

SOLA SCRIPTURA AND THE PROPHETIC GIFT (Part 1)

Introduction

SOLA SCRIPTURA was the Protestant theological ‘slogan’ in the Reformation and it indicated their belief that the Bible and the Bible alone should be the basis of all doctrine. Absolutely speaking the term means that the church’s doctrine should be Bible truth derived by ‘rightly dividing’ the scriptures.

However, the Protestants who came out of Rome brought with them a number of papal errors and therefore their doctrines were not sola scriptura in the absolute sense.

THE BIBLICAL CANON

The term Canon is used to describe the books of scripture that were Divinely inspired and therefore belong to the collection of sacred writings which we call the Bible. But the first apparent difficulty in determining the Biblical Canon is that the Bible does not give us a list of books that belong to the Bible.

HOW THE CANON WAS DETERMINED

Determining or recognizing the Canon was a process first conducted by Jewish Rabbis and Scholars and later by the Apostles and the early Christian church. Strictly speaking, a book of scripture belonged in the Canon from the moment God inspired its writing, but, yet the God of love and freedom waited on His human instrumentalities and followers to acknowledge the convincing, convicting work of the Holy Spirit in accepting the particular book and including it in the Canon.

THE CANON OF HEBREW SCRIPTURES

Hebrew believers recognized and accepted God's messengers and prophets and accepted their writings as inspired of God. Read the following texts: Joshua 1: 7, 9; 24: 26, 27; 2 Sam23:2; Ezra 7: 6; Daniel 9:2; 10: 21 ; John 5: 39 ; John 10: 34, 35; Matt 5: 17; Luke 4: 17, 21; 2 Tim 3: 16 ; Gal.3:8; Heb. 1: 1 to 3.

Moses wrote the Torah or Pentateuch. Then followed Joshua. Then there were the major and minor prophets, David's Psalms, Solomon's Proverbs etc.

By 250 AD there was almost universal agreement on the 39 books of the Hebrew Scriptures. The only unsettled issue was the Apocrypha or deuterocanonicals. The vast majority of Hebrew scholars considered the Apocrypha to be good Jewish literature, reasonable historical and religious accounts, but not inspired like the Hebrew Scriptures were.

THE GREEK SCRIPTURES

For the Greek Scriptures the process of recognition and collection began in the Apostolic Era and continued on to 397 AD ! In the Apostolic Era the Apostle Peter recognized Paul's writings as scripture, see 2 Peter 3 : 15 to 16. Apostolic epistles were being circulated among the churches, see Colossians 4:16 and 2 Peter 3: 2.

The first Canon called the Muratorian Canon was compiled in AD 170. It contained all the New Testament books except Hebrews, James, 1& 2 Peter, and 3 John. In AD 363, the council of Laodicea included 26 N T books but omitted the book of Revelation. The Council of Hippo in 393 AD affirmed the 27 N T books as inspired and authoritative.

DIVINE INSPIRATION

All truly Divinely inspired writings or messages manifest the internal evidences of inspiration . The messages are self-authenticating, self-vindicating, self-establishing, and when rightly divided, self-Harmonizing with other scriptures. Remember that all through the scriptures are apparent contradictions which require careful study, rightly dividing the word according to 2 Tim. 2: 14, 15, 16 to 25; 1 Corinthians 2: 9 to 13. Such careful study is necessary because scripture was inspired not verbally, that is by word dictation, but rather the Spirit gave the visions, the ideas of truth, leaving the human instrumentalities free to express what was shown them in their own language and cultural context, as they understood the thoughts given to them. Hebrews 1:1 to 3.

DIVINE – HUMAN BIBLE

In the incarnation the Word became flesh. So it is in the inspiration of scripture: the divine truths are incarnate in human imperfect fallen language. Hence we must carefully search the fallen language to find the perfect Divine Thought.