

Is Sola Scriptura Scriptural?

Scripture, Tradition, and the Rule of Faith the Bible Actually Describes

by Richard Whiting

© 2026 Richard Whiting. All rights reserved. May be reproduced in whole, with attribution. See full notice at the end of this document.

Contents

- I. The Question Underneath Every Other Question
- II. What the Doctrine Claims
- III. What Is Granted
- IV. The Doctrine Fails Its Own Test
- V. Second Timothy 3, Read in Its Context
- VI. The Canon Cannot Be Got From the Book
- VII. What the New Testament Says About Its Own Transmission
- VIII. Clarity, Tested by Its Results
- IX. The Doctrine Has a Date
- X. What the Church Actually Claims—and Does Not
- XI. The Strongest Replies Considered
- XII. The Witness Next Door
- XIII. The Reply in Brief
- Endnotes

I. The Question Underneath Every Other Question

Sola scriptura—Scripture alone as the sole infallible rule of faith—is the question underneath every other question between Protestants and the Catholic Church. If Scripture alone settles doctrine, then the Catholic appeal to Tradition and to a teaching Church is illegitimate before any particular argument starts; and if it does not, the Reformation’s founding principle needs defending. Every dispute about baptism, the

Eucharist, Mary, or the papacy eventually arrives at this one, which is why it deserves an essay of its own.

The Catholic Church holds that Scripture is inspired, inerrant, and the word of God written, and that it was never given to the world as a free-standing rulebook. It came out of a believing community, was recognized as Scripture by that community, and was meant to be read inside it. The objection to *sola scriptura* is not that the Bible is unreliable, but that the doctrine cannot satisfy its own standard and does not describe how the Church actually received the Bible. That case is made below—and then the strongest Protestant replies to it are taken up, because a doctrine of this importance deserves better than an argument with its best defenders left out.

II. What the Doctrine Claims

The doctrine should be stated as its defenders state it, because it is often caricatured. *Sola scriptura* does not claim that the Bible is the only authority of any kind: creeds, councils, confessions and pastors all carry real if derived authority. It claims that Scripture is the only *infallible* authority—the one standard that cannot err, by which all the others must be judged. Nor does it claim that every doctrine must be stated explicitly on the page. The classic formulation is the Westminster Confession’s: “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.” Nor, finally, does it claim that every passage is easy. The same Confession grants that “all things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all,” while holding that what must be known for salvation is set out plainly enough somewhere that an ordinary reader, with the Holy Spirit’s help, can find it.

The case for the doctrine rests on a handful of pillars. Scripture is God-breathed, and nothing else is said to be (2 Tim. 3:16–17). Christ condemned tradition set beside the word of God: “You leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men,” “thus making void the word of God through your tradition” (Mark 7:8, 13). The Bereans were commended for checking Paul’s preaching against the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). And the alternative, it is argued, has no fixed content: ask what “Tradition” contains and no list can be produced, while the body claiming to interpret infallibly has demonstrably erred—indulgences were sold, Galileo was condemned, and some popes lived scandalously. Each of these is answered in what follows; none is misrepresented, and the historical complaints in particular are simply conceded.

III. What Is Granted

A great deal is granted at the outset. Scripture is God-breathed, and no Catholic may say otherwise. Christ's rebuke of the Pharisees in Mark 7 is a standing warning, and any tradition that contradicts the written word is condemned by it—the Catholic claim has never been that tradition may overrule Scripture, but that both flow from one apostolic deposit and cannot truly conflict. The Bereans were commended. And the historical complaints are not fantasies: there have been serious sins committed by individuals—even popes—within the Church. (At the same time, it should be recognized that many claimed atrocities have been greatly exaggerated by those opposed to the Church—the exaggerations are examined in this site's essay *Does History Condemn the Church?*) Many Catholics have also been poor readers of Scripture, a fault the Church herself has named and set about repairing. (Visit any parish and you'll find at least one weekly Bible study—our parish currently has two!)

