

# Sola Scriptura

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# Sola Scriptura – Review (1 of 3)

- Martin Luther
  - Backbone of the Reformation: 5 Solas

Sola Scriptura – Scripture Alone	What do we go for knowledge of God?
Sola Fide – Faith Alone	How are we saved?
Sola Gratia – Grace Alone	Free will, or no choice?
Solus Christus – Christ Alone	Are other beliefs acceptable to God?
Soli Deo Gloria – God’s Glory Alone	What is the meaning of life? Anything

- Sola Scriptura is the doctrine of The Word, really. The concept of Sola Scriptura (in basic language) states that the Bible is God’s holy, perfect, sufficient, and complete Word that anybody can read since the Holy Spirit dwells in all true believers and helps them to sufficiently understand the text. Not only is no other text required, but the practice of including other texts is condemned. **(+pg 270)**

# Sola Scriptura – Review (2 of 3)

- Why this is important
  - All groups that claim to be a denomination of Christianity (a very diverse collection) HAVE to have some stance on what the Bible is.
  - According to Scripture we are imperfect and can not add anything to Scripture, so we either believe it and go by it alone or don't go by it at all. If so, all doctrinal conflicts need to be held to it (2 Cor 10:3-6)
  - People grab on to this topic for many reasons – hopefully this series equips you all with God's truth to do His work!
  - Nothing effects our lives (and how we live them) more than our view of God – and the Biblical view of God is different than all others.
- How do we go about determining whether SS is right?
  - Either way, *by its very definition*, the Bible can be counted on to either prove or disprove the veracity of both the concept of Sola Scriptura as well as its opposite – whether or not the Bible should be the sole source of truth and read by all.
  - **ex·e·ge·sis** - critical explanation or interpretation of a text or portion of a text, esp. of the Bible.
  - **eis·e·ge·sis** - an interpretation, esp. of Scripture, that expresses the interpreter's own ideas, bias, or the like, rather than the meaning of the text.

# Sola Scriptura – Review (3 of 3)

- There are even different interpretations of Sola Scriptura, so how do we know whether we believe it or not?
  - What is important to know is what topics Sola Scriptura encompasses, and then do word & topical studies to see what Scripture says about those things, then combine those results and see how well Sola Scriptura aligns with what we've found the Word to say.

What does the Bible Say About...		
Itself	God's promised Scriptural Help	What to preach/teach/instruct
Perfect/Inerrant/Complete	The Holy Spirit	The Gospel, Kingdom of God, the Word of the Lord, the Word of God, salvation, repentance
Sufficient	i. Who has Him?	
Authoritative	ii. What does He do for us?	Precepts for godly living, the reasons why
Powerful		
<b>Canonicity</b>		

# Sola Scriptura - Canonicity

- A few important points to make regarding the authors...
  - The men were not perfect/sinless and did not claim to be (ex: Isa 53:6, Rom 3:23)
  - Peter was/is held in very high view – in the Scriptural account he was so wrong once that Paul rebuked him publicly (Gal 2:11-21)
  - Paul acknowledged that he labored very hard and could claim certain things, but that it was only by God's grace that he was who he was, considering himself the most wretched of all sinners who couldn't stop sinning (1 Cor 15:10, Rom 7:19, 24)
  - Acts 15:36-40 has Paul vs. Barnabas over John Mark's behavior in Acts 13:13 (deserter!) – one of the four Gospel authors!
- **SO HOW CAN WE TRUST THEIR WRITINGS AS SCRIPTURE?**
- This brings up the issue of canonicity – what writings are considered Scripture and part of the canon, and what are not.

# Sola Scriptura - Canonicity

- In pre-Christian times “canon”
  - [literal] ruler, measuring rod, standard
  - [non-literal] sphere of action or influence
- Early Christian usage “canon” = authoritative Scripture
  - 1<sup>st</sup> recorded usage - AD 350 Athanasius uses “canon” actively and passively, that the Bible was the canon, and that it was canonized (or recognized to be canonical) by the church
- There are two types of evidence – internal (what Scripture says) and external (historical, etc.)

