

# Sola Scriptura VS. Sacred Tradition

This document is divided into four sections:

- What is Sola Scriptura?
- Does the Bible teach Sola Scriptura?
- What are the traditions that are spoken of in Scripture?
- Addressing Catholic counter-arguments to the above statements.

## What Is Sola Scriptura?

- The Bible claims to be the sole and sufficient rule of faith for the church. All that we need to know for godliness is found within it and nothing outside of it is binding upon the Christian conscience. Its authority comes from its nature as God-breathed, and as such it is self-consistent, self-interpreting, and self-authenticating. Sola Scriptura is a Biblical reality for the normative state of the church, i.e. once the apostles passed off the scene. While the essence of sola scriptura was affirmed in the scripture, it was also realized that God was still giving authoritative revelation through prophets and apostles. Even revelations through them were to be tested against the previously recorded scriptures.
- What it is not:
  - It is not a statement that says that the Bible is the source of all knowledge. There are many things, even the words of Christ and letters of Paul, that are not in the Bible.
  - It is not a statement that the church does not have an authority to teach the Bible. The church does not stand over it or add to it, but only teaches what is found in scripture.
  - It is not a statement that denies the word of God was at one time orally communicated. During the time of the prophets and the apostles, “men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” 2 Pet. 1:21
    - This might be the biggest hang-up for the Roman Catholic. It seems to be hard to grasp that the teaching of sola scripture is affirmed right along with the fact that new, authoritative, infallible revelation was being given through the prophets and apostles to the first church, as well as through the prophets of the OT. That new revelation was of the same nature as written scripture: God-breathed. Therefore the essential principle of sola scriptura (only that which is God-breathed is binding) is intact even though the first church was bound by two things, the apostles teaching and the apostles writing. Those two things are one thing in essence: God-breathed. We rightly say sola scriptura today, because the apostles are gone and they can’t speak to us.

## Does the Bible teach Sola Scriptura?

- 2 Tim. 3:16
  - “All Scripture” – Paul certainly had the Old Testament in mind, but that was not all. Everyone knew that inscripturation was happening in this age. In 2 pet. 3:15-16, Peter was already equating things that Paul wrote to Scripture. In 1 Tim. 5:18, Paul was calling

what Luke wrote in Luke 10:7 scripture. In the next phrase we find out what the criterion is for being scripture.

- “inspired by God” - This phrase is best translated “God-breathed”. This speaks of source or origin. Scripture is from God. It is as true, inerrant, and authoritative as God Himself because it is from Him. The one authority for the church is God, and God has “breath out” the scripture, making it the rule of faith for the church. 2 Pet.1:20-21 is an important corollary for this because it gives us a glimpse into how the inspired scriptures came about, “men carried by the Holy Spirit spoke from God”. We know who these men were, the prophets and the apostles. These were the only ones commissioned for speaking for God, and whose words were recognized as “God-breathed”. Those prophetic or apostolic words which were written down are preserved scripture for the whole church. Those prophetic or apostolic words which were not written down and not preserved were meant only for local congregations. The church universal does not need them or God would have preserved them. The reason we know this (and that God wasn’t preserving them through oral tradition) is because of the next phrase.
- “profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”
  - The scripture is all that is given to the church from which to teaching, reprove, correct and train. God did not give sacred tradition from which to teach, reprove, correct and train (we will deal with the tradition passages farther below).
  - The word “complete” is critical for this discussion on sola scriptura. The greek word is “artios”. What does this word mean? Here are some definitions from greek lexicons (which I can furnish for you if you like): “of one able to meet all demands”, “Complete, sufficient, completely qualified”, “*complete, perfect of its kind, suitable, exactly fitted*”.
  - If the above were not enough, Paul strengthens it even more by saying “equipped”. The greek work is “exartizo” which is related to the above greek word. This word has the following definitions: “to furnish or fit completely”, “to make someone completely adequate or sufficient for something—‘to make adequate, to furnish completely, to cause to be fully qualified”
  - Don’t miss it. The scripture makes someone fully sufficient, lacking nothing. Scripture alone gets the job done. The Bible teaches sola scriptura!
- Mark 7:1-13
  - Notice that everything (without exception) is to be verified by and tested against the scriptures. This was the case back in the time of Moses, up through the time of the apostles. The people of God have always tested what is being presented to them against the written scripture (and not any kind of tradition). See below passages.
    - Deuteronomy 13:1-5 – Even if a prophet arises and does amazing signs, if his words did not match written scripture, he was stoned.
    - Acts 17:10-13 – Notice that this is the apostle Paul preaching, and his preaching is even called the Word of God in verse 13. This should qualify as ‘tradition’ for the catholic. Yet the Berean church is commended for comparing the message to the scriptures. Even if Paul’s word was “God-breathed”, it was tested against the scripture. If it was God-breathed, it would be self-consistent. Everything gets tested against scripture alone.

