficulties which are found in the person who studied the text.

VIII. Doctrinal propositions resulting from logical processes of the mind operating upon the text of Scriptures, such as syllogistic deduction, collation, and summarization of all statements concerning any one topic and inference are valid truth and must be accepted, so long as they do not extend beyond and add nothing to the meaning of the text or texts. However, any activity of the human mind (e.g. induction which reads into the text something not already there, cannot produce a doctrinal proposition binding on consciences. No conclusion is valid if it conflicts with anything that the Holy Ghost has revealed or taught in Scripture.

IX. Since a prophetic text is nothing else but Scripture itself pointing at some future person or event which the Holy Ghost had in mind when He caused the text to be written, that fulfilment is a part of that which God teaches in the prophetic text, and is, therefore, Scripture doctrine regardless of whether or not it is elsewhere recorded in the Bible. When God sends the fulfilment, He expects of us that we recognize its fulfilment and believe the fulfilled prophecy, and not simply the fact that an unknowable event has been foretold in that text.

Note: The faithful application of the Sola Scriptura principles to the sedes doctrinae will produce without fail doctrines which are truly Scriptural. Their faithful application to any doctrines which are confessed will reveal with respect to each such doctrine whether it is truly Scriptural or not. Anyone who wholeheartedly adheres to the principles of Sola Scriptura will without exception accept every faithful application of these principles. The reason for this is the fact that the faithful application of the Sola Scriptura principles to the sacred text of Scripture always results in bringing to man's attention Bible doctrines themselves, which we are required to accept.

A. T. Kretzmann

WACONAWITZ LUTHERAN SEMINARY
1023 W. WATFORDS CIRCLE
MARTIN, MISSOURI 64558