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

- We are going to treat this in 6 steps
  - Historical document
  - What makes a writing canonical
  - The OT canonization
  - The NT canonization
  - The apocryphal writings (OT & NT)
  - The close of the canon

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

## Historical Document

- No original copies of Homer's Iliad (dated between 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> century BC), 643 copies of manuscript support
  - 764 lines of text that are disputed as to their accuracy
- Each of Shakespeare's 37 plays (written in 1600's) have gaps in surviving manuscripts
  - Scholars have to "fill in the blanks"
- No original copies of Bible documents (i.e. THE letter Paul sent with his fingerprints on it...)
  - 5,300 known copies and fragments in original Greek
  - Nearly 800 were copied before 1,000 AD
  - Only 40 lines in all of NT disputed, none of which compromise a major doctrine
  - Only **11 verses** of NT can not be reconstructed from the writings of the church fathers from the second and third centuries (100-300 AD)
- Historically speaking, dilution/error of Scripture from early church until today are not a concern.



# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

What makes a writing canonical?

- 1<sup>st</sup> link in the chain of revelation – inspiration.
  - God gave us the Scriptures – their authority is from God not man.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> link in the chain of revelation – canonization.
  - The question of which books God inspired.
- Inspiration is how the Bible got its authority, whereas canonization tells how the Bible received its acceptance.

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

## What makes a writing canonical?

- A common underlying thread of canonicity misconceptions is failure to distinguish between determination and recognition.
  - Canonicity is **determined** by God, **recognized** by men
  - J.I. Packer, *God Speaks to Man*, “The Church no more gave us the New Testament canon than Sir Isaac Newton gave us the force of gravity. God gave us gravity, by His work of creation, and similarly He gave us the New Testament canon, by inspiring the individual books that make it up.”
  - An OT Scholar, “When a child recognizes his own parent from a multitude of other adults at some public gathering, he does not impart any new quality of parenthood by such an act; he simply recognizes a relationship which already exists. So also with lists of authoritative books drawn up by ecclesiastical synods or councils.”
- So the question is more aptly posed – How were the components of the Bible **recognized** as canonical?

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

What makes a writing canonical?

- What does NOT make a writing canonical
  - Age (many older books not in, Moses's Deut 31:24-26, Daniel accepting Jeremiah's [contemporary] in Dan 9:2, Ezekiel with Daniel in Ezek 28:3, Peter with Paul in 2 Pet 3:15-16)
  - Language (not all Hebrew lit. is canon obviously, same with Greek, some Aramaic in canon)
  - Agreement with the Torah (of course nothing that disagreed allowed, lots that did agree not allowed, what about itself?)
  - Religious value
  - Authored by a prophet (they had grocery lists, too!)

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

## What makes a writing canonical?

- Pg 313 of The Shape Of Sola Scriptura
  - Patrick Madrid concisely states the heart of the objection: Another problem for sola scriptura is the canon of the New Testament. There is no “inspired table of contents” in Scripture that tells us which books belong and which ones do not. That information comes to us from outside Scripture. Moreover the knowledge of which books comprise the canon of the New Testament must be infallible; if not, there is no way to know for certain if the books we regard as inspired really are inspired. Further, this knowledge must be binding; otherwise men would be free to create their own customized canon containing those books they value and lacking the ones they devalue. This knowledge must also be part of divine revelation; if not, it is merely a tradition of men, and if that were so, Protestants would be forced into the intolerable position of championing a canon of purely human origin.

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

## What makes a writing canonical?

- Author's response:
  - First, it is extremely important for the purposes of this discussion to grasp the distinction between the concepts of infallibility and inerrancy. Infallibility means the inability to err. Inerrancy means the actual absence of error. Infallibility necessarily entails inerrancy. But it is important to note that fallibility does not necessarily entail errancy. In other words, although it is impossible for something or someone who is infallible to make an error, it is not impossible for someone or something who is fallible to make a statement that is inerrant (i.e., without error). If I say, "2+2=4" I have made an inerrant statement. I am even able to make an inerrant theological statement if I say, "Jesus is Lord." Does this mean that I am infallible? Certainly not. It is logically and theologically possible for any fallible individual or church to make an inerrant statement. The point is this: the fallibility of the Church does not mean she *must* always err, it only means she can err.

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

What makes a writing canonical?

- Rom 3:1-2, God entrusted the OT to the Jews, and for 1,500 years the Jews lived without an infallible Church leadership, or declaration statement, and managed to keep the inerrant Scriptures inerrant.
  - And as the Scriptural account shows us, with this very fallible people it was obviously God's will! The Scriptural account even shows them losing it for a long time and then finding it again! [2 Kings 22:8]
- The early church didn't have to keep the Scriptures nearly this long – they got to canonization very quickly.