- 1 Cor. 14:29-32 – Even when a prophecy from God came through someone, it was “subject to the prophets”. There were people who could “pass judgment”. Most probably they used their own prophetic gift and the gift of discernment (both of which were revelatory gifts) to pass judgment, but they certainly also used the scripture.
  - Rev. 2:2 – If these men claimed to be carrying apostolic authority and were bringing such things as other traditions and supposedly more developed doctrine, how could the Ephesian church test them? It couldn’t be by “tradition” because these so-called apostles would be claiming they themselves were bringing traditions and developed doctrine. How did you test apostles in the age of apostles? The church tested the message and the lives of these men against the written scripture they already had. The scripture trumps everything. It is sufficient.
- Duet 4:2 “You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it...” – Sola Scriptura was established in the Old Testament first with the law of God. There were many other things that Moses said, but only the written word was preserved. Only the written word was placed in the Ark of the covenant in the tabernacle. God himself added to His word with forthcoming scripture, but that was God’s prerogative.
- 1 Cor. 4:6 “not to exceed what is written” – Context is always king for interpretation. Paul is saying here that he has used himself and Apollos as examples of men used by God but who must not to be judged or esteemed wrongly. Paul will not allow himself or Apollos to be exalted wrongly by certain Christians. How Paul does this is by binding his reader only to what has been written. Paul does not want them to go beyond what is written. He is saying the written scriptures alone set the bounds for self-evaluation and nothing else. Don’t let any outside source affect your thinking. Confine yourself to the scriptures for how you make these judgments. Scripture is sufficient. You will be godly in this area if the scriptures alone shapes how you think and live.
- Psalm 19:7-11 This screams sufficiency. If this was true in the Old Testament (which was still being inscripturated), it would be true of the NT scriptures.
- Psalm 119 – This whole psalm is dedicated to the sufficiency of written scripture. Again, if this is true in the OT (which was still being inscripturated), then it will be of the NT scriptures.
- Psalm 1 – The man of God never withers with roots sunk deep into scripture. Scripture alone is sufficient to nourish you.
- Matt. 22:29 – “You are mistaken, not understanding the scriptures or the power of God.” Jesus taught that the scripture is all you need to have. When you understand it, you won’t be mistaken in anything. It is possible that a person in those early time periods would not have had the full picture, since there was more to be revealed soon through the apostles, but that person won’t be mistaken by what he had up to that point. God deems that OT scripture was sufficient for that time. Scripture alone is sufficient to instruct you doctrinally.

Summary Statement: The previous passages demonstrate clearly that the Bible both teaches and demonstrates the sufficiency of scripture to be the sole rule of faith for the people of God. Scripture isn't just "materially sufficient" but also "formally sufficient". Meaning, they are clear, and all a person needs at any point in time (before Christ or after Christ) to be fully equipped.

## **What are the traditions that are spoken of in scripture?**

The first and most important statement that must be made about tradition is as follows. While all that Jesus said (recorded and unrecorded) was "God-breathed", and while probably much of what the apostles taught was "God-breathed", that designation of "God-breathed" is never given to tradition. That which is handed down from person to person to person is never called God-breathed or guaranteed to be preserved, inerrant, and binding upon all the people of God. Only that which was written as God-breathed scripture would be preserved, forever inerrant, and binding upon all people everywhere.