IV. The Doctrine Fails Its Own Test

Begin with the difficulty at the foundation. If no doctrine may be held unless it is taught in Scripture, then *sola scriptura* must be taught in Scripture. Where? No passage states that Scripture is the sole infallible rule of faith, and none could easily do so while the New Testament was still being written. The Reformed answer, from the Westminster Confession, is that a doctrine may also be deduced from Scripture “by good and necessary consequence.” Grant the method; the deduction still has to reach *only*. Every text produced establishes Scripture's authority, inspiration, and profit, which the Catholic Church affirms as firmly as Geneva. None reaches its solitude.

The verse always produced is 2 Timothy 3:16–17, and it does not say it. It says Scripture is *profitable* for teaching and reproof and correction, and that it equips the man of God for every good work, which is true, and which no Catholic denies. Profitable is not the same word as sufficient; a thing can be indispensable without being the only thing. Yeast is useful for bread—indispensable, a baker might say—but no one bakes with yeast alone. And the passage has a further problem for the doctrine: the Scripture Timothy had known “from childhood” (v. 15) was the Old Testament, since the New did not yet exist. Read as the doctrine needs it read, the verse proves the Old Testament sufficient and the New unnecessary.

There is a verse in which Jesus addresses men who held something very like the doctrine—men who genuinely believed that the sacred text, closely enough searched, was where life was to be found. His reply deserves more attention than it gets in this debate:

You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

John 5:39–40, RSV

The Scriptures bear witness; they are not the destination. The men Jesus rebukes were not careless readers—they searched. What they lacked was not the text but the willingness to be led by it to a living authority standing in front of them. A rule of faith that stops at the page repeats their mistake by design.

V. Second Timothy 3, Read in Its Context

Because so much weight rests on 2 Timothy 3:16, the verse deserves to be read where it lives. Paul is warning Timothy about deceivers, and against them he sets two safeguards, not one. The first is personal and traditional: “Continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing *from whom* you learned it” (2 Tim. 3:14). The teacher is named before the text; Timothy’s security lies in the known, trusted, living chain through which the teaching reached him—his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5), and Paul himself. Only then comes the second safeguard: the sacred writings, “able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (v. 15). Scripture enters this passage as one strand of a cord, in the same breath as the living transmission the doctrine would subordinate to it.

The celebrated word itself carries less than the doctrine loads onto it. “God-breathed” (*theopneustos*) appears exactly once in the Bible, and the argument built on it—only Scripture is God-breathed, therefore only Scripture is an infallible rule—adds to the text a premise it nowhere states, that being God-breathed is what makes a thing a rule of faith. The verse does not say that; it moves at once to what Scripture is *for*: profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. And the Greek reads most naturally as “every scripture,” distributively—each sacred writing—as scholars across the confessional divide acknowledge. That grammar is fatal to the sufficiency reading: whatever the verse predicates, it predicates of each writing singly, and no one holds that Philemon by itself contains the whole counsel of God. What can be said of every scripture singly is that it is inspired and profitable—which is precisely the Catholic doctrine, and precisely short of *sola*.

VI. The Canon Cannot Be Got From the Book

No book of the Bible contains a list of the books of the Bible. The table of contents is not inspired; it is a conclusion reached by the Church over the first four centuries, and finally settled by councils of the very bishops the Reformers were prepared to call corrupt.

So the reader who holds Scripture alone must already know, from somewhere other than Scripture, which writings are Scripture. There were serious candidates that lost (the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, 1 Clement), and serious books that were long doubted, including Hebrews, James, 2 Peter and Revelation. Whatever settled those questions was not the Bible. This is the point at which the doctrine turns back on itself: it must borrow from Tradition the one thing it cannot do without.

