[why i'm catholic: sola scriptura isn't logical, Part I](https://www.kennethhensley.com/blog/why-im-catholic-sola-scriptura-isnt-logical-part-i)

6/14/2015

I've argued in this series that *sola scriptura* wasn't the [practice of believers](https://www.kennethhensley.com/blog/why-im-catholic-sola-scriptura-isnt-scriptural-part-i) living during the time of the apostles and that there's no evidence in the New Testament [that it would be](https://www.kennethhensley.com/blog/why-im-catholic-sola-scriptura-isnt-scriptural-part-ii) the practice of believer's after the apostolic age. My sense is that Protestants hold to *sola scriptura* not because they see it as actually "taught" in the New Testament but because [they no longer believe](https://www.kennethhensley.com/blog/why-im-catholic-sola-scriptura-isnt-scriptural-part-iii) the kind of authoritative, Spirit-led Church we see functioning in the New Testament exists.   
  
In the absence of a Church that can authoritatively settle disputes and issue theological definitions as it did in Acts 15, what alternative is there but Bible-only Christianity?  
  
I've also argued that [*sola scriptura* isn't historical](https://www.kennethhensley.com/blog/why-im-catholic-sola-scriptura-isnt-historical-part-i), that it wasn't the faith and practice of the Early Church, and that [it isn't workable](https://www.kennethhensley.com/blog/why-im-catholic-sola-scriptura-isnt-workable-part-i). In fact, as the working principle of Protestantism since the time of the Reformation, it's been a disaster, having led to the splintering and fragmenting of Christ's Church into an almost unbelievable number of denominations, sects and independent churches -- each of course claiming to stand upon the clear teaching of Scripture alone.  
  
As a evangelical Bible Christian, coming to these realizations felt a bit like when the earth moves beneath your feet during an earthquake. It was unsettling. After all, it's not like *sola scriptura* is some minor or peripheral doctrine within the Protestant worldview. It's the very foundation of that worldview! It was the foundation of my worldview as a Evangelical Protestant minister.  
  
However, the final blow I would have to say "took out the foundation" of my worldview was coming to see that *sola scriptura* isn't merely unscriptural, unhistorical and unworkable. It's illogical.   
  
And I don't mean merely that it's mysterious or wonderful or that it transcends human understanding like the Holy Trinity or Christ's divine and human natures. I mean that it's downright illogical in the sense that it contains an internal logical contradiction than cannot be resolved.     
  
How so? Let me explain.

Early on in my study of Catholicism, I was asked a question.   
  
I believe it was in conversation with my old friend Scott Hahn, but I can't entirely recall. What I remember clearly, however, is that from the moment the question was posed to me and I began to attempt to answer it *as a Protestant*, I was on my way into the Catholic Church.   
  
The question grew out of a conversation that went something like this:  
  
***Scott:*** I have a question I want to ask you, but before that I'd like to clarify exactly what you mean when you talk about *sola scriptura*. Are you with me?  
***Ken:*** Sure. Shoot.  
***Scott:*** OK. Would you agree that the Bible is the believer's sole infallible rule of faith and practice -- that it's our *only* infallible rule, and that it's *sufficient* to know everything God wants us to know with respect to Christian doctrine and morals?  
***Ken:*** Yes. That's the very definition of *sola scriptura*.  
***Scott:*** In other words, when it comes to Christian faith and practice, doctrine and morals, you would agree that a Christian should *only believe* what can be shown to be taught in Scripture?  
***Ken:*** Well, sometimes implications can be drawn from things that are explicitly taught in Scripture. These would be true as well. But yes. Essentially, what *sola scriptura* means is that we believe only what can be shown to be taught in Scripture, either explicitly or implicitly. Chapter and verse. When it comes to the doctrines of the faith, if it isn't in the Bible, how can I know it to be true?  
j***Scott:*** So if it isn't found in the Bible, I can't know it to be true. Correct?  
***Ken:*** Yes, yes. Will you get to your point?  
***Scott:*** OK, here's my question: How do you as a Protestant *know* that the books you have in your New Testament are inspired and belong there? For instance, take Matthew. How do you know Matthew is the inspired Word of God, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? You've just said that Christians should only believe what can be shown to be taught in Scripture. Well, nowhere in Scripture are we taught that Matthew is an inspired book. So how do you know it is. And if you can't be sure that it is, how can you include it in your "sole infallible rule of faith and practice"?