While the apostles were living and teaching among the churches, their teaching was authoritative because they had a unique commission and a unique authority from Christ Himself. Their teaching was binding upon the churches they spoke to. Yet only what was recorded in scripture (which would have included the bulk of what they taught, as we will see below) was the rule of faith for the people of God through the ages. Only the recorded scriptures were "God-breathed" and sufficient for the future people of God.

The second most important thing to remember about the traditions spoken of in the following scriptures is that they are teachings directly from Paul. Paul is calling them to hold to the authoritative teaching that they received directly from him, not from second or third or fourth hand sources. Only what is from his lips and pen, as an inspired apostle, is to be viewed as authoritative and not anything from anyone else (with the obvious exception of the other 12 apostles and the various prophets which would be in the same authoritative category as Paul).

Let's work our way through the scriptural verses that speak of tradition.

**Acts 2:42** "They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

This verse is descriptive, not prescriptive. It is simply telling us what was done at the very start. The fact that they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching is expected. None of the New Testament scriptures had been written yet, so the apostles were the authoritative voice in those days. But, as seen above in Acts 17, even as they did speak their word was compared against the OT scripture. This passage gives no hint of apostolic succession or of infallible tradition, it simply states the early church reality.

**2 Thess. 2:15** "So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. "

This is one of the go-to verses for Catholic support of authoritative Tradition. As always, context is king for understanding Paul's intent. Just a few verses before, in verse 2, Paul speaks of messages and letters

with Paul's name upon them that had actually come from other people. These messages and letters were misleading the people on matters of the end times. Paul had to deal with this, and in so doing he actually undercuts the Roman Catholic idea of Sacred Tradition. Far from encouraging the church to receive traditions second, third, or fourth hand, Paul is telling the church that they are only to receive what is just from Him. If they are not "from us" directly, then you are to critique them and do as they were taught in 1 Thess. 5:21 "But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;" Tradition being passed down is not authoritative. Paul says only what is from his lips and pen is authoritative.

**2 Thessalonians 3:6** "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. "

This passage is doubly clear, and doubly damaging to the Roman Catholic position. First, notice again that Paul is not speaking about Traditions given to them by other people. The tradition is only that which was "received from us". Paul was emphatic that you cannot accept teaching from anyone, even those claiming apostolic authority, on the basis that it came from Paul. Paul told them to keep the tradition that they receive from Paul himself. Even then he wanted them to test it against OT scripture because he knew they would find it as true and as authoritatively binding at the OT. But if it was not received from Paul himself, then test it as you test every other potentially fallible teaching. Secondly, notice that "tradition" is singular. Paul is here only talking about one tradition, which he goes on to remind them of in the following verses. The tradition is inscripturated in the following verses, and Paul knows that is binding scripture because in verse 14 he puts his teaching on the same authoritative level as the rest of God-breathed scripture.

**1 Thess 2:13** For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

There should be no surprise now that Paul understood his apostolic words to be inspired by God and on the same authoritative level as written scripture. This verse cannot be applied to anybody's word except the 12 commissioned apostles and Paul as the one other added apostle. Paul explicitly spoke of the word that was "heard from us". No tradition passed down or coming from any other person can be called "the Word of God".

**1 Corinthians 11:2** "Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you. "

We should now be accustomed to hearing this from Paul. The key feature of the tradition is that Paul himself "delivered them to you". No one else did this. These traditions were not passed down from person to person. They were from the apostle Paul to the church. That, and that alone, is why it is authoritative and should be held firmly. Additionally, notice the ironic nature of Paul's statement. Though they had held to the traditions given them by apostolic authority, they were beginning to rebel against that very authority. This was the most problematic church in the Bible. They were letting these traditions slip because they were turning away from Paul and his authoritative teaching. Far from

hoping in (let alone teaching) the infallible passing on of tradition, Paul had to rebuke them and call them back to what he himself taught them.

