

***Sola Scriptura*—Reformation’s Ecclesial Legacy:
Hermeneutical Freedom and Interpretive Diversity
toward a Reformed Catholicity of the Church**

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Abstract

Why celebrate the Reformation? Critics think that the Reformation/Protestantism is a dangerous idea. On the contrary, we believe that the Reformation was a positive movement—a positive moving toward the gospel. The Reformation offers today the same principle the Reformers fought for 500 years ago—sola Scriptura—the Reformation’s ecclesial legacy. This paper calls for a retrieval—celebrating and communicating the spirit of semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei (always reforming according to the Word of God). It challenges the church to cherish and embrace responsible hermeneutical freedom and interpretive diversity toward a reformed, and always reforming, catholicity of the church that is faithful to the Scripture and the Scripture alone. The author believes that the Reformation in and through sola Scriptura redefines what it truly means for the Church of Christ to be one, holy, apostolic, and catholic Church as Christ prayed for in John 17, and in such spirit calls the church (Roman Catholics, Protestants/Evangelicals, Orthodox churches, and other independent churches) to confess in unity that we are only the Church of Christ according to the Scripture.

Why do we celebrate the Reformation? Perhaps this is the first question we need to ask ourselves today. What significance does today’s celebration have for us as heirs of the Reformation? Should we rejoice for what happened 500 years ago or should we repent for what happened and transpired afterwards? Critics likened Protestantism to Darwin’s dangerous idea. Is Protestantism indeed Christianity’s dangerous idea? Alister McGrath likes to think so.¹ He

* This paper was presented by Dr. Hallig on the occasion of the seminary’s celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

¹ Alister McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution—A*

believes that Protestantism with its principles, like the priesthood of all believers, is a memetic idea that spreads from person to person, culture to culture, nation to nation through not genetic but cultural replication.² McGrath thinks that it is a dynamic but dangerous idea that constantly evolves unpredictably and uncontrollably.³ On the contrary, we believe that the Reformation is a positive idea or a movement that seeks to reform the Church toward a more apostolic and catholic, gospel-centered Christianity. For example, Michael Reeves and John Stott give us a good reason to preserve and promote the Reformation:

If the Reformation were merely a negative reaction to a purely historical problem, then it would not be significant for evangelicals today. But the closer one looks, the clearer it becomes: the Reformation was not, principally, a negative movement, about moving away from Rome; it was a positive moving towards the gospel. And to move towards the gospel means unearthing original, scriptural, apostolic Christianity by then buried under centuries of human tradition. That is what preserves the validity of the Reformation for today. For the church must always be reforming and constantly moving ever closer to the gospel. This is encapsulated in two words we often hear: ‘*semper reformanda*.’ But their context is important, for the full Latin phrase is *ecclesia reformata et semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei* (‘The church reformed and always reforming according to the Word of God.’) The Reformation cannot be over. It must be an evangelical banner, borne with both humility and resolution.⁴

Yet the question remains, “What legacy does the Reformation have that warrants celebration and the preservation of the spirit of *semper reformanda* today?” While there are perhaps a number of proposals such as the five *solas*, from the biblical scholars’ perspective, *sola Scriptura* would be

History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First (New York: HarperOne, 2007).

² See Kevin Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority After Babel: Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestantism* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), 8.

³ McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea*, 463.

⁴ Michael Reeves and John Stott, *The Reformation: What You Need to Know and Why* (Oxford: Monarch, 2017), 25–26.

the prime ecclesial legacy of the Reformation—the very soul of Protestantism. And as a New Testament student and a pastor at the same time, I want to focus on this particular legacy of the Reformation, hence the title: “*Sola Scriptura—Reformation’s Ecclesial Legacy: Hermeneutical Freedom and Interpretive Diversity toward a Reformed Catholicity of the Church.*” Here I will be focusing on a two-fold impact of the Reformation—Biblical interpretation and ecclesiastical reformation.

