

***SOLUS CHRISTUS* AND THE  
PROTESTANT REFORMATION OF EUROPE**

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*History shows that a commitment to solus Christus is based upon Scripture and the earliest Christian documents. Commitment to this doctrine was lost, though, after extra-biblical and traditional elements entered the church and became authoritative. The Reformers, on the other hand, understood that these traditions were simply the traditions of men. A commitment to the authority of Scripture for faith and practice resulted in a commitment to salvation mediated by Christ alone. The result is that God receives all of the glory for salvation since it is sought solely through His Son.*

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The year 2017 marks the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. A famous slogan of this Reformation was *post tenebras lux* (“after darkness, light”). According to the Reformers, a primary source of this darkness regarded the Roman Catholic Church’s errant understanding of Christology. Gradually evolving from the early church, extra-biblical traditions of Orthodoxy and Catholicism shrouded the truth of Scripture that one is justified by grace alone (*sola gratia*), through faith alone (*sola fide*), in Christ alone (*solus Christus*). The question of how this occurred is complicated because Orthodox and Catholics became convinced that salvation could only be attained by adhering to a complex system of tradition found only in their respective churches. As a result, each church believes that salvation can only be received through the grace-giving sacraments that are administered by priests empowered to do so through their ordination, which takes place through one unique, mystical line of succession. As a result, salvation can only be attained through the mediation of the one, true church. The Reformers challenged these traditions with a return to the authority of Scripture (*sola Scriptura*), where it is taught that salvation is experienced immediately through the mediation of Christ alone. It is the goal of this article to show how the Eastern and Western churches fell into error, how the Reformers responded by a return to the Christ of the Scriptures, and how the Eastern and Western churches responded to the Reformers.

## ***Solus Christus: Early to Medieval Church***

### Guardians of the Truth: Bishops and Apostolic Succession

The early church existed in a context where persecution was felt and heresies fought. The reality of not having a settled canon of Scripture, and the difficulties related to spiritual gifts produced uncertainty, questions, deception, and confusion. Realizing the need for unity in the faith, early leaders such as Ignatius of Antioch (d. ca. 117) emphasized the role of the bishop as the one reliable, authoritative source that could teach, preserve, and defend the faith. The reason for this was that the bishops were in a succession of men that learned from the apostles themselves. This was consistent with 2 Timothy 2:2: “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” Since there was a succession in teaching, the faithful could trust the instruction of the bishop against the rising tide of false teachers.<sup>1</sup>

This background is vital to understanding Ignatius’ teaching on the role of the bishop, which is often misunderstood by contemporary readers, and is anachronistically used by the Orthodox and Catholic churches to justify authoritarianism. On his way to martyrdom, Ignatius wrote seven letters where we see his pastoral concern for unity of the faith in the midst of threats that jeopardized the truth. Offensive to modern ears, but understandable in context, Ignatius writes, “Plainly therefore we ought to regard the bishop as the Lord Himself.”<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, he states, “He that honors the bishop is honored of God; he that works without the knowledge of the bishop rends service to the devil.”<sup>3</sup>

Why the emphasis on the authority of the bishop? Was it an evil desire to have an all-powerful church leadership that could not be questioned? No, the anachronistic error of forcing modern views onto Ignatius’ words should be avoided. It must be remembered that this was a time of great instability in a church with brewing heresies. Ignatius, as a good pastor, was to preserve the faith by calling for unity under the authority of the bishop. He wanted to establish stability, uniformity, and correctness in doctrine.

Irenaeus (115–202), largely considered the father of Western theology, had similar concerns as Ignatius. He writes, “Wherefore it is incumbent to obey the presbyters who are in the Church,—those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles; those who, together with the succession of the episcopate, have received the certain gift of truth, according to the good pleasure of the Father. But [it is also incumbent] to hold in suspicion others who depart from the primitive succession . . . .”<sup>4</sup>

One of the unintended consequences of appealing to the succession of bishops

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *1 Clement*, in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd edition, ed. and trans. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic), 42–44.

<sup>2</sup> *Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians*, in *ibid.*, 187.

<sup>3</sup> *Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnans*, in *ibid.*, 257.

<sup>4</sup> *Against Heresies*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* edited by Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 1:497.

was that it led to a mystical form of apostolic succession that would have been unrecognizable to the early Fathers. While this lineage was previously used as a safeguard for the truth, it later became a spiritual chain of power that was passed from man to man. In this later sense, there is believed to be a spiritual genealogy that is transferred by the ceremony of ordination, and not solely from qualifications. In other words, just as Elijah passed his spiritual power on to Elisha, so successive bishops were thought to transfer their anointing to their successors so that they too had spiritual and ecclesiastical authority to administer the sacraments. This passing of the Spirit, present in ordination and confirmation, was believed to begin with Jesus when he breathed on the disciples (John 20:22) and continued with the apostles when believers received the Holy Spirit after the laying on of hands (Acts 8:14–17; 2 Tim. 1:6).

While it is evident that the early Christians did not understand apostolic succession in a mystical way, this began to change in the early part of the third century with the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus (170–236). Describing the process of ordination, Hippolytus explains that the bishops should lay their hands on the candidate for bishopric, “praying in their heart for the descent of the Spirit.”<sup>5</sup> The bishop is then to pray to the Father, “pour forth now that power, which is thine, of thy royal Spirit, which thou gavest to thy beloved Servant Jesus Christ, which he bestowed upon his holy apostles . . . by the Spirit of high-priesthood to have power to remit sins according to thy commandment . . .”<sup>6</sup> Indicating that the rite was not simply liturgical, but exacted an ontological change in the candidate, Hippolytus commands the people in attendance to “offer him the kiss of peace, for he has been made worthy.”<sup>7</sup> Here is seen the transition from the early understanding of apostolic succession as recognition of a qualified man in ordination, to a ceremony which causes someone to be worthy of the bishopric. Upon receiving this spiritual power, the bishop is then able to transfer power and grace to the sacraments.