**2 Timothy 2:2** The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

This might be the most important verse in this discussion, because it certainly speaks of a transmission from person to person. Does this passage teach the infallible nature of a sacred tradition coming from the apostles themselves? First, we can say that there is a command to pass teaching from one person to another. There is no dispute there. Second, to try to assert that this transmission is infallible and God breathed is foreign to the text. While it began with Paul, who did speak infallibly, there is absolutely nothing that hints at the idea of an authoritative Sacred Tradition that is binding upon God's people. Thirdly, this passage does give us the clearest idea of just what the content was that was passed on. He says here that it was things "heard from me in the presence of many witnesses". If this was something that many witnesses heard, you can be sure this was the core of Paul's teaching. The core of Paul's teaching would have been the gospel itself as stated in many places (1 cor. 2:2). Therefore, the "things" which were to be passed on were the vital components of the gospel, which are clearly laid out in all the letters that Paul wrote to the churches which are contained in the NT, the most detailed being the book of Romans. There is just no way to say that this included such things as the Assumption of Mary; things that were unheard of or disputed for centuries until a pope declared *ex cathedra* that it was truth.

**Matt. 23 and Moses' seat** – This "seat" which teachers would sit in was not a recognition of binding tradition, only a term for the teaching authority of those responsible for its discharge. When they taught something rightly, it should be followed. If they teach something wrong, it should be rejected.

## **Addressing Catholic Counter-Arguments to the Above Statements**

In this section, I first want to address arguments made from an article called "One Hundred and Fifty Reasons I'm Catholic And You Should Be To!" by Dave Armstrong found at <http://www.ourcatholicfaith.org/reasons.html>

I will write short responses in red below the numbered statements.

102. *Sola Scriptura* is an abuse of the Bible, since it is a use of the Bible *contrary to its explicit and implicit testimony about itself* and Tradition. An objective reading of the Bible leads one to Tradition and the Catholic Church, rather than the opposite. The Bible is, in fact, undeniably a Christian Tradition itself! **This was thoroughly shown as not true above in the section "Does the Bible Teach Sola Scriptura?"**

103. *The NT was neither written nor received as the Bible at first*, but only gradually so (i.e., early Christianity couldn't have believed in *sola Scriptura* like current Protestants, unless it referred to the OT alone). **It was affirmed that in the earliest days, all the church had was the Old Testament**

and the teaching of the apostles. But, as was shown above, not only did the OT describe itself as sufficient, but Jesus also taught that if one read and understood the OT they would not be mistaken. Therefore, whatever God has revealed up any given point of time, that was sufficient for that time. It was all that was needed. This does not deny the fact that prophets and apostles were giving new revelation, but even that new revelation had to be tested against the previously written scripture.

104. *Tradition is not a bad word in the Bible.* Gk. *paradosis* refers to something handed on from one to another (good or bad). Good (Christian) Tradition is spoken of in [1 Cor 11:2](#); [2 Thess 2:15](#), [2 Thess 3:6](#), and [Col 2:8](#). In the latter it is contrasted with traditions of men. This is true if what you mean by "tradition" is the same thing that is meant by the scripture as "tradition".

105. *Christian Tradition, according to the Bible, can be oral as well as written* ([2 Thess 2:15](#); [2 Tim 1:13-14](#); [2 Tim 2:2](#)). St. Paul makes no qualitative distinction between the two forms. This is true as far as it went. This means that Paul's words and his letters were both authoritative when they were given directly from him to the churches. But once Paul and the apostles passed off the scene, there was only one thing that remained that was authoritative and that was written scripture. As seen above, Paul never put traditions which were passed down on the same level as infallible, inspired scripture.

