The Reformation, *Sola Scriptura*, and Tradition
(or, “The Bible Alone Authorizes, Yet the Bible that Authorizes is not Alone”)

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Introduction: Premises, Problems and Prospects
A. Premises of *sola scriptura*: 5 theses on what the Bible is:
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1. The word of God written in human words inspired by the Holy Spirit.
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1. The word of God written in human words inspired by the Holy Spirit.

2. In authoring the Bible God has also authorized it.

3. Word/discourse: something God says about something to someone in some way.
A. Premises of *sola scriptura*: 5 theses on what the Bible is:

4. Types of discourse exercise authority in different ways over different domains.
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4. Types of discourse exercise authority in different ways over different domains.

5. All biblical discourse is divinely authored and serves the same divine end.
B. Problems with *sola scriptura*: five salvos:
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1. “It is to blame for modern secularization, skepticism, and schism”
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B. Problems with *sola scriptura*: five salvos:

1. “It is to blame for modern secularization, skepticism, and schism”
2. “It is modern”
3. “It is dangerous”
4. “It is self-defeating”
5. “It detracts from Christ”
C. Prospects of *sola scriptura*:
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1. The criticisms are mostly directed against a caricature, a “straw sola.”
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2. *Sola scriptura* comes into its own in the triune economy of communication.
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1. The criticisms are mostly directed against a caricature, a “straw sola.”

2. *Sola scriptura* comes into its own in the triune economy of communication.

3. The gospel for Paul is of “first importance”; *sola scriptura* means “Scripture first!”
I. *Sola scriptura* and church tradition: exclusion or exclamation?
A. The definition:

*Sola Scriptura* = “only Scripture, because it is God’s inspired Word, is our inerrant, sufficient, and final authority for the church” (Matthew Barrett, *God’s Word Alone*)
B. The context:

1. Late medieval theology exaggeration of human traditions (material supplements).
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2. Luther rejected *nuda Scriptura*, and so should we.
C. The purpose:
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1. “Scripture alone to rule”
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2. Scripture its own interpreter
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3. The importance (but not final authority) of interpretive communities:
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3. The importance (but not final authority) of interpretive communities:
   a. Contra the Roman Catholic *magisterium*
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   b. Contra Anabaptist *enthusiasm*
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3. The importance (but not final authority) of interpretive communities:
   a. Contra the Roman Catholic *magisterium*
   b. Contra Anabaptist *enthusiasm*
   c. Respect for elder brothers (and church Fathers)
II. *Sola scriptura* and the Protestant principle and pattern of authority
A. A unique (and user-friendly) authority:
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1. Rightful say-so: the power to commend belief and command obedience.
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2. The authority principle in Christianity: the triune God in communicative action.
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2. The authority principle in Christianity: the triune God in communicative action.

3. God cares for the preservation of his word (e.g., covenants).
A. A unique (and user-friendly) authority:

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5. Scripture *alone* is holy, the divinely authorized means by which the risen Christ announces the gospel, administers his new creational kingdom, and imparts his light and life to readers made right-minded and right-hearted—fit for communion with God—through the illumination of the Holy Spirit.
B. A truthful (infallible) authority:
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1. Scripture alone is supremely authoritative, not my interpretation of it.
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2. The clarity of Scripture: God is an effective communicator.
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4. Scripture is a vital ingredient in the triune economy of truth.
C. A supreme (but not solitary) authority:
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   a. All authority has been given to Jesus Christ
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   b. Christ delegates his authority to the apostles
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   a. All authority has been given to Jesus Christ
   b. Christ delegates his authority to the apostles
   c. *Sola scriptura* is part of an “economy” or divinely given pattern of authority
2. Magisterial and ministerial authority: the role of Tradition
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a. *Sola scriptura* is not “solo” *scriptura*
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   b. How canonicity and catholicity go together
3. Creeds, confessions, and the role of the Holy Spirit
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a. Tradition is “the method by which the Holy Spirit causes the truth of Scripture to pass into the consciousness and life of the church” (Bavinck)
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b. Do not confuse *sola scriptura* with either *nuda scriptura* or *nulla traditio*
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a. Tradition is “the method by which the Holy Spirit causes the truth of Scripture to pass into the consciousness and life of the church” (Bavinck)

b. Do not confuse *sola scriptura* with either *nuda scriptura* or *nulla tradition*

c. Scripture is materially sufficient; Tradition adds no new content
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d. Scripture and Tradition as greater and lesser lights in the economy of light
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e. The testimonial and ministerial authority of Tradition
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f. Tradition as interpretive helpmeet
Conclusion: *sola scriptura* and the church today
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A. Scripture first in authority (but not entirely alone in the pattern).
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B. Why evangelical pastors should affirm catholicity as well as canonicity.
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B. Why evangelical pastors should affirm catholicity as well as canonicity.

C. In sum: not a solitary but a *singular* authority.