

Article 1: Sola Scriptura

He who takes up any novelty outside the Scriptures, such as might lead to heresy, shall be sent away.

- *The Penitential of Cummean* (Irish, 7th century)

“Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.”

- Deuteronomy 12.32

Everyone knows, of course, that it was the Reformers of the 16th century who proclaimed the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* – Scripture as our supreme and final guide to faith and life – and set the Church back on a proper keel.

Everyone knows that, but everyone is, of course, wrong.

Celtic Christians sustained an esteem of Scripture unsurpassed by Luther, Calvin, Knox, or any of the Reformers. They lived and died by Scripture, and they turned to Scripture to guide in the healing of souls, the pursuit of holiness, building the church, and reforming society.

In our day many Christian leaders loudly profess their confidence in Scripture, then run their churches and ministries following principles and using practices borrowed more from the secular age than the Word of God. Meanwhile, the plain teaching of the Bible on such matters as evangelism, shepherding, and the true nature of worship and discipleship, languishes. The Bible is treated more as a book of personal promises or comfort, rather than as the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. And the precious and very great promises of God, His covenant faithfulness, and presence, promise, and power of His Kingdom are not given the central and integrating importance God intends.

In our day, many who have been called to teach the Word of God would be looked upon by our faithful forebears as compromisers, purveyors of novelty, and even heretics.

What’s to be done?

We can’t “send everybody away,” but we could seek the Lord for repentance concerning our cavalier attitude toward the Bible, and our readiness to substitute for its guidance whatever seems to work to get the numbers up.

The Lord’s people will not be revived except by His Word and Spirit. Churches will not be renewed in anything of a lasting manner unless they submit to the Word in all it teaches. And there will be no awakening in the larger world until we preach and live the Word without compromise or fear. “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life” (Jn. 6.63).

Do we believe Jesus? Do you?

As we begin this introductory study of the discipline of Biblical theology, let us resolve to be guided *by* the Word, *into* the Word, *for the application* of the Word, into every area of our lives, unto the praise of the glory of God’s grace.