Another significant development of this concept is seen with Cyprian of Carthage (200–258). Writing with similar motives to those of Ignatius and Irenaeus, Cyprian penned *On the Unity of the Church* (AD 251) to preserve the true church against those who would divide her. In particular, Cyprian wrote this work against the Novatians, who taught that those who had apostatized (the “lapsed”) under the intense persecution of Decius (250–51) should not be allowed back into the church, even though they had repented.<sup>8</sup> Novatian (ca. 200–258) believed that the ordination of the bishop of Rome, Cornelius (d. 251), was made invalid because he opposed

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<sup>5</sup> *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* (USA: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 33.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 35. See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “1581 This sacrament configures the recipient to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit, so that he may serve as Christ’s instrument for his Church. By ordination one is enabled to act as a representative of Christ, Head of the Church, in his triple office of priest, prophet, and king.” Also, “1582 . . . The sacrament of Holy Orders . . . confers an *indelible spiritual character* and cannot be repeated or conferred temporarily” (See section two on “The Seven Sacraments of the Church,” [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_INDEX.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM). Accessed 21 October 2016).

<sup>8</sup> As an answer to this controversy, Cyprian wrote, *On the Lapsed*, which is largely responsible for the development of the penitential system of forgiveness of sin.

Novatian. As a result, Novatian appointed himself as the Roman bishop and established rival bishops to all those opposing him.

Threatening to divide the church, Novatian was countered by Cyprian, who supported Cornelius as the true successor to the bishopric. Arguing as Ignatius did, for the unity of the faith under the authority of the bishop, Cyprian defended Cornelius as the successor of Peter. Cyprian explains the inherent power in the position of bishop of Rome: “And although [given] to all the apostles . . . He gives an equal power [to all the apostles], and says, ‘As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you: Receive the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins you remit, they will be remitted to him; and whosoever sins you retain, they will be retained;’ yet, that He might set forth unity, He arranged by His authority the origin of that unity, as beginning from one.”<sup>9</sup> Cyprian then makes the connection between this apostolic succession and the efficacy of the sacraments when he writes, “And does nay one believe that this unity which thus comes from the divine strength and coheres in celestial sacraments, can be divided in the Church . . . ?”<sup>10</sup> Similarly Cyprian writes of the Eucharist, “the lamb which is slain in the figure of Christ should be eaten in one house,” and in relation to baptism, “Although there can be no other baptism but one, [the Novatians] think that they can baptize; although they forsake the fountain of life, they promise the grace of living and saving water. Men are not washed among them, but rather are made foul; nor are sins purged away, but are even accumulated.”<sup>11</sup>

The result of this teaching is that salvation became inseparably bound to the catholic (“universal”) church. As Cyprian famously writes, “He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother.”<sup>12</sup> It naturally follows then, “He who does not hold this unity does not hold God’s law, does not hold the faith of the Father and the Son, does not hold life and salvation.”<sup>13</sup>

In the writings of Cyprian the entirety of church tradition comes to a head. As Gregg Allison notes, “With Cyprian, the exclusivity of the church for redemption – ‘there is no salvation out[side] of the church’ – comes to the forefront in the development of ecclesiology.”<sup>14</sup> There is a mystical sense of apostolic succession where spiritual power is passed from bishop to bishop through ordination. This spiritual power is absolutely necessary to make baptism and the Eucharist efficacious, both of which are necessary for salvation in the Eastern and Western churches. Consequently, to reject the God-ordained means of grace in the church is to reject God and His salvation. Cyprian was consistent with the implications of this position,

<sup>9</sup> *On the Unity of the Church*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* edited by Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 5:422. There are two versions of sections four and five. The “Received” text appeals to the authority of Peter as the unifying principle among equals, and the “Primacy” text mentions Peter’s primacy upon which the church is built. While some claim that the “Primacy” text is a forgery, the likely explanation is that Cyprian originally wrote the “Primacy” text to defend Cornelius, and then redacted it during his disagreement with bishop Stephen of Rome over baptism in AD 255.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:423.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:425

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:423.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 569–70.

holding that the baptism of any sect of Christendom was invalid.<sup>15</sup> It was only logical to him that a person outside of the church could not induct someone into the church. The result of this teaching is clear: salvation could not be attained by appealing to Christ alone, but only by adhering to the traditions of the church where salvation is mediated through an ordained priest in the apostolic line of succession.

Further evidence of this is seen in the fourth century in the Cappadocian Father, Gregory of Nyssa (331/40–395). Making the connection between apostolic succession and the ability to sanctify the sacraments, he writes:

So with the sacramental oil; so with the wine: though before the benediction they are of little value, each of them, after the sanctification bestowed by the Spirit, has its several operation. The same power of the word, again, also makes the priest venerable and honorable, separated, by the new blessing bestowed upon him, from his community with the mass of men. While but yesterday he was one of the mass, one of the people, he is suddenly rendered a guide, a president, a teacher of righteousness, an instructor in hidden mysteries; and this he does without being at all changed in body or in form; but, while continuing to be in all appearance the man he was before, being, by some unseen power and grace, transformed in respect of his unseen soul to the higher condition.<sup>16</sup>

Although not found in Scripture, or the earliest of Christian documents, this mystical form of apostolic succession was firmly established as sacred tradition by the fourth century.

### Mediating Salvation: The Sacraments

A crucial aspect of the power of the church to mediate salvation involves the sacraments, which were given sanctifying power by the blessing of the ordained priests. Concerning baptism, the simplicity of immersion following a confession of faith is taught in the New Testament, as well as in the earliest documents in church history. Its earliest form dated as early as A.D. 55 by some scholars, making it the earliest Christian writing outside of Scripture, the *Didache* (“the teaching”) describes baptism in the simple terms of Matthew 28:19, with none of the later traditions of remission of sins or laying on of hands for the giving of the Spirit.<sup>17</sup> In stark contrast to this most early testimony, by the third century there is evidence of infant baptism, the requirement of three years of training prior to baptism (except for infants), unique dress prior to and following baptism, ritual cleansing, exorcism, application of holy oil, purification of the baptismal water, requirement of nudity for candidates for baptism, and other necessary traditions which resulted in the remission of sin by the

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<sup>15</sup> See the Seventh Council of Carthage.

<sup>16</sup> *On the Baptism of Christ*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, edited by Philip Schaff (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 5:519.