Sola Scriptura: Scripture, Tradition, and the Controversy

Indeed, the Reformation was not a negative reaction, but a positive one. It was not about ecclesiastical reform centered on politics or personalities. The Reformation was centered on the Holy Scriptures. If it were not, then perhaps we have no business today to be here. We have nothing to celebrate for there is nothing to *retrieve*. Here I use the word of Kevin Vanhoozer, who believes that the Reformation was a *retrieval*, first and foremost of the Biblical gospel, particularly the Pauline articulation, but also, secondarily, of the church fathers.⁵ Vanhoozer writes, “The Reformers were engaged in theology as retrieval long before it became trendy. Retrieval theology is the name for a ‘mode or style of theological discernment that looks back in order to move forward.’”⁶ To retrieve is not just to celebrate but also to communicate to the next generation what we believe—a living tradition. But this is more in connection with the active role of tradition, and in the language of Avery Dulles, a Roman Catholic theologian, it is called *traditioning*—the active engagement of the Church in passing on or handing down what has been passed on or handed down to us: “In its preaching, life and worship... [the church] hands on to every generation all that it is and all that it believes. Thus tradition is identified with the total life and praxis of the Church.”⁷ Hence, today we are engaged in traditioning—an attempt to celebrate and communicate the legacy of the Reformation.

The “tradition” of the Reformation was not something of its creation. Luther was not attempting to create a tradition of his own independent of the

⁵ Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority*, 22–23.

⁶ Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority*, 22–23.

⁷ Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 95.

then Catholic Church. He was calling the Church to reform its tradition/s in the light of the Holy Scriptures. Walker and others give us a vivid description of the controversy that led to the Reformation,

In Late 1517, Luther felt compelled to speak up against a crying abuse. Pope Leo X (1513–1521) had earlier issued a dispensation permitting Albrecht of Brandenburg (1490–1545) to hold at the same time the archbishopric of Mainz, the archbishopric of Magdeburg, and the administration of the bishopric of Halberstadt. This dispensation from church regulations against “pluralism” (multiple offices) cost Albrecht a great sum, which he borrowed from the Augsburg banking house of Fugger. To repay this loan, Albrecht was also permitted to share half the proceeds in his district from the sale of indulgences that the papacy had been issuing, since 1506, for building that new basilica of St. Peter which is still one of the ornaments of Rome. A commissioner for this collection was Johann Tetzel (1470–1519), a Dominican monk of eloquence, who, intent on the largest possible returns, painted the benefits of indulgences in the crassest terms. Luther himself had no knowledge of the financial transaction between Albrecht and the pope. His objections to the proceedings were pastoral and theological: indulgences create false sense of security and are thus destructive of true Christianity, which proclaims the cross of Christ and of the Christian, not released from deserved punishment. As Tetzel approached electoral Saxony—he was not allowed to enter, though many members of the Wittenberg congregation crossed the border to buy letters of indulgence—Luther preached against the abuse of indulgences and prepared his memorable “Ninety-five Theses,” copies of which he sent on October 31, 1517, to Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz and Bishop Jerome of Brandenburg, in whose jurisdiction Wittenberg lay. Whether Luther on that day also posted his theses on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, which served as the university bulletin board, is a matter of controversy among historians, though it seems most likely that he did.⁸

Luther and the Reformers were fighting for theological corrections of

⁸ Williston Walker, et al. *A History of the Christian Church*, 4th ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1985), 425–26.

the doctrines or traditions of the Church that were incoherent with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. They were convinced that the Church had gone too far in its exercise of the “apostolic succession,” resulting in theological deviations and wrong church practices such as the selling of indulgences for the benefit of the Church and its bishops. Luther cried out for what would be the Protestant principle and the basis of Protestant tradition: *sola Scriptura*. The Reformers believed that the Church is under the sole authority of the Scripture; the Church is bound to follow and preach what the Scripture explicitly teaches. They further maintained “the possibility that the church fathers, the councils, and the creeds have fallen into error, as firmly as the Roman Church maintains just the opposite with its doctrines of papal infallibility.”⁹

The Reformation gave birth to the Protestant theological tradition that would serve as interpretive of Protestant theology. Out of the theological struggles with the Church on forgiveness and salvation created by the selling and granting of *indulgentia* came Luther’s theological principle of “justification by faith.” To Luther, salvation is a free gift of God to all repentant sinners; hence, it is by grace alone (*sola gratia*). And this salvation is received only through faith (*sola fide*) and not by works of buying *indulgentia*. Sinners are justified by faith through the grace of God in Christ Jesus. To Luther, justification by grace through faith is the clear teaching of the Holy Scriptures. The church failed to embrace justification by grace through faith because of its adaptation of the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. In his synthesis of the interpretation of the Reformation, Cairns rightly observes that the theology of the undivided Church behind its offer of *indulgentia* was highly influenced by Thomas Aquinas’s thought on human will and the church authority to dispense grace on behalf of God.