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

## What makes a writing canonical?

- Norman Geisler’s “A General Introduction to the Bible” has pgs 203-320 “Canonization of the Bible” – much more detail!!!!
- 5 Principles used to discover what God had determined to be canonical, recognize “earmarks of inspiration”
  - Written by a man of God
  - Who was confirmed by an act of God
  - Who told the truth about God, man, and so on
  - Came with the power of God
  - Was accepted by the people of God.
- Contemporaries knew his credentials and accepted his book immediately
- Church Fathers sorted out the accumulated works and gave official recognition to the books that had been determined by God as canonical and originally recognized by the original communities

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

## The OT Canonization

- Jews before Jesus used the same OT that we use (our OT is the same as the Greek Septuagint from 250 BC)
- Council of Jamnia (first century) met to canonize OT
  - Didn't add or take away anything, just informally met to declare it
- Short answer – we do not know a whole lot about the canonization of the OT above and beyond this
- Internal evidence
  - Some of the OT Scriptures were recognized right away due to confirming signs and miracles or God's obvious presence.
  - Much of the OT is an eye-witness account, not much to question. There are even corroborating passages between contemporaries – like guide wires supporting a structure.
  - 2 Kings 22:8 – they were kept in the Temple once it was built, an obvious indication of canonicity
  - Deut 31:24-26, same as above (except by the ark of the covenant)
  - Deut 17:18-19 and Josh 1:8 clearly state how the Jews were under the authority of the Scriptures
- ***THAT'S NOT ALL! More to come when we discuss the apocryphal writings...***



# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

## The NT Canonization

- Unlike the OT, there is A LOT of evidence for the NT canonization (historical records)
- Two reasons “why”
  - Persecution – if they’re going to die for some books, better know which ones!
    - From Emperor Nero in 60s AD until 313 AD when Constantine passed the edict of Milan legalizing Christianity – HEAVY persecution
    - So, come out of hiding, and officially declare what you were dying for – the men who did the deciding had been discipled b those who had suffered greatly, and did not take the task lightly
  - Heresy – SO MANY false teachers (how many passages in NT talk about false teachers?!)

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

## The NT Canonization

- First time NT officially recognized was 393 AD @ Council of Hippo (N. African city)
  - Formed to discuss which books would/would not be recognized as authoritative.
  - Officially recognized a list compiled by Athanasium of Alexandria previously in 367 AD
- Council of Carthage 397 AD, four years later, was the second council and determined which books would be read in church services – formally forbade reading (in church) of non-canonical books.
- THE SAME LIST WE HAVE TODAY
- 404 AD – 1<sup>st</sup> self-contained Bible, Latin Vulgate.

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

## The Apocryphal Writings (both OT & NT)

- OT Apocryphal writings and NT Apocryphal writings (pseudepigrapha)...a decent listing would be...
- OT: The First & Second Books of Esdras, Tobit, Judith, The Additions to the Book of Esther, The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, The Letter of Jeremiah, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, The Prayer of Manasseh
- NT: The Infancy Gospels of Thomas/James, Secret Book of James, Acts of Peter and the Twelve, Acts of Andrew, Book of Thomas the Contender, Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Peter, Gospel of Mar, Apocalypse of Peter, The Shepherd of Hermes, Gospel of the Egyptians

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

## The Apocryphal Writings (both OT & NT)

- Josephus – one of our best early sources on the Pharisees/Sadducees/Essenes – says canon was closed in the time of Artaxerxes (465-423 BC) because there was not an “exact succession of the prophets” after that.
- OT doesn’t quote any of the apocryphal writings, but it does quote from several books not in the canon
  - 1 Sam 1:18 “teach...the song of the bow...in the book of Jashar”
  - Num 21:14 recalls some history in the Book of the Wars of the Lord
- Those sources are not apocryphal or canonical – they are just historic references used.
- All OT apocryphal writings are easily determined to be non-canonical. Example:
  - Bel and the Dragon claims to be additional material to the book of Daniel – authorship is 400 years later!
- Why still debated? Two lines of approach used to justify them (historical, appeals to authority) – both fail. None stand up to requirements for canonicity.