The history has dates and names. The four Gospels are defended as exactly four by Irenaeus about 180; the Muratorian fragment, from roughly the same period, gives the earliest surviving list, and it is not ours—it omits Hebrews, James and 2 Peter while admitting the Apocalypse of Peter. A century and a half later Eusebius still sorts the books into the acknowledged, the disputed and the spurious, with James, Jude, 2 Peter and 2–3 John among the disputed. The first list containing exactly the twenty-seven books of our New Testament appears in Athanasius’s Easter letter of 367. The question was then settled in the same generation by councils—Rome under Damasus (382), Hippo (393), Carthage (397)—and settled as a matter of Church judgment, by bishops in synod. A Christian who trusts his table of contents is trusting those bishops, whether he acknowledges the debt or not.

Nor will it do to say the books authenticate themselves, as Calvin taught and the Westminster Confession affirms—“the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.” Writings claim inspiration easily—the scriptures of the Latter-day Saints and of Christian Science claim it in so many words—so the claim cannot be its own proof. And the felt witness of the Spirit in reading, real as it is, produced the very disagreements the history records: sincere Christians long felt *Hermas* to be Scripture and doubted 2 Peter. The guarantee had to come from outside the page. It did. The Catholic simply says so.

VII. What the New Testament Says About Its Own Transmission

Paul does not describe a Church living from a book—and in a single sentence he describes how binding apostolic teaching actually reached the churches: “stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter” (2 Thess. 2:15). Everything the doctrine denies is in that verse. Paul explicitly identifies two modes by which apostolic teaching was transmitted: “by word of mouth”—oral apostolic Tradition—and “by letter”—written apostolic teaching. And he lays one and the same command on both: *hold to the traditions*. He does not say hold to the letters and let the spoken teaching lapse once the ink is dry; the oral teaching is not scaffolding to be struck when Scripture is complete. Both are called traditions, and both are to be held.

The Greek makes this particularly clear. The verb is one imperative, *krateite* (“hold fast”), and it governs one object, *tas paradoseis* (“the traditions”); the two modes are then attached by the balanced pair *eite ... eite*, “whether by word of mouth or by letter.” Grammatically, teaching received by mouth and teaching received by letter fall under the one command alike; nothing in the sentence ranks one above the other, and nothing expires one of them. Nor is *paradosis* a loose word. It is the noun Paul uses when he praises the Corinthians for maintaining “the traditions even as I have delivered them to you” (1 Cor. 11:2), and the very verb and noun of our Lord’s rebuke, “You leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men” (Mark 7:8). What Scripture condemns is the tradition *of men*; what it commands is the tradition of the apostles. The difference is never the mode of transmission. It is the source.

Nor does the verse stand alone. Paul tells Timothy to entrust what he has heard to faithful men who will teach others (2 Tim. 2:2), which is a description of succession, not of publishing. And he calls the Church, not the Scriptures, “the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). He makes the tradition the standard of communion itself: “keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us” (2 Thess. 3:6)—a discipline enforceable only if the recipients knew, without a completed canon, exactly what they had received. And his charge to Timothy is to guard a spoken deposit: “Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me ... guard the truth that has been entrusted to you” (2 Tim. 1:13–14).

The Gospels close on the same note. John ends by saying the world itself could not contain the books if everything Jesus did were written down (John 21:25)—an odd sentence to leave in place if the written record was designed to be exhaustive. And Jesus’ own provision for the Church’s future was not a book but the Spirit: “I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:12–13)—a promise made to the apostles as a body, and one the Church has always understood to be exercised through them and their successors. When a dispute did arise, the New Testament shows us the mechanism: not each believer alone with the text, but “tell it to the church,” with the warning that the one who refuses to listen “even to the church” is to be treated as an outsider (Matt. 18:17). Peter, for his part, warns that “no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation” (2 Pet. 1:20).

The Bereans do not tell against this. They were checking a new apostolic claim against the Scriptures they had, which is exactly what the Church has always said the faithful should do; and Luke records that the result was that they believed Paul. He does not record them concluding that they needed no apostle.