It emphasized his teaching that [human] will was not totally corrupted. By faith and the use of the means of grace in the sacraments dispensed by the hierarchy, [people] could achieve salvation. Augustine, *however*, believed that [human] will was so totally depraved that he could do nothing toward his salvation. God would extend grace to [people] to energize [their] will so that [they] could

⁹ Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1988), 81.

by faith take the salvation that Christ proffered.¹⁰

However, it should be noted that the Reformation was not motivated by Augustine's theology. The Reformers resorted instead to the teachings of the Scriptures and called upon the Church to closely examine the Scripture. Cairns notes this about the Reformers,

It was the Scripture that brought home the profound truth to them. The theological cause of the Reformation was the desire of the Reformers to go back to the classic source of the Christian faith, the Bible, in order to counter the claims of Thomistic theology that salvation was a matter of grace obtained through the sacraments dispensed by the hierarchy.¹¹

It was the principle of *sola Scriptura* that prompted the Reformers indeed to counter the teachings of the Church on salvation and its practice of *indulgentia* which for them was a clear theological error—a misinterpretation of the truth of the Scripture on salvation and grace. Theology and Scripture go together in the shaping or molding of the tradition and practice of the Church. The Church is not in the position to divorce theology and practice from the authority of the Scripture. There is an inherent relationship that exists between the two which the Church had to recognize and respect as the steward of the gospel or the kingdom of God. However, due to its romantic relationship with the principle of “apostolic succession” and Thomas Aquinas’s naturalistic theology influenced by Aristotle, the undivided western Church had developed another source of authority for doing theology that was divorced from the authority of the Scripture. But Luther, out of his personal and evangelical breakthrough, challenged the Church to go back to the source and to reform its ways of doing theology and ministry that were based primarily on the Holy Scriptures.

Luther’s ninety-five theses were all grounded on the Scriptures. I noted this in a paper I wrote in 2004,

With his 95 theses, Luther signaled the beginning of a long struggle for theological truths. But Luther’s theological cry was rooted upon the principle of “*sola Scriptura*.” He had made the Scripture

¹⁰ Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 275. Italics added.

¹¹ Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries*, 275.

the sole authority both in the dogma and praxis of the church. He denied any authority, including that of the Pope, the council, and the church. The church’s understanding of the Scripture in the light of its tradition, for Luther, had greatly marred the Biblical teachings, especially its conception of the righteousness of God in Christ. He used the Bible as a means to judge both the theological dogma and praxis of the church. When called upon to recant his teachings against the church’s doctrine and authorities, including that of the Pope, Luther declared, “Unless I can be instructed and convinced with evidence from the Holy Scriptures or with open, clear, and distinct grounds and reasoning—and my conscience is captive to the Word of God—then I cannot and will not recant, because it is neither safe nor wise to act against conscience.” He added, “Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen.”¹²

Sola Scriptura: Hermeneutical Freedom and Interpretive Diversity

The principle of *sola Scriptura* laid the foundation for an evangelical revival of Biblical interpretation that guided Protestant reading of the Scriptures and the construction of a more evangelical theology.¹³ Scholasticism highly influenced the pre-Reformation milieu that affected Biblical interpretations and theological works of the Western church. The faith and practices of the Church that served the background of the Reformation were highly scholastic indeed.¹⁴ The openness of the church to natural theology influenced by Thomas Aquinas obviously catered to more dogmatic teachings of the Church under the authority of the hierarchy and the high “sacramentalism” of ecclesiastical spirituality.¹⁵ Indeed, *sola Scriptura*, on the one hand, was

¹² Jason V. Hallig, “Luther’s Understanding of *Sola Scriptura*.” A paper submitted to Dr. Won, Jung Chun as part of the requirements for the class “Reformation” at AIGS, Seoul Korea (2004): 7.

