

Evangelicism, *Sola Scriptura* & 'Prophecy'

What are the true meanings of the above terms? We say 'true' because today there appears to be much confusion when these terms are used. The problem is these terms have been *broadened* so much that many Christians are simply unaware as to what they originally meant.

The term '*Evangelical*' now includes almost any who profess to be Christian. However, the original term '*Evangelical*' was historically and doctrinally synonymous with '*Protestant*'. It came into being during the Reformation. The twin slogans of the Reformation were '*Sola Scriptura*' ('Scripture Alone') and '*Sola Fide*' ('Faith Alone'). Sadly, modern Evangelicals have broadened '*Evangelical*' to mean simply the Greek word for '*Gospel*' ('*evangel*'). Thus we now have such groups as Roman Catholics and Pentecostal/Charismatics including themselves as '*Evangelical*'. The former violate true *Sola Scriptura* with *another gospel*; the latter with the addition of extra-biblical revelations, (such as 'prophecy' as in *foretelling* words from God rather than *forthtelling* Scripture). Some have thus coined the phrase '*neo-Evangelical*' to distinguish the modern broad approach in comparison to the original 'Evangelical'.

To be truly Evangelical is to accept the doctrine of '*Sola Scriptura*' (*Scripture alone*). But here we come to another problem - '*Evangelicals*' today have also broadened *Sola Scriptura* so much that the Reformers, who shed their own blood by standing for this truth, would doubtless be horrified to see this diluted.

'*Sola Scriptura*' basically means: '*All things necessary for salvation and concerning faith and the spiritual life are taught in the Bible, and clear enough for the ordinary believer to understand it*'. This was not just a Reformation cry but also a teaching of the early Church fathers. Chrysostom in the 3rd. Century, when teaching on 2Tim.3:15-17 stated: '*You have Scripture for a master instead of me; from there you can learn whatever you would know.* (1) Indeed, 2Timothy 3:16,17 states clearly that '***All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, [God-breathed] and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction [‘paideia’ - instruction of children - has a chastening implication] in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works***', (2Tim.3:16). The Greek word here for '**perfect**' is not the common '*teleios*' meaning '*complete or mature*' but is the word '*artios*' meaning '*now complete, sufficient, completely qualified*'. Augustine in the 4th Century taught the same doctrine: '*In those teachings which are clearly based on Scripture are found all that concerns faith and the conduct of life.*' (2) Luther once said: '*Any teaching which does not square with Scripture is to be rejected even if it snows miracles every day.*' (3)

Today many say the Spirit is working *apart* from the Word and in *addition* to the Word. The Signs and Wonders Movement has furthered the errors of prophetic and new revelations, unknown tongues and extra Biblical teaching. A valid response to this is: *if these are Words from God then why do we not add them to the existing canon of Scripture?* The truth is that many of these errors are often *additions* to the Word of God and thus outright attacks on *Sola Scriptura*!

However, today there are now far more subtle attacks on *Sola Scriptura*. The following two statements will show the subtle broadening of this doctrine. (A) *The Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practise.* (B) *The Bible is infallible only in matters of faith and practise.* ('Faith and practise' here refer to the sum of *Christian* living and includes all that is *needed* to salvation and to live a spiritual life that glorifies

God). The deception is in the latter (B) which leads people to think that only *part* of the Bible is infallible - ie. *that part only that speaks to faith and practice...*The next step to apostasy is to deny that the Scriptures are adequate for faith and conduct.

Outside of the material in the Bible we are free to make choices one way or another. The Bible does not tell us how to repair our motor vehicle and we are free to consult elsewhere for direction. However, all we *need* to know in *spiritual matters* and matters that deal with our *soul* are written in the Word of God - the Bible.

How and why is such a *downgrade* of *Sola Scriptura* occurring? One of the principle causes is that *Christians are looking to the world for answers to spiritual problems.* Two examples suffice to show how Christians have lowered the original view of *Sola Scriptura*.

Firstly, today Church leaders look to the world for methods of church growth and hence we have the modern '*Church Growth Movement*'. This movement unashamedly takes concepts straight out of the world's motivational marketing techniques. A proliferation of worldly techniques has arguably affected the message of the Gospel to such an extent as to make Christian and non Christian hearers comfortable and entertained. The result is that *sin and grace are minimised.*

Secondly, Christians are increasingly looking to the world for psychological methods to cure alcoholics, drug addicts and abused people. Hence churches have adopted self help groups; 'co-dependency recovery' groups; 'ten step' programs - all designed to build *self-esteem, self-fulfilment* and other humanistic and unbiblical values. Churches now have 'Christian psychologists' on staff. This is despite the fact that *Christian psychology today teaches people to look outside the Bible for solutions to problems that are addressed in the Bible.* Christian Psychology has a *low view of sin, partly because it has a low view of Scripture.*

What do the Scriptures say?: '***Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ***', (Col.2:8). '***In times past you walked according to the course of this world...***(Eph.2:2) '***And be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...***' (Rom.12:2). *The only means to transform our Christian minds is the all sufficient Word of God!* Although there are many valuable things outside the Bible, *spiritually all we need to know is in Scripture!*

It is not the Word of God *plus* - that is the message of the cults. Spiritual truth to the Christian is found in the Bible. The power of God to live a Christian life comes from the Holy Spirit, but through the Word. *To know the Scriptures is to know the power of God,* (Mk.12:24)!

How did Jesus handle attacks from Satan? - by quoting the Word of God - '***It is written***', (Matt.4:6-10). Even the symbols of the Word of God, ('*lamp*', '*hammer*', '*sword*', '*seed*'), show it's power. '***For the Word of God is quick [gives life continually] and powerful [energises] and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul [the mind, will, emotions] and spirit, [the God-breathed principle of life] and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner [‘kritikos’ - a judge, decider] of the thoughts and intents of the heart***', (Heb.4:12). *With the above in mind, do we need psychology!?! Do we need Church Growth methods!?! How did the saints of last centuries ever survive without such? - perhaps because they believed and practised *Sola Scriptura*!*