106. The phrases "*word of God*" or "*word of the Lord*" in Acts and the epistles almost always refer to *oral preaching*, not to the Bible itself. Much of the Bible was originally oral (e.g., Jesus' entire teaching- He wrote nothing -St. Peter's sermon at Pentecost, etc.). There is only one way to prove this, and that is by demonstrating that the preaching was absent of Old Testament scripture. However, the preaching we see in Acts is full of the OT. In fact, Paul's standard mode of operation was to go to the synagogues and show them from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. To see a normal example, look at Acts 13:14-42. There Paul gives an exposition that simply followed the history of redemption in the OT, from which He quoted 5 different OT verses that spoke of Christ. Their preaching was packed with the Bible, so you can't say the "word of God" was preaching and not the scripture. They were preaching the scripture. And as "the word of the Lord spread", it certainly meant that the OT scriptures that spoke of Christ were being highlighted and attached to Christ. To say that the "word of God" had to include every word spoken, whether from the scripture or not, is to press the phrase beyond common and regular usage.

107. Contrary to many Protestant claims, *Jesus didn't condemn all tradition* any more than St. Paul did. E.g., [Mt 15:3,6](#); [Mk 7:8-9](#), [Mk 7:13](#), where He condemns corrupt Pharisaical tradition only. He says "your tradition." I don't claim that. What Jesus did condemn was adding anything to the scripture that was not God-breathed revelation through a prophet or one of the 12+Paul apostles.

108. Gk. *paradidomi*, or "delivering" Christian, apostolic Tradition occurs in [Lk 1:1-2](#); [Rom 6:17](#); [1 Cor 11:23](#); [1 Cor 15:3](#); [2 Pet 2:21](#); [Jude 3](#). *Paralambano*, or "receiving" Christian Tradition occurs in [1 Cor 15:1-2](#); [Gal 1:9,12](#); [1 Thess 2:13](#). This is correct, and in every single one of those cases, it was delivered from an authoritative apostle, not second or third or fourth hand sources.

109. The concepts of "Tradition," "gospel," "word of God," "doctrine," and "the Faith" are essentially synonymous, and all are predominantly oral. E.g., in the Thessalonian epistles alone St.

Paul uses 3 of these interchangeably ([2 Thess 2:15](#); [2 Thess 3:6](#); [1 Thess 2:9,13](#) (cf. [Gal 1:9](#); [Acts 8:14](#))). *If Tradition is a dirty word, then so is "gospel" and "word of God"!* This does not help the Roman Catholic position. The tradition that Paul was delivering was the gospel itself, defined in Paul's many letters, and not unheard-of-doctrines that arose long after the early church was gone. All of these things are fully revealed in the God-breathed scriptures preserved for us in the NT, which is why 2 Tim. 3:16-17 says that a man of God will be made fully complete and sufficient.

110. St. Paul, in [1 Tim 3:15](#), puts the *Church above Bible as the grounds for truth*, as in Catholicism. The context of the passage, as well as numerous other verses, tell us that this is the exact opposite way to understand the statement. In 1 Tim. 3:1-14, Paul has been instructing Timothy about who is qualified to lead and care for the church. The church is a needy people, frail and easily deceived. The church is made up of sheep. But when they are lead, fed, and protected well, they make a wonderful stand, or pillar, upon which to display God's truth. You have turned the whole chapter up on its head to say the bible depends upon frail and fallible people. Additionally, Jesus said that he who hears my words and obeys them builds on the rock (Matt. 7). Paul said that the church of God was built upon the apostles and prophets (inspired revelation) Eph. 2:19-22.

111. *Protestantism's chief "proof text" for sola Scriptura, 2 Tim 3:16, fails*, since it says that the Bible is profitable, but not sufficient for learning and righteousness. Catholicism agrees it is great for these purposes, but not exclusively so, as in Protestantism. Secondly, when St. Paul speaks of "Scripture" here, the NT didn't yet exist (not definitively for over 300 more years), thus he is referring to the OT only. This would mean that NT wasn't necessary for the rule of faith, if *sola Scriptura* were true, and if it were supposedly alluded to in this verse! *2 Tim. 3:16 is a crucial text, and my treatment of it above shows that it does not fail, but instead emphatically declares the sufficiency of scripture. Also, as noted above, much of the NT already did exist in written form and was already being quoted by the time of 2 Timothy. Whatever God has revealed and inscribed at a particular time, is sufficient for that time.*

