5 Solas of the Reformation

Sola Scriptura
We are saved by the authority of *the Word of God alone*

Sola Gratia
We are saved *by grace alone*

Sola Fide
We are saved *through faith alone*

Solus Christus
We are saved *in Christ alone*

Soli Deo Gloria
We are saved for *the glory of God alone*

The **five *solae*** (from Latin, *sola*, lit. "alone"; occasionally Anglicized to **five *solas***) of the Protestant Reformation are a foundational set of Biblical principles held by theologians and churchmen to be central to the doctrine of salvation as taught by Western Protestantism. Each *sola* represents a key belief in Protestant Christian faith in contradistinction to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformers claimed that the Catholic Church, especially its head, the Pope, had usurped divine attributes or qualities for the Church and its hierarchy. In most of the earliest articulations of the solas, three were typically specified: scripture over tradition, faith over works, and grace over merit, each intended to represent an important distinction compared with Catholic doctrine.

The solas were not systematically articulated together until the 20th century. But *sola gratia* and *sola fide* were used in conjunction by the Reformers themselves. All of the solas show up in various writings by the Protestant Reformers, but they are not catalogued together by any. By the middle of the 20th Century, it became common to see the original list of three increased to create five solas. The additions were "Christ alone" and "Glory to God alone".

Sola Scriptura, or ***"scripture alone"*** (literally: "by scripture alone"), asserts that scripture must govern over church traditions and interpretations which are themselves held to be subject to scripture. All church traditions, creeds, and teachings must be in unity with the teachings of scripture as the divinely inspired *Word of God.*

Sola Scriptura asserts that the Bible can and is to be interpreted through itself, with one area of Scripture being useful for interpreting others. That scripture can interpret itself is a means by which to show the unity of Scripture as a whole. As all doctrines are formed via scriptural understandings, all doctrines must be found to align with Scripture and as such are then subject to scripture before the believer can begin to apply them.

Sola gratia,* or *"only grace," specifically excludes the merit done by a person as part of achieving salvation. *Sola gratia* is the teaching that salvation comes by divine grace or "unmerited favor" only, not as something merited by the sinner. This means that salvation is an unearned gift from God for Jesus' sake. While some maintain that this doctrine is the opposite of "works' righteousness" and conflicts with some of the aspects of the Roman Catholic doctrine of merit, it might be asserted that this article, taken at face value, conflicts in no way with Roman Catholic teaching; while the doctrine that grace is truly and always a gift of God is held in agreement between both views, the difference in doctrine lies mainly in two facts: that of God as sole actor in grace (in other words, that grace is always efficacious *without* any cooperation by man), and second, that man cannot by any action of his own, acting under the influence of grace, cooperate with grace to "merit" greater graces for himself (the latter would be the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church). This doctrine asserts divine monergism in salvation: God acts alone, through the Holy Spirit, and works to bring about the salvation of an individual through spiritual regeneration. The responsibility for salvation does not rest on the sinner to any degree.

Sola fide,* or *"faith alone," asserts that good works are not a means or requisite for salvation. *Sola fide* is the teaching that justification (interpreted in Protestant theology as "being *declared* just by God") is received by faith alone, without any need for good works on the part of the individual. In classical Protestant theology, good works are seen to be *evidence* of saving faith, but the good works themselves do not determine salvation. Some Protestants see this doctrine as being summarized with the formula "Faith yields justification and good works" and as contrasted with the Roman Catholic formula "Faith and good works yield justification." The Catholic side of the argument is based on *James 2:14-17. "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled', but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."* The *Sola fide* doctrine is sometimes called the material cause or principle of the Reformation because it was the central doctrinal issue for Martin Luther and the other reformers. Luther called it the "doctrine by which the church stands or falls"

Solus Christus* or *Solo Christo ("Christ alone" or "through Christ alone") excludes the priestly class as necessary for sacraments. *Solus Christus* is the teaching that Christ is the only mediator between God and man, and that there is salvation through no other. It emphasizes that salvation is made possible for man *only* by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Soli Deo Gloria or Glory to God alone It is affirmed that because salvation is of God and has been accomplished by God, it is for God's glory and that we must glorify Him always. We must live our entire lives before the face of God, under the authority of God and for His glory alone. It is denied that we can properly glorify God if our worship is confused with entertainment, if we neglect either Law or Gospel in our preaching, or if self-improvement, self-esteem or self-fulfillment are allowed to become alternatives to the gospel. In Soli Deo Gloria - Christ is glorified whenever someone believes in His redeeming work. His resurrection is often referred to the glorification of His mission on earth.