

Sola Fide? Sola Politicus.
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Faith alone, to me, means starting out from faith in God and moving forward from there, assuming nothing else as truth but that which the dictates of the indwelling spirit of Christ would indicate to be so. It is all too clear that the present condition of humanity is utterly fallible, that its most consistent mode is to seek--above all else--power, and the means, political or physical, to force others into submission.

The church (meaning here the incumbent torch-bearer for the Protestant Reformation) has never admitted this--duplicitous proclamations of "total depravity" notwithstanding--for the church is a means for a few to dominate many. Faith in God, by the standards of the church, is at best of tertiary concern, though the lip service it renders may superficially indicate otherwise. For, the church does not ask us to begin with an unquestionable faith in God, deriving truth from God's revelations, nor does it promote a doctrine of total depravity. Instead, it demands absolute and unquestioning faith in the "Word of God", which in its basest form is a demand for absolute and unquestioning faith in the authority of a few men to decide what the word of God is and is not. Were these men somehow exempt from the fallibility of the human condition? That is the implication. Don't be fooled, for the Reformation did not eliminate the concept of priesthood, but rather, only shifted it to a newer and shinier committee. The message is that the rest of you aren't good enough to determine truth from falsehood, or good from evil. In this new Catholicism, you've been given no real freedom, but only a new edition of the compendium of religiosity that happens to be written in your own language. It was men, not God, who proclaimed that special revelation has ended. Men, not God, who decided the contents of the Bible. Men, not God, in whose natures you must place your faith in order to gain entrance to the kingdom.

This is evident in the discourse of the day: they justify their exorbitant condemnation of homosexuality from a book that also warns against wearing garments woven from mixed threads, requires demolition of a house with an incurable mold problem (right down to telling you how far out of town you must dispose of the dismantled stones). Even the book in which they place all their trust is used with *extreme selectivity* to advance an oppressive political agenda, and prosecute a cultural war having absolutely no bearing on righteousness or the condition of the mortal soul. By emphasizing the words that promote exclusivity and punishment, and downplaying the words that promote inclusiveness and forgiveness, the book becomes what it was canonized to implement: an oppressive political tool.

But don't be too quick to judge your pastor. Don't be too quick to judge your friends who are sitting in the pew next to you: I would almost place bets that their intentions are pure. This is how coercive institutions universally work: enlist well-intentioned people into a cause, the purported purpose of which is to secure a better future (heaven vs. hell) for the masses, and then use them to affect cultural change to the exclusion of people or groups against whom they hold prejudices. Victims of this coercion and deception need education, not punishment or derision.

So, what do I believe? God is the sum total of all power and knowledge. God is good. Don't put God in some box and say that you know for sure that God *must* demand certain things in order to fulfill your definition of justice. God is not bound to anything, or even bound in any way whatsoever. Following the precepts of Jesus results in closeness to God. Opposing them results in isolation from God. People screw up, but this doesn't mean they have no ability to be more good than bad. Trust your friends as much as fits their trustworthiness. Don't give an inch to anyone who claims to have a monopoly on truth. Temper book knowledge with empirical evidence, common sense, and spiritual guidance. I believe in free will. The difference between righteousness and depravity is a choice. That's about it.