112. The above 11 factors being true, Catholicism maintains that *all its Tradition is consistent with the Bible*, even where the Bible is mute or merely implicit on a subject. For Catholicism, every doctrine need not be found primarily in the Bible, for this is Protestantism's principle of *sola Scriptura*. On the other hand, most Catholic theologians claim that all Catholic doctrines can be found in some fashion in the Bible, in kernel form, or by (usu. extensive) inference. *This is Catholicism's claim of "material sufficiency", stating that all the traditions are found in scripture, at least in kernel form. However, the first sentence is more honest. The scripture is mute on many of the Catholic doctrines. They are simply not there.*

113. As thoughtful evangelical scholars have pointed out, an unthinking *sola Scriptura* position can turn into "*bibliolatry*," almost a worship of the Bible rather than God who is its Author. This mentality is similar to the Muslim view of Revelation, where no human elements whatsoever were involved. *Sola Scriptura*, rightly understood from a more sophisticated Protestant perspective, means that the Bible is the final authority in Christianity, not the record of all God has said and done, as many evangelicals believe. *I don't know any evangelical who believes that the scripture is all that Jesus said, when John 21 clearly says otherwise. Additionally, I have never known someone who valued the Bible too highly. "You have magnified your word according to all your name" Ps. 138:2 You just can't value it higher than what God already has.*

114. *Christianity is unavoidably and intrinsically historical.* All the events of Jesus' life (Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, etc.) were historical, as was the preaching of the apostles. *Tradition, therefore, of some sort, is unavoidable,* contrary to numerous shortsighted Protestant claims that *sola Scriptura* annihilates Tradition. This is true both for matters great (ecclesiology, trinitarianism, justification) and small (church budgets, type of worship music, lengths of sermons, etc.). Every denial of a particular tradition involves a bias (hidden or open) towards one's own alternate tradition (E.g., if all Church authority is spurned, even individualistic autonomy is a "tradition," which ought to be defended as a Christian view in some fashion). **I don't fully understand this statement. Sola Scriptura isn't a denial that traditions and history exist, only that God's word which is God-breathed is infallible and thereby the only sure rule for faith and life.**

115. *Sola Scriptura* literally couldn't have been true, practically speaking, for most Christians throughout history, since the movable-type printing press only appeared in the mid-15th century. Preaching and oral Tradition, along with things like devotional practices, Christian holidays, church architecture and other sacred art, were the primary carriers of the gospel for 1400 years. For all these centuries, *sola Scriptura* would have been regarded as an absurd abstraction and impossibility. **The fact that many throughout history, and even many in present time, are illiterate drives home the importance of the command in 1 tim. 4:13 "Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching." God wants people to have access to His word, and until they can read it for themselves, it is to be read to them. Sola Scriptura does not deny that there aren't many ways to hold forth the word of life. There can be many good things used to bring scripture to people, basic teaching being the most fundamental, but that does not negate the reality that scripture is the only infallible, God-breathed source of truth.**

116. Protestantism claims that the Catholic Church has "*added to the Bible.*" The Catholic Church replies that it has merely drawn out the implications of the Bible (development of doctrine), and followed the understanding of the early Church, and that Protestants have "subtracted" from the Bible by ignoring large portions of it which suggest Catholic positions. Each side thinks the other is "unbiblical," but in different ways. **The test will always be who is more faithful to what the actual scriptures say.**

117. *Sola Scriptura* is Protestantism's "Achilles' Heel." Merely invoking *sola Scriptura* is no solution to the problem of authority and certainty as long as multiple interpretations exist. If the Bible were so clear that all Protestants agreed simply by reading it with a willingness to accept and follow its teaching, this would be one thing, but since this isn't the case by a long shot (the multiplicity of denominations), *sola Scriptura* is a pipe-dream at best. About all that all Protestants agree on is that Catholicism is wrong! Of all Protestant ideas, the "clarity" or *perspicuity* of the Bible is surely one of the most absurd and the most demonstrably false by the historical record. **See #118**