<sup>17</sup> See Section 7 “Concerning Baptism” from the *Didache*, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, 355.

act of baptism.<sup>18</sup>

A similar phenomenon can be observed in the history of the Lord's Supper. From the earliest account in the *Didache* we learn that the Eucharistic service was very basic, with a presentation of the elements, prayer, and taking of the bread and wine.<sup>19</sup> The idea that the elements mystically changed into the literal body and blood of Christ through the blessing of the ordained bishop came later in the fourth century with Ambrose (337/340–397).<sup>20</sup> As he writes,

Before [the bread] is consecrated, it is bread; but when Christ's words have been added, it is the body of Christ . . . . And before the words of Christ, the chalice is full of wine and water; when the words of Christ have been added, then blood is effected, which redeemed the people. So behold in what great respects the expression of Christ is able to change all things.<sup>21</sup>

This too became integral to salvation, thus increasingly making people dependent upon the services of the church for eternal life. Ambrose explains further, "If, as his blood is poured out, it is poured for the forgiveness of sins, I should always receive it, so that it may always forgive my sins. Because I always sin, I should always have a remedy."<sup>22</sup> As Cyril of Jerusalem (313–86) explains, partaking of the Eucharist causes the faithful to become "partakers of the divine nature." And warning against neglect of the Table by the words of Christ, "Except you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you."<sup>23</sup>

Coupling the mystical approach to baptism and the Lord's Supper with the doctrine of apostolic succession, church tradition produced a system for salvation. Christians were dependent upon the sacraments for salvation, and the sacraments could only be administered by qualified men that fell in the apostolic succession of a specific tradition. Consequently, if you were outside of the true church that could administer the sacraments, you were outside of the faith because you had no access to the spiritual power that was necessary to enact change in the sacraments. As a result of these developments, the Orthodox and Catholic churches fell into the same

<sup>18</sup> See Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition* (chapters 17–24); Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:185; and Tertullian, *On Baptism*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:669, 672–73, 678–79.

<sup>19</sup> See *Didache*, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, 357–61.

<sup>20</sup> See Ambrose *On the Sacraments*, in *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1987) and *On the Mysteries*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, volume 10.

<sup>21</sup> *On the Sacraments*, in *The Fathers of the Church*, 305. What was known as transubstantiation (the bread and wine literally transform into the body and blood of Christ) was not formalized until the 9th century (Paschasius Radbertus [785–860]). It was then accepted by 1059, and officially recognized at the Fourth Lateran Council of the Western church in 1215. See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1353.

<sup>22</sup> *On the Sacraments*, 306.

<sup>23</sup> *Catechetical Lectures* in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, 7:151. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* now states, "As often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which 'Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed' is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out" (1364). It is also stated that the Eucharist is offered for purification of those in purgatory" (1371).

error as the Pharisees of the New Testament period: placing the tradition of men above the authority of the Scriptures.

### The Medieval Period (500–1500)

Throughout the medieval period, these extra-biblical demands upon salvation only broadened and intensified. Fighting a similar sect as the Novatians, arguably the most influential theologian of church history, Augustine (354–430), supported Cyprian's conception of the church and had a major influence upon its future.<sup>24</sup> Codifying the sacramental authority of the church, Augustine writes, "There is no other valid means of making Christians and remitting sins, except by causing men to become believers by the institution of Christ and the church, and through the sacraments."<sup>25</sup>

Gregory the Great (540–604) developed the doctrine of purgatory for the remission of sin after death and prayer to the saints, while Peter Lombard (1100–1160) codified the seven sacraments in his *Four Books of the Sentences*. The importance of an ordained priesthood to perform the sacraments was fundamental to Lombard. He taught that priests have the "keys," according to Matthew 16:19, to bind and loose, which is received at the priests' ordination. Thus, there is power in the spoken word of the priest. He writes, "We call 'baptism' the bathing, that is, the exterior ablution of the body, performed under the prescribed form of words. Take away the word, and what is water but water."<sup>26</sup> He then explains the full significance of the baptismal event: "And this is the thing of the sacrament, namely, interior cleansing . . . Thus, the thing of this sacrament is justification."<sup>27</sup> This is not full justification, however, but a one-time event that removes sin. Sin that occurs after baptism is to be remitted by penance: "if someone has, by sinning, tainted the robe of innocence received in baptism, he can restore it through the remedy of penance . . . both are the cause of justification and salvation."<sup>28</sup> The process of repentance is then prescribed by Lombard: "it is necessary to make confession to God first, and then to a priest; and that it is not possible to gain entrance to paradise otherwise . . ." <sup>29</sup> Again, based upon apostolic succession, only in the priesthood is there power to

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<sup>24</sup> See his *On Baptism, Against the Donatists*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, volume 4. While Augustine championed doctrinal advances concerning human depravity, divine sovereignty, and the grace of God, his views on the church ran contrary to those convictions. In fact, Benjamin Warfield famously quipped, "The Reformation . . . was just the ultimate triumph of Augustine's doctrine of grace over Augustine's doctrine of the Church." *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia, 1956), 332.

<sup>25</sup> *On Forgiveness of Sins, and Baptism*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, 78.

<sup>26</sup> *Sentences* 4, distinction 3, chapter I, number 2, quoted in Philipp W. Rosemann, *Peter Lombard* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 147. Peter also explains how the waters first received this spiritual power: "the institution occurred when Christ was baptized by John in the Jordan . . . because through the contact with His clean flesh He conferred upon the waters His regenerative power, so that someone who would subsequently be immersed while the name of the Trinity was being invoked might be purged from his sins" (*ibid.*, 148).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

accomplish salvation through the sacraments.

