The Sufficiency of Christ
The Reasons to Accept Solus Christus

The differences between Roman Catholicism and the reformers of the Reformation had nothing to do with the Person of Christ; on that there was total agreement; we can be grateful to Catholicism for preserving some of the orthodox teaching of the Church— the doctrines of the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, His miracles, His death, His resurrection while various heresies sought to dismantle them.

The problem the reformers had concerning Catholicism was their teaching on the work of Christ; namely, that salvation comes from the grace of Christ as it is mediated to the people through an elaborate system of priests and sacramental works; Luther argued that the papacy, through the sacramental system usurped the authority of Christ alone as the dispenser of grace.

The Reformation was about Christ’s death as our only source of forgiveness; Luther said, “The cross alone is our theology;” Swiss reformer Huldrych Zwingli said, “Christ is the only way of salvation of all who were, are now, or shall be… Christ has born all our pain and travail. Hence whoever contributes to works of penance what is Christ’s alone, errs and blasphemes God;” The Westminster Confession states, “The principle acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.”

The reformers were intent on proclaiming alone Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2; Acts 4:12).

The Possession of Salvation in the Catholic Church Alone
The relationship of salvation to the Roman Catholic Church... The authority of the Catholic Church is the Church itself; the Church is not the body of believers as it is in Protestantism, it is the Magisterium—- the pope and cardinals in session.

Catholics teach that Peter was given special authority over and above the other apostles and that authority was passed down through an unbroken chain of bishops of the church in Rome, each having apostolic authority; Vatican Council I (1869-1870) stated the Peter was given primary jurisdiction over the universal Church based on the promise Jesus made to Peter when He confessed Jesus to be the Christ the son of the living God (Matthew 16:13-18).

The Church says when Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter He spoke in Aramaic and Peter means “rock” (kepha) and He would build His Church upon “this rock” (kepha); Vatican Council I affirmed that anyone who did not believe that Peter was the visible Head of the Church Militant is to be considered “anathema;” the same Council convened by Pope Pius IX declared the pope “infallible” when speaking ex cathedra on matters of faith and morals.

Since authority is in the Church, then forgiveness, salvation is mediated from the pope to the priesthood in the sacraments; this is called “sacerdotalism;” that is the priests are acting as mediators between God and man.

It is by and through the sacraments that saving grace is imparted to the believer and these sacraments can only be administered by priests; St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (200-258) said, “Outside the Church there is no salvation: St. Augustine (354-430), “He who does not have the Church as his Mother does not have God as his Father;” Pope Innocent III (1208), “By the heart we believe and by the mouth we confess the one Church, not of heretics, but Holy, Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic, outside of which we believe no one is saved;” all outside the Church were viewed as heretics.

The recognition of grace outside the Roman Catholic Church... In 1414 the Council of Florence open the door a bit to those outside the Church; it declared that salvation was only in the Church yet grace is active outside the Church; the Council never determined the sufficiency of that grace; under Pope Eugenius IV the decision of the Council of Florence was negated as he reaffirmed the original position of the Church; “Those not living within the Catholic Church... cannot become participants in eternal life but will depart into everlasting fire....”
The receiving of grace for those with “invincible ignorance”... Pope Pius IX in his 1854 encyclical, made a distinction between “invincible” and “vincible ignorance;” vincible ignorance means one’s ignorance cannot be overcome and thus willfully rejects the teachings of the Church; they remain under God’s judgment since they are without excuse; invincible ignorance is the desire to know the truth and would follow the truth of the Church if they knew it; such a person may be saved while unwittingly rejecting the Church; only God can judge those who are invincibly ignorant; in 1943, Pope Pius XII rejected invincible ignorance and referred only to “the visible Roman Catholic Church as the body of Christ and no one outside the body of Christ can be saved.”

The reaching out to Protestants in Vatican II, 1962... Vatican II referred to Protestants as “separated brethren” while Vatican I referred to them as “heretics;” Vatican II was called “the ecumenical council” as it had a greater spirit of cooperation with all believers who call themselves “Christian;” it spoke against the Church’s teaching of “Triumphalism” meaning, “I and I alone am right.”

The Council again referred to Protestants as those of “invincible ignorance;” and are considered baptized into the Catholic Church by “the baptism of desire;” that is, because we have the desire to know the truth and to obey the truth, we unknowingly have become members of the Roman Catholic Church; Pope Paul VI referred to this as a “mystical inclusion” of “separated brethren” into the Roman Catholic Church; Pope Paul VI put it like this, “There are authentic sheep outside the sheep fold.”