118. Put another way, having a Bible does not render one's private judgment infallible. *Interpretation is just as inevitable as tradition.* The Catholic Church therefore, is absolutely necessary in order to speak authoritatively and to prevent confusion, error, and division. **Sola Scriptura does not lead to saying private judgment is infallible. In fact, Sola Scriptura declares that there is only one infallible thing; the scripture. To say that interpretation is inevitable is not a knock on sola Scriptura because the Bible commands good interpretation. Scripture doesn't command believers to look to a pope or to an undefined blob of tradition. It says,**

"Be diligent to present yourself...as a workman...accurately handling the word of truth." 2 tim. 2:15  
Multiple interpretations does not mean that there isn't one right one, or that you can't know the one right one. In fact, Scripture expects that you will be able to do that and therefore commands it. Many people, and many protestants have not been diligent to handle the word accurately and so we see many divisions. But that doesn't mean we don't have a clear and authoritative voice in scripture, it means there are many sinful people who will be ashamed.

There is another way to state the massive problem with this. When the Catholic church delivers an infallible dogma, how is it delivered to the people? It is delivered to them in human language through Encyclicals, bulls, sermons, etc. Whatever various ways it is delivered, it comes through language. Let's take the doctrine of papal infallibility. When the pope speaks *ex cathedra*, the pope is infallible. But how does the average Catholic know this is the real meaning? Why couldn't these words mean the pope is infallible every second Tuesday? The Catholic church assumes the individual's ability to understand these words. The magisterium cannot interpret itself, because then *that* interpretation could be equally distorted, and so on. If it is possible for individuals to approach the decrees of the church with an ability to understand them, why is it impossible to do the same with the Scriptures? There is no way to deny that a man can understand the Scriptures for himself without simultaneously denying that he can understand anything for himself – including the teaching of his interpreters.

119. Catholicism doesn't regard the Bible as obscure, mysterious, and inaccessible, but it is vigilant to protect it from all *arbitrary and aberrant exegesis* (2 Pet 1:20, 3:16). The best Protestant traditions seek to do the same, but are inadequate and ineffectual since they are divided. #119 is contradicted by #117. To say that the clarity or perspicuity of the Bible is "absurd" and "most demonstrably false" is to say that the Bible is obscure, mysterious and inaccessible to the common man. Catholicism cannot protect from aberrant exegesis by adding traditions that have no exegetical basis in scripture.

120. Protestantism has a huge problem with the *Canon of the NT*. The process of determining the exact books which constitute the NT lasted until 397 A.D., when the Council of Carthage spoke with finality, certainly proof that the Bible is not "self-authenticating," as Protestantism believes. Some sincere, devout, and learned Christians doubted the canonicity of some books which are now in the Bible, and others considered books as Scripture which were not at length included in the Canon. St. Athanasius in 367 was the first to list all 27 books in the NT as Scripture. *The scriptures are self-authenticating for this reason; the councils never determined the books of the NT. All the councils did was recognize what the church had already known to be God-breathed scripture. The canon is a list of authoritative books, not an authoritative list of books. The church basically always knew what God's word was. As already stated, Peter and Paul were already quoting from NT writings and calling them scripture. The reality is that 20 of the 27 books have never been seriously disputed, even from the earliest time. The remaining seven show two primary things: 1) in that day it took a while for things to spread and to be known widely by the church and 2) it shows that there was great care taken by the church to give the time needed for seeing if the book really was a) authored by an apostolic witness, that it b) conformed to the scriptures already in possession, and finally that it c) had wide and continuing acceptance and usage by the church. There were many false prophets and forged letters, so being very deliberate in this was wise. But to say that the councils made pronouncements on what was scripture would be like gathering several academies of*

musicians in our day to make a pronouncement that the music of Bach and Mozart is wonderful. Everybody already knew that.

