

The Roman Catholic Church and *Sola Scriptura*

Review:

- **Augustine** (The Grace of God)

Why do we study church history?

1. To glorify God and praise him for his wise providence.
2. To be encouraged by the faith of our spiritual family.
3. To learn from the past as we navigate the present.
4. To build a healthy church.

This last reason will be ESPECIALLY important for our time together today.

I. Development of the Roman Catholic Church:

Irenaeus (c.120 to 140-200 AD)¹

- Irenaeus was an elder of the church in what is now Lyon, France who was very active in refuting early heretical groups.
- These false teachers claimed that their teachings were based upon secret traditions received from the apostles of Jesus.
- Irenaeus argued against them by actually listing the men who had succeeded Peter and Paul as elders of the church in Rome. He argued that the public nature of their teaching and its consistency over time and place proved that the heretics were wrong. There was no secret teaching.
 - *However, others after him would take this argument and twist it. They would teach that the elders of the church in Rome not only followed after the apostles in teaching the same gospel but that they were actually the successors of the apostles with all the rights and responsibilities that they had. As the apostles delivered fresh words from God, so the bishop of the church in Rome would also.*
- [Irenaeus appealed to the faithful teaching of the church in Rome over other churches because it was the capital city of the Roman empire.
- It seems that he thought that the inflow of representatives from the other churches in the area ensured that its teaching would remain true to the teaching of the apostles.]

Patriarchs

- In the second century a perceptible change came about in the conception of the Church.²
- Instead of sticking with the biblical model of the church with elders and deacons, the early church decided it would also have bishops who presided over a particular region. These bishops often had an authority greater than that of an elder.
- Bishops from historic and important cities came to be known as patriarchs. Patriarch is a combination of two Greek words, *patras* and *arche*. *Patras* means father and *arche*

¹Everett Ferguson, *Church History: From Christ to Pre-Reformation*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 125–126.

²Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), 233.

means ruler. These bishops were therefore ruling fathers of the church from historically important cities.

- In the East they were eventually called patriarchs and in the West they were called popes, also a shortened form of the word for father (*papas*).
- Nicaea recognized four bishops with an authority greater than that of a metropolitan—the bishops of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Caesarea. From these special jurisdictions emerged the patriarchs, not fully in place until the fifth century, and not usually called patriarchs until the sixth.³
- Later, more patriarchs would be added. Politically, these cities vied for power within the early church, especially after Constantine.

Rome and Constantinople

- The Council of Chalcedon confirmed the place of the church of Constantinople as next to Rome. **The twenty-eighth canon grounded the authority of the Roman bishop in his place of residence, and not on his connection to the apostles.** Thus was laid the basis for a long-standing dispute between Rome and the East on the constitutional basis of the church.
- The East followed a principle of accommodation, so the ranking of churches could be accommodated to political realities. **Since Constantinople was now the capital of the empire, the new Rome, its bishop should be given a rank reflecting that reality.** A primacy of honor was accorded to the bishop of Rome because of the historic associations of Rome as the old capital of the empire.
- **The bishop of Rome, on the other hand, steadfastly insisted on a principle of apostolicity: Rome had its position because of its connections with Paul and Peter.**⁴

Pope on the Rise

- We have more evidence that the bishop of Rome was thinking of himself as more than just another bishop when **Leo (400-461)** began to give special place to the church in Rome in his theology.
- “In his political theory, Leo drew a comparison between the two natures of Jesus Christ and the two parts of the empire, the priesthood (*sacerdotium*) and the kingship (*regnum*). He compared Peter and Paul as founders of the Roman church to Romulus and Remus as the founders of the city of Rome, and presented the *pax Christianum* (the Christian peace) as the counterpart of the *pax Romanum*.”⁵
 - These are all ideas that would become very important to Roman Catholic doctrine in the future.
- Leo’s policy toward the barbarians was both to civilize and sanctify them. They called him the *consul dei* (the consul of God). **Leo negotiated with the Huns under Attila to get them to turn back from Rome. He claimed the title of the pagan chief priest of**

³Ferguson, 212.

⁴Ferguson, 266-67.

⁵Ferguson, 304.