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

## The Apocryphal Writings (both OT & NT)

- Pope Gregory the Great (600 AD) says regarding 1 Maccabees, “We address a testimony from books, though not canonical, yet published for the edification of the church.”
- Esteemed Cardinal Ximenes, in the preface to his very historic Complutensian Polyglot (the first parallel columns/languages Bible), “...dedicated to Pope Leo X and approved by him,” and states that the Apocryphal books which were included were not in the canon but used for edification.
  - **THIS WAS JUST BEFORE THE REFORMATION!**
  - pg188 “Inspiration and Canonicity of the Scripture”, Harris
- The apocryphal writings were never quoted in the OT and alleged allusions to them are few and doubtful at best. They are not useless though, as they are historical documents that tell us something of the state of Israel.

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

The Apocryphal Writings (both OT & NT)

- The simple fact is this: the OT at Jesus' time as well as at the early church councils was the same as we go by. When the Catholic Church, during the Reformation, unlawfully declared the OT Apocryphal writings to be canonical (essentially ***recanonizing*** the OT) they were usurping authority not granted to them. The Old Covenant was given to the Jews, and they preserved it until Christ's birth.
  - From footnote pg 316 The Shape of Sola Scriptura, citing Bruce's "The Canon of Scripture" pgs 27-42

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

## The Apocryphal Writings (both OT & NT)

- The NT apocryphal books show up as being argued about in the medieval times (about 400's to Reformation time frame roughly)
- Then fought over in renaissance (about 1300s to 1600s) when people were starting to learn and read.
- The Roman Catholic Church was teaching out of them as well as the other books, and had adopted some practices and beliefs that couldn't be found in Scripture, so to try and hold on to what they were teaching they needed the apocryphal writings in order to defend against the Reformation.
- The NT apocryphal writings, like those of the OT, do not pass the requirements for canonicity. Example:
  - Gospel of Thomas: supposed quotes from Jesus that contradict the other Gospel accounts which corroborate each other and the rest of Scripture – contains no verifiable historical/geographical material that aid in validation as the rest of the writings do, and was written 50 years later the last apostle died and probably about 70 years after Thomas died.
- One last issue some skeptics raise – similar to what was mentioned regarding some OT passages, Jude 14-15 “And about these also Enoch...prophesied...”
  - Why was a non-canonical book quoted? Quotation as an example, not authority
  - Paul quoted Greek poets several times in Scripture

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

## The close of the canon

- Just as the close of the OT canon was followed by silence, so the close of the NT was followed by the utter absence of new revelation in any form.
- Since the book of Revelation was completed, no new written or verbal prophecy has ever been universally recognized by Christians as divine truth from God.
  - Remember, major divides in the church @ 1054 & *basically* 1517 (but many events that lead to that)
  - NOT a myriad of denominations like today, MANY years of “unified” church, where it would be easier for this to take place
- The Bible has a lot to say about the conclusion of the Scriptures



# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

## The close of the canon

- 1 Cor 13:8-10
  - Love never fails; but if *there are gifts of prophecy*, they will be done away; if *there are tongues*, they will cease; if *there is knowledge*, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.
  - Cessation of some of the gifts of the Holy Spirit – focus today is on prophecy
  - Prophecies are “special messages from God, often uttered through human spokesmen, which indicate the divine will for mankind on earth and in heaven.”
  - Scripture is a record of these prophecies
  - The question is then posed – When will this end take place?
    - v10 Tells us “But when the perfection comes...” The Scriptures do not tell us what “the perfection” refers to. It is clear from history, however, that the gift of prophecy ceased after the time of the apostles.

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

## The close of the canon

- Jude 1:3
  - Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.
  - Jude was not referring to the close of canon as having happened already since his was part of it, therefore he must have understood that the canon was closing or drawing to a close and therefore was altogether whole. The Greek word “hapax” is what is translated “once for all” and can also be translated “the whole” or “altogether” The word Jude used describes wholeness or completion.

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

## The close of the canon

- Rev 22:18-19
  - I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.
  - Strong warning – God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city – *could it be any stronger?*
  - Why did John issue such a strong warning?
  - End-o-world prophecies commonplace then, many opposing ideologies, all supposedly supported by alleged prophetic utterances.
  - v18 warns against addition, v19 warns against changing. With apostolic authority he declared there were to be no more prophecies

# Sola Scriptura – Canonicity

## The close of the canon

- 2 Pet 1:3-4
  - [*v2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;*] seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. [*and then vv5-6 talk about going on to moral excellence, godliness...thinking of Titus 1:2 and other verses...*]
  - These verses should call to mind 2 Tim 3:16-17, 2 Cor 10:3-6
- **Summary statement: The Bible is the complete revelation, as complete it contains everything pertaining to godliness that we need. If new ideas arise, we have a standard to hold them against – Scripture.**