However, there is one problem for the “separated brethren;” to maintain salvation, ongoing righteousness must be obtained by receiving the sacraments; mortal sin that is not redeemed by confession before a priest and the sacraments cannot attain forgiveness; therefore, how do “separated brethren” maintain salvation apart from the sacraments administered by the Church?

The Problems for the Church as the Mediator of Salvation
The sufficiency of Christ for salvation... Salvation through Christ alone is the heart of the Reformation; the reformers believed that the Catholics got Jesus wrong when they teach salvation is in the Church; it was Christ plus baptism, plus confession, plus Mass, plus the authority of the Church.

The statements of Christ concerning Peter and the rock... The Catholic Church claims Peter was given special authority over the other apostles and was the “rock” upon which the Church was built (Matthew 16:18); he was the first of a succession of popes as the bishop of Rome; he held it for 24 years before being martyred by Nero around 64 to 67 AD; as pope he became the visible presence of Christ on earth.

Did Jesus give Peter that authority? The Greek word for Peter is Petros, masculine and means a small stone or pebble; the word for “rock” is petra, feminine and refers to a large boulder; Catholic apologists are quick to point out that Jesus spoke Aramaic, not Greek and the Aramaic word for “rock” kepha, does not distinguish between genders; one of the earliest church historians, Papias says that “Matthew collected the sayings of Jesus in the Hebrew tongue;” That would be no different than the Aramaic as it does not distinguish between genders.

The problem is we do not posses any Hebrew or Aramaic manuscripts of Matthew’s gospel; the earliest are in Greek; reformers believed that Jesus was telling Peter He was building His Church on Peter’s confession that He is”the Christ the Son of the living God.”

The separation of Peter from the rock... When Christ speaks to Peter He does so in the second person, direct address; when He says “upon this rock I will build My church” the phrase “this rock” is third person or indirect address; He was speaking to Peter about the rock, not that Peter is the rock.

Even Catholic saints Augustine and John Chrysostom understood that Matthew 16:18 did not establish Petrine primacy; church historian William Cathcart noted... “For the first five centuries of our era, no Christian father of any note dreamt that this saying gave Peter the sovereignty of the Church.”

The church at Rome was not the only church with apostolic tradition; Irenaeus (185) and Tertullian (200) mention Corinth, Philippi, and Ephesus as having
apostolic authority no different than Rome; Pope Gregory I admitted that Alexandria and Antioch had the same apostolic background as Rome (590-604).

The primacy of Peter came much later; was first acknowledged by Innocent I (402-417); Pope Leo (451) first claimed Petrine authority even though the Council of Nicaea (325) voted that position to the bishop of Jerusalem; 100 years after Pope Leo, Gregory I (540) refused the title pope and acknowledged himself as no different than any other bishop; he called anyone who took the title “Universal Bishop” as “an antichrist”

*The summarizing from early church fathers concerning the equality of the bishops*... The earliest church fathers acknowledged that the Church was to be built on Peter’s confession; they acknowledged all bishops as equal; Irenaeus of Lyons in Gaul condemned Roman bishop Eleutherius of heresy for maintaining his bishopric was superior to others; Origen (182-251), Cyprian (200-251), Jerome (347-420) all held equality of bishops.

The Primacy of Christ as the Sole Savior of His Church

*The salvation in Christ alone*... It is Christ alone who saves; He cannot be replaced by any human or organization (Luke 19:10; John 14:6).

*The sovereignty of Christ over His Church*... He is the sovereign One (Romans 9:5); He is the head of the Church (Colossians 1:18); the Church is His body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

*The security of the believer in Christ*... He is the sustainer of of those who are saved (John 10:26-30); in Catholicism there is no assurance of salvation.

Christ knows His sheep and they follow Him; we know we are saved because of the witness of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16).

He gives His sheep eternal life.

His sheep will not perish as He will not lose one of them.

No one can take His sheep out of His hand or the hand of His Father.
He keeps us saved by His blood (1 John 1:7); a genuine Christian walks habitually *in the light of God’s Word* rather than *according to God’s Word*; that would require sinless perfection and that is impossible as we still dwell in an unredeemed body of flesh; to walk in the light suggests an openness and responsiveness to the light; as he so walks he does so under the blood of Christ which day by day cleanses from all sin; that is how God can continually call His children perfect, holy, blameless, righteous, sanctified and justified. Amen!