Rome, “pontifex maximus,” for himself, and he was the first Roman bishop to be buried in St. Peter’s.⁶

- Leo saw the church in Rome as appropriately fulfilling more of the powers of the state than ever before.

The Papacy Looks Northward

- In the years from 600-800, “the success of Islam in the southern and eastern Mediterranean not only weakened the eastern empire and broke the unity of the Mediterranean world, but also brought about a political and cultural shift in the West. **Ultimately, the success of Islam created the circumstances in which the Frankish kingdom came to dominance and the papacy began to look northward and westward to the Franks for political support and to develop as an independent state itself.**”⁷

Charlemagne

- This looking to the North, took a major step when Leo III (750-816) “crowned Charlemagne ‘Emperor of the Romans.’”⁸
 - “Charles told his biographer that he attended the service unaware that the pope was going to do this, but modern historians discount this as overly modest. In addition to complex political reasons for wanting the title, Charles had theological reasons. Charles was also a great student of Augustine, much taken with his idea of the *City of God*. He believed the church and state should be allied as forces in the unification of society.”⁹
- Charlemagne was the King of the Franks (French); King of the Lombards (Italians); Emperor of the Carolingian Empire (much of Modern Germany); and also Emperor of the Romans.

East and West Tensions

- Increasingly the Christian world was split into two spheres: East and West. This division represented the Greek speaking Christians on the Eastern side of the Mediterranean and the Latin speaking Christians on the West side.
- Relationships between the Eastern and Western Christians had been on the decline for centuries. Their different languages and cultures often led to disagreements.
- The church in Constantinople (the East) was loyal to the emperor and their patriarch Michael and the church in Rome (the West) was increasingly loyal to its emperor and the bishop of Rome—the pope.
- **“Michael (r. 1043-1058) attacked the Latins as heretical for a variety of reasons. The Latin church used unleavened bread in the eucharist (the Greeks, arguing that the Gospels use the word for ordinary bread in the accounts of the Last Supper, used**

⁶Ferguson, 304.

⁷Ferguson, 332.

⁸Mark Galli and Ted Olsen, “Introduction,” in *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 321.

⁹Galli and Olsen, 321.

leavened bread), making them no better than Jews. They forced celibacy on all the clergy. They pictured Jesus Christ as a Lamb (because of the incarnation he should be pictured as a man). They sang Hallelujah at Easter only, omitting it from Lent. They did not forbid the eating of strangled meat (the Germans liked their blood sausages!).”¹⁰

Forgeries

- A couple of forgeries were also instrumental in cementing Rome’s emerging view of itself as a state in its own right.
- The first of the two forgeries, *The Donation of Constantine*, claimed to be a document that claimed that, in the 300s, “Pope Sylvester healed and converted Constantine, who then moved his capital to Constantinople and gave rule over the West to the pope, from whom he received the imperial crown, had been widely accepted in Rome in the late fifth century and had circulated in an eighth-century forgery in connection with Stephen’s anointing of Pippin [King of the Franks].”¹¹
- The second, the *Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals*, contained fifty forged laws from the popes of the past and was used to show the popes as defenders of bishops. This document “became the basis of the claims for the papal monarchy in the later Middle Ages... The overall effect of the collection was to give a legal basis for papal authority over the jurisdictional structure of the church. The ‘Donation of Constantine’ had the further significance of giving a basis for the claim that the pope is supreme over all rulers, even the Roman emperor.”¹²

Other Motifs of Roman Catholicism

- Cyprian of Carthage used the language of paganism to explain the bishop as a priest and the Lord’s supper as a sacrifice.¹³
- The scholastics after Augustine began to believe that baptism and the Lord’s supper worked *ex opere operato*. “...the way was paved for the Roman Catholic conception of baptism, according to which it is the sacrament of regeneration and of initiation into the Church. It contains the grace which it signifies and confers it *ex opere operato* on all those who do not put an obstacle in the way.”¹⁴
- Gregory I (590-604), “He supported the reverence for saints and relics and the idea of purgatory, teaching that the sacrifice of the mass helps souls there.”¹⁵
- Charlemagne made paedobaptism a legal requirement during his reign (800-814).
- Radbertus (d. c. 860), a monk, popularized the view that the elements at communion become the literal body and blood of Jesus Christ.
- Innocent III (1160-1216) saw himself as the vicar of Christ—his representative on earth.