¹³ Three major Protestant principles are usually identified: *sola gratia et fides* (salvation by grace through faith alone), *sola scriptura* (Scripture above all other authorities for Christian faith and practice), and the priesthood of all believers. See Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Leicester: Apollos, 1999), 370–374.

¹⁴ William R. Step, *Renaissance and Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), ix.

¹⁵ Walker, et al., *History*, 344–45.

moving away from the growing and controlling influence of scholasticism, and, on the other hand, it was moving toward the gospel centered on the person and work of Christ. Gerald Bray writes,

The watchword of the Reformation was *sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone), and this principle guided its theological development. Luther and the first generation of Reformers were still deeply immersed in medieval categories of thought, and they tended to interpret “Scripture alone” in the traditional Christological way.¹⁶

Sola Scriptura freed the Church from the abuses of the hierarchy caused by its eccentric interpretation of the Bible and its ecclesiastical authority based on “apostolic succession” granted by its acceptance of Thomas Aquinas’s theology of grace and the sacraments. Luther’s appeal for *sola Scriptura* called on the Church to anchor its faith and practices in the clear teachings of the Scripture centered on the mediatorial work of Christ and Christ alone, or *solus Christus*.

The Reformation, then, offered to the Church *hermeneutical freedom*. It is freedom from highly ecclesiastical interpretation of the Bible by the hierarchy under the final authority of the Pope. *Sola Scriptura* gave the whole Church, i.e., the people and priests alike (hence, the priesthood of all believers), the authority to examine the Bible and check the interpretations of the hierarchy of the Church based on the literal and clear meaning of the text, which Luther believed was marred by the early allegorical/mystical and later dogmatic interpretation of the Bible. To Luther, the authority to read and interpret the Scriptures was everybody’s business in the Church as its priests, but interpretation must be done based on the literal and clear sense of the text. Although Luther was not totally freed from allegorical interpretations of the Biblical texts—for he did apply it in many ways—he was heavily guided by the clear and literal interpretation of the Bible. His ninety-five theses were appealing to the literal and clear interpretations of Biblical passages and stories. Hence, Luther said, and let me repeat it here, “Unless I can be instructed and convinced with evidence from the Holy Scriptures or with open, clear, and distinct grounds and reasoning—and my conscience is captive to the Word of God—then I cannot and will not recant, because it is neither safe nor wise to act against conscience.” He

¹⁶ Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Leicester: Apollos, 1996), 167.

added, “Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen.”

Admittedly, Luther’s and other Reformers’ interpretations of the Bible did not immediately yield for us solid and mature interpretations of the Bible or a robust evangelical theology as we have today. However, the Reformation gave the Church its hermeneutical freedom—from a number of Bible translations to various approaches to Biblical interpretation. Today we have in our hands the Bible in our languages and dialects. Had it not been for the Reformation, perhaps we would still be under the “three-languages heresy”—Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. Bray notes,

However, Latin remained the cultural language of western Europe, a development which was reinforced by a group of ninth-century theologians, who proclaimed what was known in the East as the “three-languages heresy.” They claimed that there were only three languages in which God could be worshipped—Hebrew, Greek and Latin. But Hebrew had fallen into disuse because of the apostasy of the Jews, and the Greeks were prone to heresy. Only Latin remained pure, and therefore it was only in that language that God could be properly worshipped.¹⁷

Moreover, Biblical interpretation has given us varied approaches to reading and interpreting the Bible, from historical and grammatical criticisms to present literary criticisms that yielded for us deeper insights into the truths of the Scriptures, enriching the Church in its faith and practice, life and mission. Rightly so, because the authority now lies with the whole believing Church. This means that hermeneutical freedom engenders interpretive creativity under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the canonical authority of the Church.

Hermeneutical freedom, however, does not set aside the earlier works of the Church on Biblical interpretation and theology.¹⁸ We still hold on today to the great contributions of the early church fathers and theologians such

¹⁷ Bray, *Biblical Interpretation*, 130.