**The Dilemma**  
Let we try to describe for you the dilemma this question posed for me as a Protestant -- the dilemma upon whose horns I was in the end impaled.  
  
Of course I immediately understood the importance of the question. If a Christian -- whether Protestant or Catholic! -- is going to say that the Bible is his infallible rule, he needs to *know* that the books in his Bible are the inspired Word of God. I mean, we Christians can't very well go around saying, "I *think* these are the right books, and everything they teach is inspired and infallibly true!” We have to *know*. So how did I know that Matthew is an inspired writing? And Mark? And Luke?  
  
The only answer I could give that would be truly*consistent*with my foundational commitment to *sola scriptura* would be to say, "Ï know these books are inspired the same way I know that Jesus was born of a virgin, that he healed the blind and that he died to take away the sins of the world -- because God has revealed this in Scripture. Because the Bible tells me so."   
  
The only problem was: I couldn't give that answer. Because the Bible *doesn't tell me anywhere* that Matthew is an inspired book, or Mark, or Luke. Yes, St Paul speaks of Scripture as being inspired ("All Scripture is God-breathed..." 2 Tim 3:16). Yes, Jesus and the apostles repeatedly refer to the Old Testament as Scripture and treat it as inspired and authoritative. But where does Scripture teach me that *Matthew* is "Scripture" and therefore inspired? Or Mark? Or Luke?   
  
There's no inspired table of contents in the New Testament. There's no*list* of inspired writings. There's no passage stating that Matthew was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.   
So how do I know?    
  
**Everyone Knew**  
  
At this point, I may have responded,   
  
"Well, in the apostolic churches *everyone knew* which books had been authored by apostles and were inspired and this knowledge was handed down within the churches. It's something Christians accept on the witness of the early Church -- those who were closest to the apostolic age and who looked at the evidence and *knew* who had written what and what books were accepted as inspired and..."   
  
But internally I was scrambling, because I knew that what I was saying wasn't consistent with *sola scripture.* What? I insist that Christians should only believe what is taught in the Bible and then I believe that Matthew is inspired on the witness of the early Church?   
  
When it comes to doctrine and morals the Bible is my authority, but when it comes to deciding which books to include in the Bible, suddenly *tradition* is my authority? How can *that* be?  
  
I began to read scholarly accounts of the process by which the New Testament was assembled by the early Church. I read Protestant scholars like Bruce Metzger and F.F. Bruce on the formation of the New Testament canon. And what I learned was that my "everyone knew" idea wasn't even true.   
  
It turns out that some of the books we now have in our New Testaments were held in suspicion by some in the early Church. And I don't mean some individuals; I mean some areas of the Church. Some churches rejected Hebrews. Others rejected the book of Revelation. Specifically, we’re talking about James, Hebrews, 2 Peter, Jude, Third John and Revelation that were disputed to one degree or another in the early centuries of Christianity. Six books. There are only 27 books in our New Testament.  In other words, almost a quarter of the New Testament was disputed to some degree.  
  
And the process was even more complicated than that.   
  
Because it’s not like the early church had only those 27 books to examine and choose from. There were scads of books in circulation at the time claiming to have been written by Peter and Paul and John and the rest. And then there were books written by others that did not wind up being included in our New Testament but were considered authoritative by some and were read in the public worship. For instance, The Shepherd of Hermas, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (the Didache), the Epistle of St. Clement to the Corinthians, and there were others as well…  
  
So it is simply *not true* that everyone in the early Church *knew* which books were apostolic and inspired and which were not and that this knowledge was passed down within the churches.   
  
