

Protestant Division Disproves Sola Scriptura — Cheat Sheet

THE OFFENSIVE ARGUMENT

40,000+ Protestant denominations all claim the Bible alone as their authority — yet they disagree on baptism, the Eucharist, predestination, salvation, church governance, and eschatology. If *sola scriptura* worked, it would produce unity. It produces chaos.

THEIR BEST DEFENSES (KNOW THESE)

- "Denominations agree on essentials" — disagreements are on secondary matters
- "The 40,000 number is inflated" — counts every national body as a separate denomination
- "The problem is sin, not scripture" — human pride causes division, not the Bible
- "Catholic/Orthodox/LDS have internal disagreements too"
- "An authoritative interpreter creates dependence on a human, not on God"

CORE ARGUMENT: THE BIBLE ITSELF REJECTS SOLA SCRIPTURA

Scripture Requires an Authoritative Interpreter

- **1 Peter 1:20** — "No prophecy of the scripture is of any **private interpretation**"
- **2 Peter 3:15-16** — Paul's letters contain things "hard to be understood" which the "unlearned wrest... unto their own destruction"
- **Acts 8:30-31** — Ethiopian eunuch: "**How can I** [understand], except some man should **guide me?**"

The Church — Not the Bible — Is the Foundation

- **1 Timothy 3:15** — "The **church** of the living God, the **pillar and ground of the truth**"
- **Ephesians 2:20** — Built on **apostles and prophets**, not on the Bible alone
- **Ephesians 4:11-14** — Apostles and prophets given to prevent being "tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine"

Oral Tradition Is Co-Authoritative

- **2 Thessalonians 2:15** — "Hold the traditions... whether by **word** or our **epistle**"
- **1 Corinthians 11:2** — "Keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you"

Unity Is Commanded, Division Is Sin

- **John 17:20-21** — Jesus prays "that they all may be **one**" — division contradicts His prayer
- **1 Corinthians 1:10-13** — "Is Christ **divided?**" — denominational splits are condemned
- **Ephesians 4:4-6** — "**One** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism"

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE: SOLA SCRIPTURA FAILS IMMEDIATELY

- **Marburg Colloquy (1529)** — Luther and Zwingli both use sola scriptura; cannot agree on "This is my body"
- **Luther vs. Anabaptists** — Same Bible, opposite conclusions on infant baptism
- **Calvin vs. Arminius** — Same Bible, opposite conclusions on predestination

- **No Church Father** taught sola scriptura. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Augustine all required the Church's authority to interpret scripture

Church Father Quotes

- **Irenaeus** — When heretics misuse scripture, appeal to apostolic tradition in the churches (*Against Heresies* 3.4.1)
- **Tertullian** — Heretics have no right to scripture; it belongs to the Church (*Prescription* 19)
- **Augustine** — "I would not believe the Gospel if the authority of the Catholic Church did not move me" (*Against Manichaeus* 5.6)

ONE-LINE OBJECTION RESPONSES

Objection	Response
"Denominations agree on essentials"	Who defines "essential"? Calvinists and Arminians disagree on whether God predestines people to hell. Is that essential?
"40,000 is inflated"	Even if hundreds, sola scriptura has failed to produce agreement on baptism, Eucharist, predestination, or governance. The fragmentation is real.
"The problem is sin, not the Bible"	If human sin prevents correct interpretation, then sola scriptura is insufficient <i>in practice</i> — which is the whole point
"Catholics/Orthodox disagree too"	Internal debate within a unified structure ≠ thousands of competing institutions with no mechanism for resolution
"A prophet creates dependence on a human"	The apostolic Church had prophets and apostles (Eph 4:11). Was that dependence on humans, or God's design?

LDS DOCTRINAL ANCHORS

- **Joseph Smith—History 1:10-19** — Sacred Grove vision precipitated by denominational confusion
- **Articles of Faith 1:5** — Must be "called of God, by prophecy" — not self-appointed
- **Articles of Faith 1:6** — Same organization as the primitive Church: apostles, prophets, etc.
- **Articles of Faith 1:9** — Ongoing revelation: God "does now reveal" and "will yet reveal"
- **D&C 1:30** — Restored Church as "the only true and living church"

THE BOTTOM LINE

Sola scriptura promises that the Bible alone is sufficient. 500 years of denominational fragmentation proves it is not. The Bible itself says the Church needs apostles and prophets (Eph 4:11), that scripture requires authoritative interpretation (2 Pet 1:20; Acts 8:31), and that the Church — not the Bible — is the "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15). The Restoration provides what sola scriptura cannot: living prophets, apostolic authority, and ongoing revelation.

Resources:

- [FAIR: Sola Scriptura](#)
- [Gospel Topics: Apostles](#)