VIII. Clarity, Tested by Its Results

The claim that Scripture is clear in what matters is testable, and the test has been running for five centuries. Sincere, learned, prayerful readers of the same text disagree irreconcilably about baptism, the Eucharist, church government, predestination, the perseverance of the saints, and whether baptism saves. These are not trivia; each side holds its position to be plainly taught. The Reformers themselves lived long enough to see it begin: Luther, who had staked everything on the clarity of the text, spent his later years lamenting the swarm of conflicting teachers who drew opposite doctrines from the same pages with the same confidence—a complaint his own principle could not answer.

Nor is the difficulty only Protestant. The first centuries ran the same experiment: Arius quoted Scripture, fluently and sincerely, and reasoned his way to a Christ who was a creature. What refuted him was not a lone reader with a better concordance but the Church in council at Nicaea, exercising exactly the authority *sola scriptura* denies. Anyone who says Arius was wrong has already conceded that a right reading exists and that something settled it—and that something was not the text alone, which both sides quoted.

Scripture itself is less confident about its own transparency than the doctrine requires. Philip asks the Ethiopian whether he understands what he is reading, and the answer is: “How can I, unless some one guides me?” (Acts 8:31). Peter says Paul’s letters contain “some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures” (2 Pet. 3:16). That is an apostle saying the apostolic writings are misread by people reading them sincerely.

IX. The Doctrine Has a Date

The early Church did not settle disputes this way. Confronted by Gnostics who also quoted Scripture (and who claimed a secret apostolic tradition of their own), Irenaeus did not answer with the text alone. He answered by pointing to the churches founded by apostles and to the public succession of their bishops, which he treats as the test of whether a reading of Scripture is authentic. He even poses the counterfactual that decides the question: “For how should it be if the apostles themselves had not left us writings? Would it be necessary, in that case, to follow the course of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they did commit the Churches?”—and when disputes arise, “should we not have recourse to the most ancient Churches with which the apostles held constant intercourse, and learn from them what is certain and clear in regard to the present question?” That argument makes no sense on *sola scriptura*, and it is the argument the second century actually used.

Origen, half a century later, states the working rule of the pre-Nicene Church in a sentence: since heretics and true teachers alike claim the Scriptures, “the teaching of the Church, transmitted in orderly succession from the apostles, and remaining in the Churches to the present day, is still preserved, that alone is to be accepted as truth which differs in no respect from ecclesiastical and apostolic tradition.” A Christian of the second or third century, asked how he knew a doctrine was true, pointed to the apostolic churches and their succession. The answer “by Scripture alone” appears in no Father, because the thing it presupposes—a closed, settled, universally received canon standing apart from the Church—did not yet exist. The doctrine has a date, and the date is the sixteenth century.

X. What the Church Actually Claims—and Does Not

It matters to state what the Catholic Church actually claims, because the doctrine is often rejected in a form no Catholic holds. The Second Vatican Council’s constitution on divine revelation, *Dei Verbum*, sets out the relation of Scripture and Tradition: both flow “from the same divine wellspring,” and “it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed.” The Catechism repeats it: the Church “does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence” (CCC 82); “sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others” (CCC 95).

And what the Church does *not* claim is just as important. She does not claim that the Magisterium is a third source of revelation, or that it may teach novelties: “this teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully” (*Dei Verbum* 10; compare CCC 86). She does not claim that Tradition may contradict Scripture—the two flow from one deposit and are measured against each other. She does not forbid the faithful to read and interpret Scripture; she asks that interpretation not set itself against the faith the Scriptures were written within. And some Catholic theologians have long held that all revealed doctrine is at least implicit in Scripture—the position called material sufficiency. What the Church denies is *formal* sufficiency: that the book, alone, apart from the community that wrote, received, canonized and reads it, functions as a self-interpreting rule. The dispute is not over whether Scripture is sufficient as God’s word. It is over whether it was ever meant to work alone.