But even if it *were true* that "everyone knew," my dilemma remained. How do I say with Luther that Scripture is "my basis," that I only believe what is taught in Scripture, that I reject tradition as human and fallible, and then accept the witness of "tradition" on the most fundamental question of all -- **the question of which books should be considered inspired and included in my infallible rule of faith and practice!**  
  
This was more than a dilemma. The question pointed out an inconsistency in my position as a Protestant. One could even say it revealed a *contradiction* in my position as a Protestant.

**My Sheep Hear My Voice**  
In the end what most every Protestant will say, and what I probably said in my conversations with Scott, is that we know Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and the rest of the 27 books in our New Testaments are inspired and belong there because the Holy Spirit led the Church to select the right books.  
  
It's like Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice and they follow me.”   
  
In the end, the people of God heard the voice of their Shepherd in *these* writings. Not individually. I'm not saying the Holy Spirit led each Christian individually to the same conclusions on every book. Some thought Second Peter, Jude and Third John should not be included in the New Testament and some thought the Epistle of Barnabas should be included. But in general, over time the people of God *knew*.    
  
In other words, when pressed with the question "how do we know" the answer Protestants give is something like: Inspired apostles wrote the books and handed them on to the churches as inspired. The churches preserved the knowledge of which books were inspired. This knowledge was passed down within the Church. And when heresies began to arise that attacked the canon of Scripture and it became necessary for some authoritative determination to be made as to which books *exactly* make up the Church’s Old and New Testaments, the Church met in councils to decide.  
  
And the Holy Spirit led in this process. In the end, the Holy Spirit led the people of God to recognize which books were inspired and apostolic and which were not. And that's how we know.  
  
Of course there’s only one problem with this. It’s the Catholic position.   
  
It's the Catholic position to say that revealed truths are (a) given us in Scripture, but that they are also (b) handed down in the Church as Tradition and that (c) the Holy Spirit leads the Church to a certain knowledge of these truths. And because this is the Catholic position, it isn't a problem for Catholics that the Bible doesn't *tell us* that Matthew is an inspired book, or Mark, or Luke.  
  
But this is a massive problem for Protestants. Why? Because it's the Protestant position to say we accept and believe and teach others to accept and believe *only what can be shown to be taught in the pages of Scripture.* Protestants don't accept the authority of Traditions, for instance that Matthew was written by Matthew and is an inspired book. Protestants don't accept the authority of decisions made by councils, for instance that Revelation and Hebrews are inspired and should be included in the New Testament Canon and that the Epistle of Barnabas should be excluded. Protestants don't accept the *idea* that the Holy Spirit leads the Church to these sorts of authoritative decisions.   
  
For Protestantism, it's "what saith the Scripture?"  
 **Conclusion**  
And so the question wouldn't go away: How do Protestants *know* that the books they have in their New Testaments belong there? Since the Bible is their sole rule of faith and practice and the Bible doesn't tell them -- and they reject the authority of Tradition and the Church, how do they know?  
  
At this point I was pretty much on my back, intellectually. I *had to know* the 27 books in my New Testament were the inspired Word of God in order to have my New Testament function as my infallible rule. And I believed they were the inspired Word of God. But I had *no idea* how to answer the question of *how I know this* without violating my commitment to *sola scriptura*. 

As I stared into the void, Scott pressed the question another step…..

[why i'm catholic: sola scriptura isn't logical, Part II](https://www.kennethhensley.com/blog/why-im-catholic-sola-scriptura-isnt-logical-part-i)

6/22/2015

When [our last lesson](https://www.kennethhensley.com/blog/why-im-catholic-sola-scriptura-isnt-logical-part-i) came to its untimely end, I was in the middle of relating the substance of some conversations I had with Scott Hahn while I was still a Protestant minister. In fact, Scott was just about to ask me the question that eventually sent me over the edge.   
  
Scott's question was like a bell tolling the end of my life as an Evangelical Protestant.   
  