121. The Council of Carthage, in deciding the Canon of the entire Bible in 397, included the so-called "*Apocryphal*" books, which Protestants kicked out of the Bible (i.e., a late tradition). Prior to the 16th century Christians considered these books Scripture, and they weren't even separated from the others, as they are today in the Protestant Bibles which include them. Protestantism accepts the authority of this Council for the NT, but not the OT, just as it arbitrarily and selectively accepts or denies other conciliar decrees, according to their accord with existing Protestant "dogmas" and biases. **The Apocrypha actually poses a huge dilemma for Roman Catholicism. The Apocrypha was never accepted by the Jews. The apostles nor Jesus nor any believing Jew regarded the Apocrypha as scripture. The dilemma is as follows. If you say that some kind of OT "church" infallibly told the people that Isaiah and 2 Chronicles were scripture, then that means that they also told the people that the traditions such as the Korban rule seen in Mark 7 was also from God. But Jesus explicitly said that tradition was not. That same OT church also rejected the Apocrypha. So no matter which way you turn, it conflicts with an "infallible" teaching from Roman Catholicism. If you say the OT church was infallible because scripture has always had to be accompanied with an infallible "magisterium", then that conflicts with Jesus' rejection of one of the accepted traditions, the Korban rule. It also means that the OT magisterium rejected the apocrypha, which the Roman Catholic magisterium accepts. But, if you say that the OT magisterium was fallible, then you are left with sola Scriptura, scripture alone as the authoritative rule of faith, which Roman Catholicism rejects.**

122. Contrary to Protestant anti-Catholic myth, *the Catholic Church has always revered the Bible*, and hasn't suppressed it (it protested some Protestant translations, but Protestants have often done the same regarding Catholic versions). This is proven by the laborious care of monks in protecting and copying manuscripts, and the constant translations into vernacular tongues (as opposed to the falsehoods about only Latin Bibles), among other plentiful and indisputable historical evidences. *The Bible is a Catholic book*, and no matter how much Protestants study it and proclaim it as peculiarly their own, they must acknowledge their undeniable debt to the Catholic Church for having decided the Canon, and for preserving the Bible intact for 1400 years. How could the Catholic Church be "against the Bible," as anti-Catholics say, yet at the same time preserve and revere the Bible profoundly for so many years? The very thought is so absurd as to be self-refuting. If Catholicism is indeed as heinous as anti-Catholics would have us believe, Protestantism ought to put together its own Bible, instead of using the one delivered to them by the Catholic Church, as it obviously could not be trusted! **Rome did not "decide" the canon as shown above. It was simply there for all to read and recognize as God-breathed truth. No one gets to put together their own scripture. Only God can give scripture. If Rome helped copy and preserve the scripture, then thank you. But the scripture was not created, or given authority by Rome or anyone. Rome does not own the Bible. Far from it, Roman Catholicism has added to God's word by putting traditions on the same level as scripture and then degrading the scripture by saying that God was unable to give us clear and understandable truth through His apostles and prophets in scripture.**

Responses to two quotes from "Why Only Catholicism Can Make Protestantism Work".

The inspiration of the Bible means that God is the primary author of Scripture. Since we can say that about no other writing or formal expression of the Church's Faith, not even conciliar or papal definitions of faith, the Bible alone is the Word of God in this sense and therefore it possesses a unique authority.

Yet the supremacy of the Bible does not imply an opposition between it and the authority of the Church or Tradition, as certain negative principles adopted by the Reformers implied.

We are not saying the Bible implies "an opposition", we are saying an opposition is demanded by scripture when tradition is placed on the same level as scripture. Scripture alone is given the designation as "God-breathed" which means it alone is infallible as it came through apostles and prophets who delivered it infallibly. As seen in all the statements in scripture about tradition, no tradition is to be regarded as infallible unless you hear it from the lips or pen of Paul, or the apostles or the prophets themselves. They are all dead, so there is no authoritative tradition.

But that doesn't mean that the Word of God in an authoritative form is found only in the Bible, for the Word of God can be communicated in a non-inspired, yet authoritative form as well. There is no justification for saying the authoritative, infallible word of God is anywhere other than scripture. A person can preach the bible and have authority only when their words match the words of scripture. But that is a fallible person with a derived authority. Nor does it mean that there can be no authoritative interpreter of the Bible (the Magisterium) or authoritative interpretation of biblical doctrine (Tradition). You can't just say that. It has to be proven from scripture, and I have shown that it is not to be found in scripture.