XI. The Strongest Replies Considered

The strongest Protestant replies deserve answers rather than silence. The ablest modern defender of the doctrine, James White, presses two in particular. First, that *sola scriptura* describes the Church's *normative* condition—the rule once revelation is complete—so it is no objection that the apostolic Church, living amid ongoing revelation, did not practice it. Second, that the canon is a function of Scripture's own existence: God's providence saw to it that His books were recognized, so the Church *discovered* the canon rather than conferring it, and the Catholic argument from the canon proves nothing. Others, following R. C. Sproul, bite the bullet outright, describing the canon as a fallible collection of infallible books.

Take them in turn. The normative-condition reply concedes the essential point: the rule of faith it describes is nowhere taught by the apostles, since on this account they lived under a different economy. The doctrine thus becomes a post-apostolic inference *about* Scripture that is not *in* Scripture—judged by its own standard, a tradition of men. It also leaves the transition unexplained: Scripture nowhere announces that at the death of the last apostle the Church's rule of faith would change, and the men who lived through that transition—Ignatius, Irenaeus, Origen—show no awareness of it, appealing instead to succession and tradition for centuries after the alleged change of rule.

The discovery reply is true as far as it goes, and a Catholic can affirm most of it: the Church did not make books inspired; she recognized the inspiration God had given. But recognition is an act of judgment, and the question is whether that judgment was trustworthy. If the Church's recognition of the canon was reliable—reliable enough to bet the doctrine of Scripture on—then the Church exercised, at least once, exactly the Spirit-guided discernment in a matter of revelation that *sola scriptura* says no church possesses. If her judgment was not reliable, the canon is uncertain and the doctrine collapses with it. Sproul's formula simply chooses the second horn and states it plainly: a fallible collection might be missing books or carrying intruders, and a rule of faith whose table of contents is admitted to be fallible cannot function as the sole infallible standard by which everything else is judged. Providence is the right answer—but providence working through the concrete, historical, authoritative judgment of the Church, which is the Catholic position.

XII. The Witness Next Door

There is a live demonstration of the difficulty, and it is the reason this page sits in this section of the site. Jehovah's Witnesses hold, with complete sincerity, that they follow the Bible alone and no human tradition. They also hold that the Bible cannot be rightly

understood apart from the publications of the Governing Body, and a Witness who reads his way to a different conclusion is removed from the congregation for it.

That is not an accusation of bad faith, but what happens when a group takes perspicuity seriously and then has to keep order: an interpreter appears, because one is needed. The Catholic claim is not that an interpreter is convenient, but that Christ provided one, and that the alternative to a Church with authority is not no authority but an authority that has never been asked to justify itself.

XIII. The Reply in Brief

The doctrine is not taught in the book it makes the only teacher; the verse offered for it says *profitable*, not *sufficient*, and describes an Old Testament that on the same reading would make the New superfluous. Its canon must be received from outside itself, from the judgment of the Church. Paul names oral tradition and written letter side by side and calls the Church the pillar of the truth. And its promise of clarity has produced, among sincere readers of one text, the divisions it was supposed to prevent.

None of which lowers Scripture. The Catholic position is that the Bible is exactly what it claims to be, and that it was given to a people with a living voice, in whose hands it was written, gathered, preserved and read aloud long before anyone owned a copy. Take the book out of that community and it does not become clearer; it becomes whatever the reader already thought.

Endnotes

1. *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646), I.6: “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture”; I.7 grants that “all things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all.”
2. Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition.
3. On “every scripture” as the more natural rendering of 2 Timothy 3:16 (the noun is singular and anarthrous), see the standard commentaries on the Pastoral Epistles, including J. N. D. Kelly’s—a judgment made on grammatical grounds by scholars on both sides of this dispute; summarized here rather than quoted.
4. On the history of the canon: Irenaeus defends the fourfold Gospel in *Against Heresies* 3.11.8; the Muratorian fragment (c. 170–200) omits Hebrews, James and 2 Peter and admits the Apocalypse of Peter; Eusebius’s classification of acknowledged, disputed and

spurious books is in *Church History* 3.25; Athanasius's Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter (367) gives the first list of exactly the twenty-seven New Testament books; the canon was fixed for the West at the Synod of Rome (382) and the Councils of Hippo (393) and Carthage (397). The self-attestation doctrine is Calvin, Institutes I.7, and Westminster Confession I.5; its difficulties are pressed by Joe Heschmeyer, "Is the Bible Self-Attesting, or Do We Need the Church?" (Shameless Popery), transcript held in the site's reference library.