**Scott:**  Ken, it is a simple *fact* that the list of books to be included in the canon of Scripture -- the list you still have in your New Testament -- was decided by Catholic bishops in a series of Church Councils, primarily Hippo in 393 A.D. and Carthage in 397 and 419 A.D. There's no way to get around this. This is inarguable. This is *where* you received the New Testament you have in your Bible today -- precisely those 27 books, no more, no less. So here's my question: Did the Holy Spirit lead the Church in those councils to an infallible decision, yes or no?   
  
Of course I could see immediately that this was a trick question, a loaded question.   
  
I needed time to think. As a Protestant, I did *not* believe that the Holy Spirit led the Church to infallible decisions and kept the Church from error – even in essential matters of faith and practice and even when all the bishops in the world met in Ecumenical Council. And these councils in North Africa were regional councils, although their decisions were affirmed by Rome.   
  
No. I believed as Luther believed and viewed the decisions of Popes and Councils as inherently fallible, no matter what the topic, no matter what the level of importance to Christians.  
  
But in Scott's question I heard something of the subtlety of the pharisees when they asked Jesus, "John's baptism -- where did it come from? Was it from heaven or from men?" (Matthew 21:25). I knew that if I answered, 'No, the decisions of those councils from "from men" and fallible,' then Scott would say, 'Then I suppose you don't know *for sure* that you have the right books in your Bible, do you?'   
  
On the other hand, if I answered, 'Yes, the Holy Spirit led those councils to an infallible decision,' their decision was "from heaven", Scott would respond, 'Welcome to the Catholic Church!'  
  
So instead I tried to derail Scott's line of thought and defuse his argument by raising a classic red herring I've heard Protestant apologists raise repeatedly since I've been a Catholic. Here's what I said and how the conversation proceeded.

**Ken:**  Scott, those councils didn't "decide" the canon of inspired Scripture -- God decided that when he inspired the authors to write down what He wanted us to know. *God* created the canon! Those councils merely "recognized" what God had done in creating the canon!  
  
**Scott:**  But of course! I'm not saying -- and the Catholic Church has *never* said -- that the Church somehow *created* the canon by its authoritative decree. Obviously, God did that through the process of inspiration. The canon existed from the moment the last inspired book was penned. What the councils did was *recognize* the canon and make formal declaration of which books should be included and which should not be included. And the question I'm asking you is: do you believe the Holy Spirit led those bishops to an infallibly correct decision? Yes or no?   
  
Beginning to feel somewhat hemmed in, I tried to circumvent the question.   
  
**Ken:**  Scott, it's not like it was a difficult decision. There may not have been perfect agreement among Christians over the issue of "which books" to receive as inspired and canonical, but it was nearly perfect!  
  
**Scott:**  Ken, we've already gone over this. About 25% of the New Testament we now have was disputed to some degree in the early centuries of the Church. Read the first church historian, Eusebius. As late as 330 A.D. he's writing about the canon of Scripture and listing the New Testament as containing only one epistle of John and one of Peter. He's referring to James, 2 Peter and Jude as "disputed writings." He's describing the Apocalypse of John as a book accepted by some but "rejected" by others. You call this "nearly perfect" agreement?  
  
**Ken:**  OK. I hear you. I guess I would say that yes, the Holy Spirit led those councils to an infallible decision. But *only this time and only on this issue!*After all, the issue of which books Christians will consider inspired and infallible and authoritative for Church teaching is so foundational, so critical, so consequential that in this case I believe God would not allow the Church to err and thereby lead all Christians forever astray. In this case, God would protect his Church.   
  
Essentially, I agree with what Reformed philosopher Greg Bahnsen has said:

Add [to the historical evidences for the various books of the canon] the conviction that God controls history and promised he would build his church and we can be assured "the God ordained recognition of the canon would be providentially accomplished"  Otherwise we have no sure Word of God and are left with skepticism.

**Scott:**  So you *agree* that if the Holy Spirit *didn't* lead the Church to an infallible decision on the issue of the canon, the result would be skepticism regarding the true teachings of Christianity?  
  