There is similar dependence upon the mystical power of the ordained priesthood concerning the Eucharist. Lombard continues, “For when those words are spoken, the conversion of the bread and wine into the substance of the body and blood of Christ occurs . . . .”<sup>30</sup> His commitment to the spiritual authority of the church in salvation inspired his biographer to write, “The sacraments, then, heal the wounds inflicted upon humanity by both original sin and actual sin” and “It was now no longer the Eucharist that made the Church, but the Church that made the Eucharist.”<sup>31</sup> These concepts were further refined by Roman Catholicism’s greatest theologian, Thomas Aquinas (1225–74), in his monumental *Summa Theologica*.<sup>32</sup>

As the means of salvific grace, the church played a vital role in every stage of man’s life through the seven sacraments. In *Baptism* he is justified through the removal of sin, in *Confirmation* he receives the Holy Spirit,<sup>33</sup> in *Penance* forgiveness from post-baptismal sin, in the *Eucharist* and other rituals (indulgences, veneration to the saints, etc.) cleansing in the present and future, in *Ordination* spiritual power in the line of the apostles, in *Marriage* a bond of strength and perfection, and he concludes his life with *Unction* where he is sealed with sacred oil for physical and spiritual healing (or for fortification in the final struggles before entering eternal rest).<sup>34</sup> Whereas the earliest Christian documents expressed the simplicity of salvation through Christ alone, this was no longer the case in the medieval church.<sup>35</sup> Christ was no longer the central figure in salvation, but His work was mediated through the church. In one of the most brazen papal bulls in Catholic history, Pope Boniface VIII (1235–1303) issued *Unam Sanctum* in 1302, which stated: “We therefore declare, say, and affirm that submission on the part of every man to the bishop of Rome is altogether necessary for his salvation.”

The accumulation of Roman Catholic tradition can now be seen in its fullness. While Christ’s sacrifice on the cross provides the ground of salvation, grace must be communicated by the agency of the church. This can only be done by priests that are in the mystical line of apostolic succession, who have been given the power to administer the saving grace of the sacraments. One may be justified in baptism, and continue through life in the sacramental system to have sin absolved so as to reduce

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 151. This is true for any sacrament, such as the oil of chrism that must first be sanctified by the bishop (*Ibid.*, 169).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 145, 155.

<sup>32</sup> See his “Treatise on the Sacraments” in *Summa Theologiae*, ed. by Timothy McDermott (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1989), 541–600.

<sup>33</sup> Early on, the reception of the Holy Spirit was thought to occur at baptism. See Tertullian’s *On Baptism*, 3:671–73.

<sup>34</sup> This is a simplistic description of the sacraments, which are each multifaceted. These dynamics can be viewed in detail in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

<sup>35</sup> See the earliest extant Christian letter outside of Scripture, *1 Clement*, “And so we, having been called through his will in Christ Jesus, are not justified through ourselves or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety, or works that we have done in holiness of heart, but through faith, by which the Almighty God has justified all who have existed from the beginning; to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” *The Apostolic Fathers*, 87.

time in purgatory where remaining sin must be purged. There is no concept of justification by faith alone in the substitutionary atonement of Christ. As one Catholic theologian writes,

What did Christ's suffering and death actually accomplish that allowed the Father to provide the human race with salvation? Did Christ take within himself the sin and guilt of mankind and suffer the specific punishment for that sin and guilt, as Protestants contend? The answer is no . . . Christ did not take upon himself the entire punishment required of man for sin. Rather, Scripture teaches only that Christ became a "propitiation," a "sin offering," or a "sacrifice" for sins . . . Essentially, this means that Christ, because he was guiltless, sin-free and in favor with God, could offer himself up as a means of persuading God to relent of his angry wrath against the sins of mankind.<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, since full justification is not found in the imputation of the righteousness of Christ through His substitutionary atonement, but only through the mediation of the church, it naturally follows that there is no salvation outside of the church. It was this type of theological abuse of the Scriptures, coupled with moral abuses of the Roman Catholic Church, that birthed the Protestant Reformation, which, on the basis of Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*), championed justification by faith alone (*sola fide*) in Christ alone (*solus Christus*), by the grace of God alone (*sola gratia*), to the glory of God alone (*solus deo gloria*).

### ***Solus Christus: The Reformation***

#### Renaissance Humanism

Unlike the contemporary "humanist" movement that is man-centered and godless, Renaissance humanism is to be understood as focusing on the humanities, with an emphasis on rhetoric, grammar, poetry, history, and moral philosophy. Historian Alister McGrath explains the importance of this cultural movement: "Of the many tributaries which contributed to the flow of the Reformation, by far the most important was Renaissance humanism."<sup>37</sup> A vital principle of humanism that contributed to the Reformation was its principle of *ad fontes* ("to the source"). Humanists were not satisfied with old translations of documents, or selective quotes taken out of their contexts (as with Lombard's *Sentences*)—they wanted a return to the original sources for renewed understanding, and to appreciate their beauty and value.

Erasmus of Rotterdam (1467–1536) was one of the most renowned scholars of his day and is largely considered to be the father of humanism. Even more important than his translation of the early Church Fathers, the publication of the first printed Greek New Testament in 1516 was revolutionary. Once Erasmus produced this work, however, Catholics started to notice discrepancies between the original Greek text of

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<sup>36</sup> Robert Sungenis, *Not By Faith Alone* (Santa Barbara: Queenship, 1997), 107–08.

<sup>37</sup> *Reformation Thought* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), 39.

the Bible and their Latin Vulgate translation. Such was the case for marriage as a sacrament (Eph. 5:31–32), penance as a sacrament (Matt. 4:17), and the understanding of Mary as a reservoir of grace (Luke 1:28). The effect of these discoveries in the original text of the Bible was to result in the subversion of Roman Catholic tradition and authority for that of Scripture.

#### Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531)

Although there were many Reformers leading up to the Reformation, one of the earliest of the sixteenth century was Ulrich Zwingli.<sup>38</sup> Ministering at the Great Minster in Zürich, Switzerland, Zwingli was influenced by humanism. He immersed himself in Erasmus' Greek New Testament and studied the Greek and Latin Fathers. It was his study of the original sources that convinced him that the church needed reform. In particular, he appealed to 1 Timothy 2:5 (“For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”) as proof that a man did not need the mediation of the church to attain salvation. In his “67 Articles” (1523), which were instrumental in the reform of Zürich, Zwingli begins by focusing on *solus christus* to recover the true Gospel.