¹⁸ Grant R. Osborne writes, “Trace the developing contextualization (*the discipline of doing contextual theology*) of the doctrine through church history... By considering carefully how the church reshaped and applied the dogmas to meet its changing needs, we are given negative (heresy) and positive (creeds and confessions) examples for our contemporary contextualization.” *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 408. Italics added.

as St. Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas.¹⁹ Aquinas, for example, laid the foundation for beyond-the-use-of-literal-sense in Biblical interpretation and the use of philosophy or reason in the study of theology. They have laid the foundations for what we do today in the Church. I cannot imagine, for example, theology without the influence of either Augustine or Aquinas. To do theology today that disregards these men of wisdom is either plain ignorance or pure arrogance. We owe the church fathers and early theologians Biblical and theological foundations for our work today.

Let me for a few seconds give emphasis to how we should keep and promote hermeneutical freedom still. Sadly, the Church today appears to have surrendered this freedom to Biblical scholars and systematic theologians—perceived as the Church’s experts. We have left the reading and interpreting of the Bible in the hands of those whom we believe or perceive as more able men and women today. The Church is becoming more and more complacent in its hermeneutical and theological tasks. This is so because of the influence of the present society that is so engrossed with the technological advances we experience today. Both Bible and theology are losing their appeal to young people today. The result is that we have technological advances void of morality and ethics, to say the least. Today’s celebration of the Reformation should challenge us to go back to what our great fathers of the faith had given to us and modeled for us—the love of the Scriptures and our freedom to read and interpret them for our lives, our Church, and our society. There is so much “nominalism” today, not because we failed to be faithful to the Church, but because we failed to be responsible for reading and interpreting the Bible. Hence, I challenge our teachers, pastors, and lay people alike, especially our young people, to engage in reading and interpreting the Bible with the purpose of writing “theological” books and the like for the Church and the society. The Church is indeed always in need of reformation. We must hold on to the Reformation principle of *semper reformanda*—‘always reforming’ or better ‘always being reformed’ by the Scripture and by the Scripture alone—*sola Scriptura*.

¹⁹ For a theological work that traces the development of theology through the history of the church, see Roderick T. Leupp, *The Renewal of Trinitarian Theology: Themes, Patterns and Explorations* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 12, where he writes, “Western trinitarian formulations are usually indebted to the groundbreaking work of Augustine, and this indebtedness has come in for reexamination.”

Apparently and consequently, hermeneutical freedom has led to interpretive diversity. This is where some critics accuse us as heirs of the Reformation of being anarchists. Hermeneutical freedom, they say, begets anarchy or chaos in Biblical interpretation. We have been accused of not coming to one interpretation that could unify the Church. With the results of the Reformation—and today there are about 38,000 Protestant churches or denominations worldwide and still growing—we have been labeled as anarchists. Kevin Vanhoozer’s book is a response to the accusations thrown at us. Vanhoozer, however, argues that the interpretive diversity we have in the Church vis-à-vis Biblical interpretation is what brings Protestant Biblical interpretation into its own life and meaning—the Pentecostal experience and significance. Today, no theologians whether from the East or West can claim superiority or monopoly of interpretations or readings. Each of us, with our own readings and interpretations influenced by our presuppositions, contributes to the rich and varied meanings of the Scripture today. The Scriptures have come to life and its dynamism. As it is said, “It takes a thousand tongues to sing my redeemer’s praise”—what a beautiful Pentecostal song of grace and praise indeed!

Sola Scriptura: Toward A Reformed Catholicity of the Church

Sola Scriptura is also an ecclesiological principle that seeks to offer a reformed catholicity of the church. A narrow understanding of *sola Scriptura* limits the principle to general hermeneutics or Biblical interpretation. As a result, Reformation critics criticize the Reformers of having destroyed the catholicity of the church due to their individualistic interpretations of the Holy Scriptures. Protestantism for them is anti-catholicity. They believe that Protestantism destroys the *one, holy, apostolic, and catholic* Church. And so we must ask ourselves today, are we the cancer cells that have spread out all over the body of Christ? Or are we the cure that seeks to heal the ailing Church?