Dictatus Papae of Gregory VII (1020-1085)

¹⁰Ferguson, 397.

¹¹Ferguson, 377.

¹²Ferguson, 377-78.

¹³Ferguson, 250.

¹⁴Berkhof, 256–257.

¹⁵Ferguson, 321.

CLAIMS OF THE “DICTATUS PAPAE”¹⁶
(Selected statements arranged by topics)
Preeminence of the Roman See
1. The Roman Church was founded by God alone. 2. The bishop of Rome alone is to be called universal.
Special Privileges of the Popes
8. The pope alone may use imperial insignia (e.g., tiara, red carpet, which had been borrowed from Persia by Emperor Diocletian). 9. All princes should kiss his feet, and his alone.
Inerrancy of the Church of Rome
22. The Roman Church has never erred, nor will it ever, according to Scripture. 23. The pope, if canonically ordained, is by merits of Peter rendered holy. 26. No one is to be reckoned a Catholic who does not agree with the Roman church.
Jurisdiction of the Popes
4. His legates take precedence over all bishops in council, and his legates can give sentences of deposition. 7. The pope by himself has power of making laws if necessary. 16. No synod is to be called ecumenical except with his permission. 17. No legal statement, nor any book of canons, is to be accepted apart from his authority.
Authority over Bishops
3. The pope alone has power to depose or reconcile bishops. 13. The pope may translate a bishop to other dioceses in case of necessity.
Authority in Adjudication
18. The pope alone can revise one of his sentences. 19. The pope can be judged by no one. 20. No one dare condemn an appellant to the apostolic see.
Papal Rights in Respect to Secular Authorities
12. The pope may depose emperors. 27. The pope may absolve subjects of wicked rulers from their allegiance.

Trent-era Definition of the Church

¹⁶Ferguson, 403.

- By the time of the Reformation (1517), a common Roman Catholic definition for the church was “the company of all who are bound together by the profession of the same Christian faith and by the use of the same sacraments and are under the rule of legitimate pastors and principally Christ’s vicar on earth, the Roman Pontiff.”¹⁷
 - Berkhof notes that “the first clause of this definition (profession of the same Christian faith) excludes all unbelievers; the second (use of the same sacraments), catechumens and those that are excommunicated; and the third (obedience to the Roman Pontiff), all schismatics, such as the Greek Christians.”¹⁸

II. The Authority of God (*Sola Scriptura*)

Definition of Authority

- Authority is the “power or right to enforce obedience; moral or legal supremacy; right to command or give final decision.”¹⁹
- “Secular worldviews offer many approaches to authority, such as the following:
 - *Oligarchical*: authority exercised by a powerful few
 - *Democratic*: authority exercised by the people
 - *Hereditary*: authority exercised by those in a particular family
 - *Despotic*: authority exercised by one or more in an evil fashion
 - *Personal*: authority exercised by one person”.²⁰
- “However, in a biblical worldview, original and ultimate authority resides with God and God alone. God did not inherit his authority—there was no one to bequeath it to him. God did not receive his authority—there was no one to bestow it on him. God’s authority did not come by way of an election—there was no one to vote for him. God did not seize his authority—there was no one from whom to steal it. God did not earn his authority—it was already his.”²¹

God’s Authority (passages)

- Gen 1:1—God made everything
- Ps 24:1—Everything belongs to God
- Rom 13:1—All human authorities are subject to God
- Mt 28:18—Christ has been given all authority
- Phil 2:10—Every knee will bow
- Jude 25—God is the possessor of dominion and authority for all time
- 2 Pet 3:10—God will consume it all

¹⁷Berkhof, 240. Definition from Cardinal Bellarmine (1542–1621).

¹⁸Berkhof, 241.

¹⁹*The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), s.v. “authority.” Cited in John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 101.

²⁰MacArthur and Mayhue, 101.

²¹MacArthur and Mayhue, 101.

His titles Lord (Deut 10:17) and God Almighty (Gen 17:1) demonstrate his authority and power over all things.²²

Christ is the King of kings and Lord of Lords. He sits upon the eternal throne in heaven. His authority is without limit. God has the keys of hell hanging from his beltloop. He gives and takes away life. He lifts up and destroys. He is all-powerful. He is full of mercy and grace. He is abounding in love to those who repent and trust in Christ alone to save them. God is the ultimate authority.