**Ken:**  Yes, of course. If we don't know *for sure* which books are inspired, then we can't know which books to build our theology from, which books to take our teaching from. So on this I agree with you: God *must have* led the Church to the truth - not on every issue, but on this issue of the canon.   
 **Scott:** Well, now you've got me scratching my head.  
  
**Ken:**  Why? I just agreed with you. You win the point. The Holy Spirit led those councils to an infallibly true decision with respect to the canon of Scripture.   
  
**Scott:**  Well, I'm just wondering something. Are you aware that at those same councils at Hippo and Carthage the seven Old Testament books we Catholics accept as inspired and you Protestants reject and do not include in your Bibles were *also* confirmed as inspired and canonical?  
  
**Ken:**  I didn't know that.  
  
**Scott:**Yes. And there's more. I don't mean to paint you into a corner, but are you aware that those same councils *also* formally affirmed the decisions of the Council of Constantinople held 20 years earlier, at which the Church recognized the authority of the Bishop of Rome?   
  
**Ken:**  Well, the councils were wrong about those things.    
  
**Scott:**So you’re saying the Holy Spirit led the bishops at those councils *infallibly* when it came to determining the 27 books of the New Testament canon, but *not* when it came to determining the Old Testament canon and affirming the authority of the Bishop of Rome?  So God made sure Christians had the correct New Testament, but didn't mind if we have the wrong Old Testament? Forgive me, but it seems like on all the issues you *disagree* with (the Old Testament Canon, the authority of the Bishop of Rome) the decisions of these councils were wrong.  And on the issues you *agree* with (the New Testament canon), not only were they right, but infallibly led by the Spirit!  Doesn't this seem a bit convenient? I'm wondering if you agree with them at this point because they were infallibly led or believe they were infallibly led at this point because you agree with them. Which is it?  
  
**Ken:**  Look, let's continue this later. I don't feel so good.

My Protestant worldview began to unravel. The foundation began to shift. The building began to crumble the moment I realized that essentially I had been *relying* all along on decisions of the Catholic Church to give me the very Bible I then used *against* that same Church.    
  
In order to have an authoritative New Testament I had implicitly accepted the authority of the Catholic Church, which I then turned around and rejected on the authority of the New Testament.   
  
I had to sit in Rome’s lap in order to slap her in the face.   
  
In order to use the Bible as my "infallible rule", I had to believe the Holy Spirit had led the Church "infallibly" when it assembled that Bible at those Catholic Councils. But then, in order to escape becoming Catholic, I had to believe the Holy Spirit had led the Church infallibly *only when it assembled that Bible.* And even then, only the New Testament!   
  
On nearly everything else, the Church was wrong.   
  
It was wrong about the canon of the Old Testament. It was wrong about the authority of the Bishop of Rome. It was wrong about baptismal regeneration and the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist -- all teachings universally accepted at the time those councils were held in Hippo and Carthage.   
  
But it was right on the New Testament canon -- the one point with which I happened to agree. In fact, when it came to *that* decision, it was infallibly led by the Spirit.  
  
It began to dawn on me that I the only way I could have the foundation I needed to be a Protestant -- an inspired, infallible canon of Scripture -- was to first be a Catholic.   
  
And so I became a Catholic so that I could be a Protestant. And then at some point the thought occurred to me, 'Why not just be a Catholic?'   
  
And that's essentially how it happened.

[why i'm catholic: sola scriptura isn't logical, Part III](https://www.kennethhensley.com/blog/why-im-catholic-sola-scriptura-isnt-logical-part-i)

6/28/2015

Even though I've been writing for thirteen weeks now about an obscure Latin phrase (*sola scriptura*) and using some terms that are so out of vogue in our modern "what I feel is all that's real" world (for instance, "logical") I can't stress enough that I'm talking about something I experienced to the depths of my being. Something existential. Something real.  
  
It was like the Northridge Earthquake. But this time it wasn't the foundation of my house moving and shifting and beginning to crumble; it was the foundation of my worldview. I was an evangelical Protestant minister and I was coming to the realization that Bible-only Christianity didn't make sense.