The diversity and dynamism of the Church today prove that the Reformation was not a cancer but a cure. Before the Reformation, the Church was going the wrong direction and was slowly moving away from the apostolic faith with its misconception of the catholicity of the Church as moving

toward Babel—a hierarchical Church that provides “interpretive Babel.”²⁰ Moreover, the Church had embraced a misguided unity that seeks to provide uniformity for every church around the world under one head (the Pope), with one language (Latin), with a vision of becoming an empire in the world (the one Roman church).

Sola Scriptura provides the Church the way to becoming the Church of Christ—one, holy, apostolic, and catholic community that truly welcomes diversity. *Sola Scriptura* and its interpretive diversity provided an opportunity toward Biblical catholicity. As catholic, the Church though many is one.²¹ It is a unity in diversity—the very fulfillment of God’s covenant with Abraham inclusive of the promise that Abraham would be the father of many nations.

Today, we stand as the reformed catholic Church with many members called to be one. This call is penned by Paul in Ephesians 4:3–6 (NIV),
 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

As such let us today as one body with many members (Roman Catholics, Protestant/Evangelical churches, Eastern Orthodox Church, and the many independent churches), together make the confession in the spirit of *sola Scriptura* that we are “one, holy, apostolic, and catholic Church,” indeed, in spirit and in truth.

Conclusion

While some have grown cold to the Reformation and doubted its contributions to the Church, the fact remains that the Church is changed. The Church will never be the same again as it was in the 16th century. For sure, we all, as the body of Christ, have learned lessons from the Reformation toward maturity and stability. One thing, however, stands tall among the

²⁰ See Kevin Vanhoozer, *Biblical Interpretation*, x. He uses “interpretive Babel” as descriptive of the church and its attempt to control and manipulate Bible interpretation for its own sake and survival.

²¹ See Jason Valeriano Hallig, *We Are Catholic: Catholic, Catholicity, and Catholicization* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 86–109.

many lasting contributions of the Reformation—the principle of *sola Scriptura*—Reformation’s ecclesial legacy.

With *sola Scriptura*, the Church has been true to its marks or notes as one, holy, apostolic, and catholic Church. This is true to Roman Catholics, Protestants/Evangelical churches, Eastern Orthodox Church and even to many independent churches. We all have recognized the primacy of the Scripture notwithstanding the supplemental roles of tradition, reason, and experience.

Today, we cannot remain divided or fragmented. We must overcome our differences and embrace our diversity as the one body of Christ. We must heed the words of John Stott,

Today, however, many of us evangelical Christians acquiesce too readily in our pathological tendency to fragment. We take refuge in our conviction about the invisible unity of the church, as if its visible manifestation did not matter. In consequence, the devil has been hugely successful in his old strategy to “divide and conquer.”

Our disunity remains a major hindrance to our evangelism.²²

We cannot afford not to live out the prayer of Jesus our Lord for his Church to be one (John 17:11), and also we cannot ignore the exhortation of the apostle Paul for all of us to keep the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3). John Stott writes, “So truth, holiness, *unity* and mission belong together and cannot be separated.”²³ The Reformation was an event of the Church, and a movement for the catholic Church today. Hence, we must pray for a new Reformation, but this time back to the catholic Church—many but one.

The end of everything, however, must be to another *sola* of the Reformation—*soli Deo gloria*. The Reformation and any reformation works today vis-à-vis *sola Scriptura* must give the glory not to humans but to God alone. Let us let Luther himself speak the last words:

When I first took upon me the defense of the Gospel, I remember a worthy man saying to me, “I like it, this doctrine you preach, because it gives glory and everything else to God alone, and nothing to man, for we cannot attribute too much glory, goodness, mercy, and so on to God.” This greatly comforted and confirmed

²² John Stott, *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 141.

²³ Reeves and Stott, *Reformation*, 53.

me. And it is true that the doctrine of the Gospel removes from mankind all glory, wisdom, righteousness, and so on and gives it solely to the Creator, who made everything out of nothing (Hebrews 11:3).²⁴

Soli Deo gloria!

²⁴ Martin Luther, *Galatians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries 58 (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 1998), cited from <http://reasonablechristian.blogspot.com/2012/03/martin-luther-soli-deo-gloria-to-god.html> [accessed on October 13, 2017].