

How Did We Get Here?

30-300's: Jesus was the Christian Authority until He ascended. His Apostles and their teaching were the Authority while they lived, and then their writings after them.

200's: 27 books of the New Testament were commonly recognized and in use, but other "non-authorized" writings were circulated, though their authenticity was questioned.

300's: Letter from Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria (367) affirms the exact list of books which became our New Testament. The Council of Hippo (393) and The Council of Carthage (397) affirmed and formally recognized the list.

1054: The Great Schism, which had been building since the splitting of the Roman Empire into two capitols (Constantinople and Rome), was the final separation of The Eastern Orthodox Church (Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox) from the Roman Catholic Church.

1378: 3 Popes (2 Italians and 1 French) warred for the papal seat. – Until then, the assumption had been one Pope appointed by God. Where was Authority?

1517: Seeds of Reformation were sown. *Sola Scriptura, Scriptura Sola (Only Scripture, Scripture Only)* and Priesthood of the Believer became the authority. Papal Authority was challenged, and Protestantism was born.

1546: Council of Trent established the Catholic Bible with the Apocrypha (12 extra books) as a reaction to Martin Luther and the Reformation.

Sola Scriptura, Scriptura Sola required literacy for all.

People learned to read but they read scripture differently. Divided into denominations. There were four general denominational types: Liturgical, Social Justice, Conservatives (Evangelicals) & Renewalists (Charismatics & Pentecostals.) This created the problem of conflicting interpretations of the same Bible.

Today, 500 years after the Reformation, the authority of scripture is withering

Where is authority?

In 1905, Einstein came to the forefront with Theory of Relativity

1927 Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle – came in conflict with Einstein 's Theory of Relativity.

Heisenberg said, 'The more you know about the speed of a thing, the less you know about its position until one has to concede that the act of observing itself **changes the thing observed.**'

In fact, 'literary deconstruction' held that there was '**no absolute truth.**' **Truth was only in the eyes of the perceiver.**

So all literature (sacred or secular) 'has no innate meaning until it is read and therefore has no meaning outside the circumstances and disposition of the reader.'

Sola Scriptura, Scriptura Sola was slowly picked apart as 'Uncertainty' and literary deconstruction emerged.

Relativism and pragmatism became preminent.

For 500 years, *Sola Scriptura, Scriptura Sola* held but erosion and new generations have slowly but surely created new and challenging issues and they are messy.

Information from *The Great Emergence* by Phillis Tickle and *Culture Shock* by Chip Inghram

Relativism

Webster's Dictionary: The view that ethical truths depend on the individuals and groups holding them.

Relativistic views...

- Assert that something (e.g. morals, beauty, knowledge, etc.) is relative only to a particular framework or standpoint (e.g. the individual subject, a culture, an era)
- Deny that any viewpoint is uniquely privileged over all others. In other words, we have no basis to tell someone else their view is wrong.

Problem: by their own logic they have no basis to say they are right

How did we get here?

Boomers: tended to hold the world view of Western civilization – secular humanism (man centered), even within Christian circles sometimes.

Busters: started to mix secular humanism with Eastern thought and “New Age” beliefs and secular humanism began being replaced with a cosmic humanism.

Millenials: have developed a cafeteria approach to truth, becoming comfortable holding multiple beliefs that contradict.

New Millenium:

- Reading is in decline overall
- Newspapers and magazines are dying
- Bookstores are closing
- People have become so used to being manipulated by marketing and media to the point that everything is suspect
- Leaders have failed and disappointed to the point that all authority is doubted and nothing is sure

Information Age:

- Explosion of media sources (hundreds of tv channels, ease of internet search :. much harder to look at all sides of an issue)
- Rise of “fake news”, ease of unverified info (anyone can post a review site that puts their product first)
- Becoming less intellectual, less rational, decisions driven by emotions – how I feel
- Becoming cynical about truth (“Nones” – those who grew up with no religious affiliation – will soon be largest religious demographic in the US)

Post-Christian Culture:

- Different from non-Christian culture...Christianity seen as already having been tried...negative bias
- Rejects objective, absolute truths – asking same question as Pilate in Jn18:38 – Jesus: “I came to testify of truth” Pilate: “What is truth?”

Problem: Truth is truth regardless of whether you or I believe it. Gravity continues to operate consistently whether I believe it or not. If I ignore it, it still trumps all my opinions and feelings.

Problems with relativism:

- Relativism trivializes morality (which doesn't work in the real world - All relativists become objectivists when you steal their iPhone).
- Relativism provides no room for moral mediators (and yet we have an internal awareness of right and wrong built in by our Creator)
- Relativism actually works against moral change movements (because it gives authority to the majority instead of what is right)
- Relativism has no basis to argue for tolerance (this is why tolerance is one-sided)

What does Future hold?

Relativism is dying...the question is, “What will replace it?”

This is our moment in history (His Story). This is the world in which we get to live out our faith and mission. To succeed, we must be in the world but not of it. In John 17:13-17 – as Jesus was preparing to leave His disciples behind in a fallen world, He prayed,

“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. “I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.