

Lecture 1 – Introduction

He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. II Peter 3:16

Key Terms

“Band of orphans,” “catholic,” pastoral, opposition to heresy, sermons, discipleship, kingdom

Objectives

- Locate the books of Hebrews to Revelation in the Scriptures and describe their role in Scripture
- Describe the problems associated with the question of canonicity
- Explain the Reformed position of canonicity
- Explore the implications of your understanding of canonicity for your life and ministry

Preliminary Questions

- How can you be confident that the books of the Bible you read and teach are, in fact, God’s Word?
- How does this confidence strengthen your ability to live and communicate the Gospel of grace?
- How does a lack of confidence hinder your ability to live and communicate the Gospel of grace?

Introduction

Some Introductory Thoughts:

Goal:

- Hebrews
- James
- Peter
- John
- Revelation

The way things are:

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I. Perspectives on the Literature

- A. Hebrews to Revelation as a band of orphans; no internal unity
- B. The common division of the NT books
- C. Why Paul’s work has “pride of place” in the church
 - 1.
 - 2.

II. Categories Describing Hebrews to Revelation

- A. “Catholic” epistles (epistles addressed to entire church):
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- B. Pastoral works:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- C. Epistles of opposition to heresy:
 - 1.
 - 2.

D. Sermons:

- 1.
- 2.

E. Affinities to the Gospels

1. Discipleship
2. Kingdom

III. Canonicity: The Problem and Issues

A. The Problem

1. How can we know what is true? What can I trust? Who can I trust? How can I be sure that this is actually true? Where did you get this book from?
 - a. An imaginary debate
 - 1) A liberal Protestant
 - a)
 - b)
 - 2) A traditional Catholic
 - a)
 - b)
 - 3) A Jew
 - 4) An atheist
 - 5) Your response?
 2. How do we respond?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 3. These answers examined
 - a.
 - b.

B. The issues restated

1. Questions of authorship: Were the writers eyewitnesses, apostles, or first generation Christians?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
2. The presentation of the Gospel differs somewhat from Paul (and Pastorals sound different from rest of Paul)
3. Church makes less use of these books and only slowly accepted them into canon
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

V. Solutions to Questions of Canonicity

A. Roman Catholic Church

- 1.
- 2.

B. Some Protestants approaches

1. Luther's response
 - a.
 - b.

2. Empirical approach evidences
 - a. Apostolicity
 - 1) Problem
 - b. Antiquity: (“it is old”; near the time of the events)
 - 1) Problem
 - c. _____
 - d. Usage
 - 1) Problem
 - e. Catholicity (what the church everywhere has used)
 - f. Inspiration
3. Reformed emphasis
 - a. Self-attestation
 - 1) Potential problems

VI. Reformed View Reformulated

A. Incorporating insights from other schools

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

B. Idea of canon arises in the New Testament

1. II Peter 3:16
2. I Timothy 5:18
3. I Corinthians 14:37
 - a. Therefore:
4. Galatians 1:8, 9
5. I John 4
 - a. These passages assume:
6. Sermon on the Mount
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. Therefore:

C. Role of apostles in canon (see Ridderbos, Herman, *Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures*; Eerdmans)

1. Eyewitnesses
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. To see, hear, remember, teach
2. The tradition
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
3. Scripture references to “the tradition”
 - a. I Thessalonians 2:13-15
 - b. Romans 6:17
 - c. I Corinthians 11:2
 - d. Jude 3
4. The New Testament church and the canon
 - a. _____
 - b. _____

- c. _____
- 5. The canon gives rise to the church; not vice versa; “all of that oral teaching laid the foundation of the church”
- D. Consequences of the idea of canonicity
 - 1. Closing of the canon
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - 2. Apostolic teaching judges canon
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

How does the idea that “the canon gives rise to the church” compare or contrast with how you have understood the relationship between Scripture and the church? Does the church give credence to Scripture? Does Scripture give credence to the church? What are some implications for each perspective?