**1.  It didn't make scriptural sense.**  
  
The heart and soul of *Sola scriptura* was the conviction that when it comes to "revealed truths" -- truths that could only be known if God chose to reveal them -- I should accept *only* what I could see taught in the Bible. And yet *sola scriptura* itself did not seem to be taught in the Bible.    
  
**2.  It didn't make historical sense.**  
  
On the question of how a believer knows what the true teachings of the faith are, my answer as an evangelical Protestant would have been: "The Bible -- nothing more, nothing less, and *nothing else* -- is all that is necessary for faith and practice." Read the Bible. Study the Bible.  
  
But then I read the writings of the early Church and found the Fathers of Christianity quite simply speaking a different language. They spoke of the authority of Scripture. But then they also spoke of the apostolic teaching as something preserved in the Church through apostolic succession and that functioned as a lens through which the light of Scripture comes into focus and is correctly understood.

The teaching of the Church [Origen of Alexandria wrote in 220-230 A.D.] has indeed been handed down through an order of succession from the Apostles, and remains in the Churches even to the present time. That alone is to be believed as the truth which is in no way at variance with ecclesiastical and apostolic tradition.

Finally, the Fathers spoke of the authority of the Church to deal with controversies and formally decide and define matters of faith and practice.   
  
I read what the great St Athanasius, the leader in the battle against the Arians in the 4th century, said about the first Ecumenical Council of the Church held in Nicea in 325 AD.

But the word of the Lord which came though the ecumenical Synod at Nicea, abides forever.... Are they not then committing a crime in their very thought to gainsay so great and ecumenical a Council.

What? "The *word of the Lord* which came *through* the ecumenical Synod at Nicea"? I was immediately reminded of Acts 15:28, where the decision of the Council of Jerusalem is described as being the decision of the Holy Spirit. "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us..."   
  
Whether I was looking at the New Testament or the early Church, the pattern was the same: Scripture, tradition, and a Church with the authority to define Christian teaching.   
  
This is what Christianity believed and taught in its early centuries. It did not teach that the Bible is to be treated as the sole and sufficient infallible rule of faith and practice and that each believer has the right to decide for himself what it is teaching. This is not historical Christianity.  
  
But there there more problems with *sola scriptura*.  
  
**3. It didn't make practical sense.**  
  
From the moment it became the rule of faith and practice for the Protestant movement, the result was theological chaos and division. "There are more beliefs than there are heads!" Luther complained.   
  
And that was at the beginning. Now, after 498 years of *sola scriptura*, there are more Protestant sects, denominations, independent churches and fellowships than Luther ever dreamed would exist. It's frightening to imagine how many there would be if *sola scriptura* *had been* the belief and practice of the Church for the 1500 years previous to the Reformation.  
  
The question that came to me was inescapable: Would the Lord Jesus *really* choose to build his one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church on this sort of foundation -- a principle that by its nature leads to disagreement and division?

**4. Finally, it didn't make logical sense**  
  
There was a contradiction at the heart of it.    
  
How so? Well, again, according to *sola scriptura,* we can only know for sure those revealed truths that are presented to us in Scripture. Revealed truths transmitted through tradition are essentially worthless, fallible, untrustworthy. Well, certainly the fact that Matthew, Mark, Hebrews and 2 Peter are inspired writings would qualify as revealed truths. (How else could one know it?) And yet the Bible doesn't tell us that they are. It follows that on the basis of "Scripture alone," we can't know that Matthew, Mark, Hebrews and 2 Peter are inspired books.  
  
Put another way, since only what is taught in Scripture is binding, this should mean the decision the Church came to on the canon of Scripture isn't "binding."   
  
I realized that the exact New Testament I had in my Bible was based on decisions made by the Church's leadership, primarily at the Councils of Hippo and Carthage in 393 and 397 A.D. -- councils I would not as a Protestant have considered to be authoritative. I certainly would *never* have said I trusted the Holy Spirit to lead those councils to *infallibly true conclusions.*   
  
So why did I treat the issue of the canon as though it has been *infallibly* decided?   
  