5. The Greek of 2 Thessalonians 2:15 is *krateite tas paradoseis*—a single imperative ("hold fast") with a single object ("the traditions")—followed by *eite dia logou eite di' epistoles hemon*, "whether by word or by our letter." Mark 7:8 uses the same verb and noun—*krateite ten paradosin ton anthropon*, "you hold fast the tradition of men"—so what distinguishes condemned tradition from commanded tradition is not the mode of transmission but the source.

6. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.4.1, Ante-Nicene Fathers translation; the appeal to the succession of bishops as the test of authentic teaching is 3.3.1–4.

7. Origen, *De Principiis*, Preface, 2, Ante-Nicene Fathers translation.

8. *Dei Verbum* (1965), 9–10: Scripture and Tradition "flowing from the same divine wellspring"; "it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed"; the teaching office "is not above the word of God, but serves it." See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 80–95, especially 82, 86 and 95.

9. On material versus formal sufficiency, and the view of some Catholic theologians that all revealed doctrine is at least implicitly scriptural, see Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions* (1966); the distinction is summarized here rather than quoted.

10. James White, *Scripture Alone* (Bethany House, 2004), presses the normative-condition and canon-as-artifact replies; R. C. Sproul's description of the canon as a fallible collection of infallible books appears in *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Tyndale, 1992). Both positions are summarized here from their published statements.

11. Luther's later complaints about the multiplication of conflicting interpreters—that there were soon almost as many sects as heads—are recorded across his correspondence and table talk of the 1520s onward; the point is summarized rather than quoted, since the wording varies by source and translation.

12. Joel Peters, *Twenty One Reasons to Reject Sola Scriptura* (TAN Books, 1999), collects several of the arguments deployed here, including the appeal to 2 Peter 1:20, Matthew 18:17, and the absence of original autographs.

13. On the Watchtower’s simultaneous profession of “the Bible alone” and requirement of Governing Body interpretation, see this site’s pages on authority (*By What Authority?*) and on the New World Translation.

For Further Reading

Dei Verbum, Second Vatican Council—§§9–10 on Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium. Free online at https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.

Against Heresies, by Irenaeus (c. 180)—apostolic succession as the test of a reading. Free online at <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103303.htm>.

Scripture Alone, by James R. White—the Protestant case, argued by its ablest defender.

The Westminster Confession of Faith, ch. I—the classic statement of the doctrine. Free online at <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds3.iv.html>.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, §§74–100 on the transmission of divine revelation. Free online at <https://usccb.cld.bz/Catechism-of-the-Catholic-Church2>.

... you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.

1 Timothy 3:15

* * *

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.*

Copyright and Distribution

© 2026 Richard Whiting. All rights reserved.

This essay may be reproduced and distributed freely, in printed or electronic form, provided that it is reproduced in whole and without alteration, and that the author’s name

is retained. Excerpts may be quoted in reviews, scholarly works, or other writings consistent with fair use, with attribution.

A Note on Authority

This essay represents the author's articulation of *the Catholic understanding of Scripture and Tradition, in answer to the doctrine of sola scriptura*, drawing on Scripture, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Church Fathers, and the major theological tradition. It is offered as a personal defense, not as an official statement of the Church's teaching. Where this defense is fortunate enough to align with the magisterial teaching of the Church, the credit belongs to the tradition that formed it. Where it falls short, the responsibility is the author's alone.