- 1 All who say that the Gospel is nothing without the confirmation of the church make a mistake and blaspheme God.
- 2 The sum of the Gospel is that our Lord Christ, true Son of God, has made known to us the will of his heavenly Father, redeemed us from death by his innocence, and reconciled us to God.
- 3 Therefore, Christ is the only way to salvation for all who have been, who are, or who will be.
- 4 Whoever seeks or points to another door, errs. Indeed, he is a murderer of the soul and a thief.
- 5 Therefore, all who regard other teachings equal to or higher than the Gospel, err. They do not know what Gospel is.
- 16 In the gospel we learn that teachings and traditions of men are of no use for salvation.
- 17 Christ is the one eternal high priest; from this we deduce that all those who pretend to be high priests, oppose the honor and power of Christ; indeed, they reject it.
- 18 Christ, who has once offered himself as a sacrifice, is for eternity a perpetual enduring and efficacious sacrifice for the sin of all believers. Therefore we conclude that the Mass is not a sacrifice but a memorial of the one sacrifice and a seal of redemption that Christ made good for us.
- 19 Christ is the only Mediator between God and us.
- 20 God wants to give us all things in his name. It follows from this that we need no other mediator but him beyond the present time.
- 21 When we pray for one another here on earth, we do so in the confidence

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<sup>38</sup> For example, see the life and works of John Wycliffe (1328–1384) and John Huss (1369–1415).

that *all things are given us through Christ alone*.<sup>39</sup>

- 22 Christ is our righteousness. From this we conclude that our words are good insofar as they are Christ's; but insofar as they are ours, they are neither right nor good.

Jettisoning church tradition for the authority of Scripture, Zwingli writes,

- 13 Whenever we give heed to the Word, we acquire pure and clear knowledge of the will of God and are drawn to him by his Spirit and transformed into his likeness.

Addressing the authority of the Catholic Church and salvation mediated through the priesthood, he continues,

- 27 All Christians are brothers of Christ and of one another and no one on earth ought to be elevated to be called Father. This brings to naught religious orders, sects and illegal gatherings.
- 50 God alone remits sin through Jesus Christ his son, our only Lord.
- 51 Whoever ascribes this to a creature, robs God of his honor and gives it to one who is not God. This is sheer idolatry.
- 52 Therefore, confession which is made to a priest or to a neighbor should not be advocated as the remission of sin, but simply as seeking advice.
- 53 Imposed works of penance derive from human counsel—with the exception of the ban. They do not remove sin and are imposed merely to deter others.
- 54 Christ has borne all of our sorrow and labor. Whoever adds works of penance, which belongs to Christ alone, makes a mistake and blasphemes God.
- 61 Of an indelible character which priests have appropriated to themselves in recent times, scripture knows nothing at all.
- 62 Scripture recognizes no priests except those who proclaim God's Word.
- 63 To them who proclaim God's Word, Scripture bids us show respect by giving them physical sustenance.<sup>40</sup>

As a former priest, Zwingli clearly understood the systemic nature of salvation in the Catholic Church. In his earliest of Reformation writings, he draws his readers' attention to the authority of the Word of God, the priesthood of all believers, and a dependence upon Christ alone for salvation (apart from the mediation of the church sacramental system). Timothy George comments on these articles: "No one preached

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<sup>39</sup> Italics mine.

<sup>40</sup> Mark Noll, ed., *Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 39–46.

*solus Christus* more strongly than [Zwingli] . . . ”<sup>41</sup>

Martin Luther (1483–1546)

As the leading figure of the European Reformation, Martin Luther nailed his famed “95 Theses” on the castle door of Wittenberg on 31 October 1517. Although the thrust of this work was against indulgences, he ended it with a focus on the cross of Christ as the true source of peace in salvation:

- 92 And so let all those prophets depart who say to Christ’s people  
“Peace, peace” and there is no peace.
- 93 And farewell to all those prophets who say to Christ’s people “the  
cross, the cross” and there is no cross.
- 94 Christians are to be exhorted to endeavor to follow Christ, their  
head, through pains, deaths, and hells.
- 95 And so let them trust to enter heaven rather through many  
tribulations than through the false confidence of peace.<sup>42</sup>

A year later, Luther participated in the Heidelberg Disputation (1518). In a write-up on the event, Luther penned twenty-eight doctrinal positions that championed his “theology of the cross.” Number twenty-five clearly outlines that justification is by faith alone, and not by works of the law imposed by the Catholic Church.<sup>43</sup> In 1520 Luther wrote three significant works, the earliest of which was, *To the Nobility of the German Nation*. In this work, he addressed the idea of the mystical power of the priesthood, which Luther understood as a foundational doctrine upon which the power of the church rested. Arguing for the priesthood of *all* believers, Luther writes, “It is pure invention that pope, bishop, priests and monks are called the spiritual estate, while princes, lords, artisans and farmers are called the temporal estate . . . . All Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference between them except that of office.”<sup>44</sup>

His second work of 1520 was a detailed treatment of the sacraments: *The*

<sup>41</sup> *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1988), 125.

<sup>42</sup> *Documents of the Christian Church*, second edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 191.

<sup>43</sup> “For the righteousness of God is not acquired by means of acts frequently repeated, as Aristotle taught, but it is imparted by faith, for ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live’ (Rom. 1:17), and ‘Man believes with his heart and so is justified’ (Rom. 10:10). Therefore I wish to have the words ‘without work’ understood in the following manner: Not that the righteous person does nothing, but that his works do not make him righteous, rather that his righteousness creates works. For grace and faith are infused without our works. After they have been imparted the works follow. Thus Rom. 3:20 states, ‘No human being will be justified in His sight by works of the law,’ and, ‘For we hold that man is justified by faith apart from works of law’ (Rom. 3:28). In other words, works contribute nothing to justification . . . . His justification by faith in Christ is sufficient to him. Christ is his wisdom, righteousness, etc., as 1 Cor 1:30 has it, that he himself may be Christ’s vessel and instrument (*operatio seu instrumentum*).” Martin Luther, “The Heidelberg Disputation,” <http://bookofconcord.org/heidelberg.php#25>. Accessed 18 October 2016.

<sup>44</sup> *To the Nobility of the German Nation in Three Treatises* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 12.

*Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. In this work, Luther compares the Israelite captivity in Babylon with the captivity of the church by the sacrificial system of Rome. Attacking the heart of the Roman Catholic Church, he reduces the number of sacraments to two: the Lord's Supper and baptism. Luther is clear that the warrant for this conclusion is that the other sacraments are not found in Scripture. A key point of emphasis for Luther is the priesthood of all believers, as is taught in 1 Peter 2:9: "But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD." Luther writes, "Let everyone, therefore, who knows himself to be a Christian, be assured of this, that we are all equally priests, that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and the sacraments."<sup>45</sup> The results for mystical ordination were evident: "It is clear, therefore, that the ordination, which, as a sacrament, makes clergymen of this sort of men, is in truth nothing but a mere fiction, devised by men who understand nothing about the church, the priesthood, the ministry of the Word, or the sacraments."<sup>46</sup>

*The Freedom of the Christian* is the final work published in 1520 and is the logical conclusion to what he had thus far written. As a result of his belief in the doctrine of justification by faith alone, he writes, "one thing, and only one thing, is necessary for Christian life, righteousness, and freedom. That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ."<sup>47</sup> Thus Luther understood the vital nature of *solus Christus* to the Reformation. In a classic style that exemplifies the Reformation, Luther writes, "This one thing preach: the wisdom of the cross, that is, that man is nothing and can do nothing and thus learns to despair of himself and hope in Christ."<sup>48</sup>

Understanding that he was challenging Catholic tradition, he appeals to the ancient Fathers for support. Using the language of Cyprian, but yet appealing to the authority of Scripture, Luther writes, "The church is your mother who gives birth to you and bears you though the Word."<sup>49</sup> His goal was to reform the Catholic Church by returning to the authority of Scripture for the benefit of the "true, ancient church, one body and one communion of saints with the holy, universal, Christian church."<sup>50</sup>

John Calvin (1509–64)

Justo L. Gonzales, in his popular textbook on church history, labels Calvin as "the most important systematizer of Protestant theology in the sixteenth century."<sup>51</sup> The reason for this is that he produced the most significant theological work of the Reformation: *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Historian Alistair McGrath observes, "What we do know is that the Institutes were now firmly established as the most influential theological work of the Protestant Reformation, eclipsing in

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<sup>45</sup> *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* in *ibid.*, 248.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>47</sup> *The Freedom of the Christian* in *ibid.*, 279.

<sup>48</sup> *Luther's Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1959), 51:14.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 51:166. Cf. *ibid.*, 26:441.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 41:119.

<sup>51</sup> Justo L. Gonzales. *The Story of Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 1985), 2:61.

importance the rival works of Luther, Melancthon and Zwingli . . . . The intellectual domination of Protestantism by theologians of the Reformed tradition is due both to the substance and structure of Calvin’s final edition of the *Institutes*.<sup>52</sup>

In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin goes into detail concerning the authority of the church to forgive sin, and the centrality of Christ in salvation. Book IV of the *Institutes* deals specifically with the nature of the church and its relation to the Christian. Understanding that the mystical powers of the Catholic priesthood lie in ordination, Calvin writes, “But those miraculous powers and manifest workings, which were dispensed by the laying on of hands, have ceased; and they have rightly lasted only for a time.”<sup>53</sup> Concerning the Catholic belief that the Holy Spirit was given through the oil of confirmation, Calvin states, “Those who call oil ‘the oil of salvation’ forswear the salvation which is in Christ; they deny Christ, and they have no part in God’s Kingdom.”<sup>54</sup> Recognizing that the misunderstanding concerning anointing (unction) was the source of so many errors concerning the salvific powers of the Catholic Church, Calvin laments, “how many monsters this grease feeds and nourishes. These anointers say that the Holy Spirit is given in baptism for innocence; in confirmation, for the increase of grace; that in baptism we are regenerated unto life; in confirmation we are equipped for battle . . . . What wickedness!”<sup>55</sup>

In Book III, Chapter IV (“The Way We Receive the Grace of Christ”) Calvin writes sections which expound: “Christ has provided full satisfaction” (§ 26); “The Roman doctrine deprives Christ of honor, and the conscience of every assurance” (§ 27); and “Christ’s unique sacrifice can alone remove both penalty and guilt” (§ 30). In this one chapter, Calvin gives us one of the finest definitions of *solus Christus* from the Reformation:

We see that our whole salvation and all its parts are comprehended in Christ [Acts 4:12]. We should therefore take care not to derive the least portion of it from anywhere else. If we seek salvation, we are taught by the very name of Jesus that it is “of him” [1 Cor. 1:30]. If we seek any other gifts of the Spirit, they will be found in his anointing. If we seek strength, it lies in his dominion; if purity, in his conception; if gentleness, it appears in his birth . . . . If we seek redemption, it lies in his passion; if acquittal, in his condemnation; if remission of the curse, in his cross [Gal. 3:13]; if satisfaction, in his sacrifice; if purification, in his blood; if reconciliation, in his descent into hell; if mortification of the flesh, in his tomb; if newness of life, in his resurrection; if immortality, in the same; if inheritance of the Heavenly Kingdom, in his entrance into heaven; if protection, if security, if abundant supply of all blessings, in his Kingdom; if untroubled expectation of judgment, in the power given to him to judge. In short, since rich store of every kind of good abounds

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<sup>52</sup> *Reformation Thought*, 246–47.

<sup>53</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics (1559; repr., Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 4.19.6.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.19.7.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.19.8.

in him, let us drink our fill from this fountain, and from no other.<sup>56</sup>

Calvin was also very vocal on these issues in his commentaries and sermons. In his commentary on 1 Timothy 2:5 Calvin writes, “. . . as there is one God, the Creator and Father of all, so he [Paul] says that there is but one Mediator, through whom we have access to the Father; and that this Mediator was given, not only to one nation, or to a small number of persons of some particular rank, but to all; because the fruit of the sacrifice, by which he made atonement for sins, extends to all”<sup>57</sup> In the footnote there is the following comment: “Christ is said to be one Mediator in the same sense that God is said to be the one God. As there is but one Creator of man, so there is but one Mediator for men. As God is God of all that died before Christ came, as well as of those that died after; so Christ is the Mediator of all that died before his coming, as well as of those that saw his day.”<sup>58</sup> He continues, “[Let us] remember ‘the man Christ,’ who gently invites us, and takes us, as it were, by the hand, in order that the Father, who had been the object of terror and alarm, may be reconciled by him and rendered friendly to us. This is the only key to open for us the gate of the heavenly kingdom, that we may appear in the presence of God with confidence.”<sup>59</sup> Calvin then writes about the Roman Catholic position on these doctrines:

[The] sophists of the Church of Rome have resorted to every contrivance for darkening a point so clear. First, the name is so hateful to them, that, if any one mentions Christ as Mediator, without taking notice of the saints, he instantly falls under a suspicion of heresy. But, because they do not venture to reject altogether what Paul teaches in this passage, they evade it by a foolish exposition, that he is called “one Mediator,” not “the only Mediator.” As if the Apostle had mentioned God as one out of a vast multitude of gods; for the two clauses are closely connected, that “there is one God and one Mediator;” and therefore they who make Christ one out of many mediators must apply the same interpretation in speaking of God.<sup>60</sup>

In his commentary on 1 John 2:1, Calvin continues this theme:

For this reason he immediately adds the second clause, that when we sin we have an *advocate*. By these words he confirms what we have already said, that we are very far from being perfectly righteous, nay, that we contract new guilt daily, and that yet there is a remedy for reconciling us to God, if we flee to Christ; and this is alone that in which consciences can acquiesce, in which is included the righteousness of men, in which is founded the hope of salvation . . .

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.16.19.

<sup>57</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on The First Epistle to Timothy* in *Calvin's Commentaries*, 22 Volumes (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 21:56.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 57–58.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

. . . It hence follows, that all the saints who have ever been and shall be, have need of an advocate, and that no one except Christ is equal to undertake this office. And doubtless John ascribed these two things to Christ, to show that he is the only true advocate”<sup>61</sup>

As the preeminent theologian of the Reformation, it is clear from Calvin’s theological writings, commentaries, sermons and letters that he was a champion of *solus Christus*.

### Cyril Lucaris (1572–1638)

One of the most intriguing and untold chapters in the Eastern response to the Reformation was the conversion of the Archbishop of Constantinople: Cyril Lucaris.<sup>62</sup> Having studied in Venice, Wittenberg, and Geneva, Lucaris was one of the most educated Greeks of the time. He was elected patriarch of Alexandria in 1602 and patriarch of Constantinople around 1620. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* describes Cyril: “He remains, however, the most brilliant and politically outstanding Greek Patriarch and national leader of the 17th century.”<sup>63</sup> Even Orthodox historian Timothy Ware notes, “he was possibly the most brilliant man to have held office as Patriarch since the days of St. Photius.”<sup>64</sup>

Since he was Orthodox, Lucaris was strongly anti-Catholic, and so procured the help of Protestants in his endeavors. Having experienced a kind of conversion to Protestant doctrine, Calvinistic teaching apparently intrigued him, but the Jesuit Catholics attacked his views because they did not want Protestantism succeeding. Additionally, Lucaris’ own people opposed his views that he set forth in his Protestant “Confession of Faith” of 1629, which was published in Geneva. The Protestants were ecstatic at Lucaris’ Confession and had it translated in four French editions, two Latin editions, English, and two German editions—all by 1629. In 1633 it also appeared in Greek. In this document, the bishop of Constantinople emphasized *solus Christus*,

We believe that man is justified by faith and not by works. But when we say by faith, we mean the correlative or object of faith, which is the righteousness of Christ, which, functioning as a hand, faith grasps and applies to us for our salvation. This we declare in order to sustain and not deter works. Truth itself teaches us that works are not to be neglected, for they are necessary means for a witness to faith and confirmation of our calling. But human frailty witnesses it to be false that works are sufficient for our salvation, that they can enable one

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 171–72.

<sup>62</sup> For a helpful history on Lucaris’ life, see Igor Gerdov, “Cyril Lucaris (1572–1638): His Confession and the Official Response of The Eastern Orthodox Church to Protestant Doctrine.” ThM Thesis. The Master’s Seminary, 2015.

<sup>63</sup> “Lucar, Cyril,” edited by F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, third edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1007.

<sup>64</sup> *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 96.

to appear boldly at the tribunal of Christ, and that of their own merit they can confer salvation. But the righteousness of Christ alone, applied to those who repent and imputed to them, justifies and saves the believer.<sup>65</sup>

Attacking apostolic succession, he writes, “Of this church our Lord Jesus Christ is sole head, because a mortal man can in no way be head; he holds the rudder and is at the helm governing the church. Yet, because there are on earth particular visible churches, each for order has its presiding officer, who is not, strictly speaking, called head of that particular church except in an improper sense, because he is the leading member in it.”<sup>66</sup> In reaction to his Confession of Faith, Lucaris’ teaching was condemned at the synods at Constantinople (1638, 1642), Kiev (1640), Jassy (Romania, 1642), and the synod of Jerusalem (also known as the synod of Bethlehem and the “Confession of Dositheus”) in 1672. Lucaris was murdered in 1638.

### ***Solus Christus: The Counter Reformation***

#### Eastern Orthodoxy

Challenged by the evangelistic efforts of Protestantism, the Orthodox Church responded with strong anathemas against Protestantism. It countered the doctrine of the Reformation in several councils, one of which was the Council of Jerusalem that produced the Confession of Dositheus (1672). This synod is important because it approved *The Three Answers of Patriarch Jeremiah II to the Lutheran Scholars in Tübingen (1576–81)* and because Dositheus of Jerusalem answered Cyril Lucaris’ confession point by point. As one of the most important representations of Orthodox theology in the 17th century, the Orthodox Church, with this document, presented an official rejection of the theology of the Reformation.

The following sections directly address the Reformation doctrine of Cyril Lucaris. First, there is an attack on *sola scriptura*:

Decree 2: Therefore the witness of the Catholic Church is, we believe, not inferior in authority to that of the Divine Scripture. For one and the same Holy Spirit being the author of both, it is quite the same to be taught by the Scriptures and by the catholic church . . . the Catholic Church . . . like the Divine Scripture, she is infallible, and has perpetual authority.<sup>67</sup>

Second, Dositheus rejects the doctrine of *sola fide*:

Decree 9: We believe that no one is saved without faith. And by faith we mean the right persuasion with us—as this is contained in the creed of the first and the second ecumenical council—which, working by love, that is to say, by

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<sup>65</sup> “Cyril Lucar, *The Eastern Confession of the Christian Faith*, 1629 (1633),” in Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie R. Hotchkiss, *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 1:553–54.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:553.