How *could I* treat the issue of the canon as infallibly decided and at the same time reject *the means* by which it was decided as merely human and fallible?   
  
And then the even more distressing implication began to creep its way into my mind: If the decision of the Church was fallible, why aren't Christians free to examine the tradition, explore the historical evidences and decide for themselves which books to include in their Bibles?    
  
Well, from long experience as an Evangelical, I can tell you with a fair degree of conviction: The pastors of Protestant churches would go berserk if individual believers started researching the historical pedigree of the various Old and New Testament books, weighing the evidences, making their own decisions and creating their own Bibles. Or -- even worse! -- praying for the Holy Spirit’s guidance as to which books to keep and which ones to throw in the trash!  
  
But is there *any good reason* for not allowing the right of private judgment with respect to the canon of Scripture once we've *insisted* on that right with respect to the meaning of Scripture?   
  
I can think of a profoundly good practical reason: The chaos would be impossible to contain!   
  
What I can't think of are reasons that cohere with the principle of *sola scriptura*. No. Protestants need to act as though the decisions of those councils were infallible even though they don't believe in the infallible decisions of councils. It's either that or skepticism.  
  
Some Protestant apologists have responded,   
  
*OK, we admit that as Protestants we can’t say that we know for sure. The best we can say is that on the basis of history and tradition – the evidences – odds are strong that we have the right books in our Bibles. We’re not going to agree with you Catholics that the Holy Spirit led the Church to an infallible decision. But that’s OK. All we claim is to have a “fallible collection of infallible books.”*  
With all due respect and affection, when you say your "collection" is fallible, isn't that the same thing as saying you don't know for sure that each book in the collection is the inspired Word of God?   
  
Why not just be honest and say, “We don’t know for sure if all the books we have in our Bible are inspired and from God"?  And when the Protestant minister stands in his pulpit to preach on Sunday morning, why not just be honest and say, “Thus saith the Lord... I hope"?  
  
As Catholic apologist Peter Kreeft explains in his book *Ecumenical Jihad,*

A fallible cause cannot produce an infallible effect.  But the Church is the efficient cause of Scripture.  She wrote it.  She is also its formal cause: she defined its canon.  Thus, if the Church is only fallible, her canon of Scripture is only fallible, and we do not know infallibly which books are Scripture, that is [which books are] infallible…. Thus *sola scriptura* undermines the authority of the very Scripture it exalts.

**Toward Catholicism**  
  
Of course this whole issue of the canon presents no problem for the Catholic worldview. After all, Catholics believe that God leads his Church into the recognition of the truth. Authority in Catholicism is rooted in Scripture, Tradition *and* the leading of the Holy Spirit through the Church -- especially through the Church's ordained leadership when it meets in council to formally define Christian teaching   
  
But I think it's a massive and unanswerable problem for Protestantism.   
  
More and more it seemed to me that I had a choice to make. Either Jesus established an authoritative Church on earth, or Christianity is reduced to billions of believers reading their Bibles and doing their best without really knowing for sure whether they're reading the right books, without really knowing whether the doctrines they hold are the same as those the apostles taught and first Christians believed.  
  
Mulling these ideas over, my good friend Bill Galvan, who is also a fellow convert and Catholic apologist, once described the Protestant predicament:

Isn’t it just, “the best you can do’?  Aren’t Protestantism’s doctrinal formulations simply the ultimately doubtable result of doing the best you can do?  Isn’t the landscape of Protestantism, with its countless denominations, simply the result of other people realizing the arbitrary nature of Protestant doctrinal formulations and going on to claim that they can do better than the best you could do?”

It made sense to me that the kind of Church we see functioning in the New Testament -- an authoritative Church, a Church that can speak in his name -- is the kind of Church Christ would want.   
  
It also happened to be the kind of Church the Catholic Church has always claimed to be.