God's Authority in the Scripture

- “The matter of authority is addressed frequently throughout Scripture. The descriptions of God and the titles applied to him demonstrate his absolute authority over his creation.”²³
- “This authority is conveyed to man through God’s Word and is an unalterably authoritative message (Deut 4:1-2; Prov 30:5-6; Rev 22:18-19).”²⁴
 - The entire Old Testament is God’s breathed-out words (2 Tim 3:16-17)
 - The entire New Testament is God’s breathed-out words (2 Pet 3:16; 1 Tim 5:18)
 - The entirety of Scripture is God’s breathed-out words and carries his authority.
- “The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God’s words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.”²⁵
 - Jesus rebuked his disciples for not believing the Scriptures (Lk 24:25).
 - We also know from Titus 1:2 and Hebrews 6:18 that God does not lie. His words are completely true.
 - Therefore, all the words in Scripture are completely true and without error in any part.²⁶
 - “The essence of the authority of Scripture is its ability to compel us to believe and to obey it and to make such belief and obedience equivalent to believing and obeying God himself.”²⁷
 - God’s Word is truth because the Bible is the final standard of truth.²⁸
- The Holy Spirit through the Scripture equips us for all of life and godliness (2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:3).

Sola Scriptura

- God has all authority
- God communicates authoritatively by the Scripture
- God equips us for all of life and godliness through the Scripture

²²MacArthur and Mayhue, 103.

²³MacArthur and Mayhue, 103.

²⁴MacArthur and Mayhue, 103.

²⁵Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 73.

²⁶Grudem, 83.

²⁷Grudem, 82.

²⁸Grudem, 83.

- Therefore, the Scripture is the final authority in the church.²⁹

This truth is captured in the Latin phrase, *Sola Scriptura*. “*Sola Scriptura* means that *only Scripture, because it is God’s inspired Word, is our inerrant, sufficient, and final authority for the church.*”³⁰

Role of Tradition (Barrett, 45-47; Frame, 281, 601-614)

- This does not mean that we dispense with tradition. Not *nuda Scriptura*.
- Tradition here refers to the biblical teaching that we have received from prior generations.
- However, we never acknowledge that tradition is without error, able to lead us into all of life and godliness, or our final authority for the church.

Refutation of the Roman Catholic Church’s authoritative view of tradition and the magisterium

- The error of the Roman Catholic Church has been to elevate the role of tradition so much that it has an equal footing with Scripture.
- In their view, Scripture, the tradition of the church, and the teaching authority of the church all have the same authority.
- They deny that the Scripture is the final authority for the church.
 - Vatican II: “It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, sacred Scripture, and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God’s most wise design are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.”³¹

Quotes from the BOYS

- “Scripture alone is the true lord and master of all writings and doctrine on earth. If that is not granted, what is Scripture good for? The more we reject it, the more we become satisfied with men’s books and human teachers.” —Martin Luther
- “I approve only of those human institutions which are founded upon the authority of God and derived from Scripture.” —John Calvin
- *Sola Scriptura* “is the corner-stone of universal Protestantism; and on it Protestantism stands, or else it falls.” —B. B. Warfield³²

Application to Us

- “However, man in his depravity will always fundamentally rebel against God’s Word as the truth expressing God’s right to exercise absolute authority over him.”³³
- Are we submitting to God’s Scripture?

²⁹Matthew Barrett, *God’s Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 23.

³⁰Barrett, 23.

³¹Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, trans. Joseph Gallagher (New York: American, 1966), 115-16. Cited in Barrett, 348.

³²Quotes from Barrett, 21.

³³MacArthur and Mayhue, 104.

- We might squirm as we think about areas of our lives where we do not submit to God's Word. Are you willing to let God deal with you through his Word? If you are a believer, he will do it whether you like it or not.
- Are you grateful that you have been given the Scripture? That it is God's authoritative words which are able to equip you such that you lack nothing?
 - Do you know that in paying attention to God's authoritative word there is much joy?
 - Do you know that in 1 John 5:3, John writes that the commandments of God are not burdensome?