<sup>67</sup> “Dositheus and the Synod of Jerusalem, *Confession*, 1672,” in *ibid.*, 1:616.

observing the divine commandments, justifies us with Christ. Without this faith it is impossible to please God.

Decree 13: We believe that a man is not simply justified through faith alone, but through faith that works through love, that is to say, through faith and works. But the notion that faith, fulfilling the function of a hand, lays hold on the righteousness which is in Christ and applies it to us for salvation, we know to be far from all true piety. For faith thus understood would be possible in all, and so no one could miss salvation, which is obviously false. But on the contrary, we rather believe that it is not the correlative of faith, but the faith that is in us, which, through works, justifies us with Christ.<sup>68</sup>

Third, Dositheus affirms the authority of the bishop in salvation through ordination:

Decree: 10: That the dignity of the bishop is so necessary in the church that without him neither church nor Christian could either be or be spoken of. Having been deemed worthy of being a bishop as a successor of the apostles, and having received in continuous succession by the laying on of hands and the invocation of the Allholy Spirit the grace is given to him from the Lord of binding and loosing, he is a living image of God on earth; and by a most ample participation of the operation of the Holy Spirit, who is the chief functionary, he is a fountain of all the sacraments of the catholic church, through which we obtain salvation.<sup>69</sup>

The importance of this section is seen in its length where Dositheus assiduously explains the vital nature of apostolic succession and the powers of the bishop, as opposed to the priest. He continues:

And the [simple] Priest, indeed, retains to himself the authority and grace of the priesthood, which he has received; but the bishop imparts it to others also. And the one having received the dignity of the priesthood from the bishop, can only perform holy baptism and the sacrament of unction, minister sacrificially the unbloody sacrifice, and impart to the people the allholy body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, anoint the baptized with the holy myrrh, crown Orthodox couples who are entering into holy matrimony in accordance with the law, pray for the sick, and that all men may be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, and especially for the remission and forgiveness of the sins of the faithful, living and dead. And if he is eminent for experience and virtue, receiving his authority from the bishop, he directs those faithful who come unto him and guides them into the way of possessing the heavenly kingdom, and is appointed a preacher of the sacred gospel . . . . without contradiction the bishop differs from the simple priest, and that without him all the priests in the world could

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:619 and 1:623.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:620.

not exercise the pastorate in the church of God or govern it at all.<sup>70</sup>

Concerning the unerring authority of the church:

Decree 12: . . . the church is indeed taught by the life-giving Spirit, but through the medium of the holy fathers and doctors (whose rule is acknowledged to be the holy ecumenical councils). And therefore we are not only persuaded, but we confess as true and undoubtedly certain, that it is impossible for the catholic church to err, or to be deceived at all, or ever to choose falsehood instead of truth.<sup>71</sup>

Concerning the salvific effects of baptism and the eucharist are explained in light of apostolic succession found only in the Orthodox Church:

Decree 16: The effects of baptism are, to speak concisely, these: first, the remission of the ancestral transgression, and of any other sins that the baptized may have committed; secondly, it delivers him from the eternal punishment to which he was liable, as well for original sin and for mortal sins he may have individually committed; thirdly, it gives to him immortality; for in justifying him from past sins, it makes him a temple of God.

Moreover, baptism imparts an indelible character, as does also the priesthood. For as it is impossible for anyone to receive twice the same order of the priesthood, so it is impossible for any once who is rightly baptized, to be baptized again . . . .

Decree 17: . . . they convey remission of sins and life eternal to the pious and worthy, but to the impious and unworthy they involve condemnation and eternal punishment.

. . . it is a true and propitiatory sacrifice offered for all the faithful . . . .

Further, the catholic church teaches that this sacrament of the holy eucharist is not carried out by anyone other than an Orthodox priest, and one who has received the priesthood from an Orthodox and legitimate bishop.

. . . . For the catholic church of Christ rejects and anathematizes those who transgress this.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to these doctrinal stances, Dositheus also appeals to the pseudepigraphal Dionysius the Areopagite as support for his belief in confirmation (Decree 15), the descent of the Holy Spirit upon a person (Decree 15), and baptism (Decree 16).

### Roman Catholicism

The popular response to the Reformation by the Roman Catholic Church was

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:621–22.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:623.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:627–27 and 1:629–30.

made by the Council of Trent (1545–63). The council ruled on the necessity of the sacraments for salvation, which involved a direct denial of the Protestant doctrine of *solus Christus*:

Canon 1. If any one denieth, that, in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist, are contained truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ; but saith that He is only therein as in a sign, or in figure, or virtue; let him be anathema.

Canon 4. If any one saith, that, after the consecration is completed, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are not in the admirable sacrament of the Eucharist, but (are there) only during the use, whilst it is being taken, and not either before or after; and that, in the hosts, or consecrated particles, which are reserved or which remain after communion, the true Body of the Lord remaineth not; let him be anathema.<sup>73</sup>

Specifically addressing the justifying grace of Mass, Trent judged:

Canon 5. If any one saith, either that the principal fruit of the most holy Eucharist is the remission of sins, or, that other effects do not result therefrom; let him be anathema.<sup>74</sup>

### Conclusion

It is the testimony of history that a commitment to *solus Christus* is based upon Scripture and the earliest Christian documents. Commitment to this doctrine was lost after extra-biblical, traditional elements entered the church and became authoritative. As Vatican II stated in the 1960s, “Sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is entrusted to the Church.”<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, “sacred Tradition, sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.”<sup>76</sup>

Opposed to this approach, the Reformers understood that these traditions were simply the traditions of men. A commitment to the authority of Scripture for faith and practice resulted in a commitment to salvation mediated by Christ alone. As such, God receives all of the glory for salvation since it is sought solely through His Son. May the church return to the Christ of Scripture for a modern reformation. *Ad Fontes!*

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<sup>73</sup> *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, ed. and trans. J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848), 82–3.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>75</sup> *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* (Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, 18 November 1965), 10.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*