The Sufficiency of Scripture
The Reasons to Accept Sola Scriptura

Wherein lies the authority of the Church? The Catholic Church holds that the direct authority for understanding God’s revelation is the teaching of the Church which takes her teaching from divine revelation---the written Word called “Scripture” and the oral or unwritten Word called “tradition;” the teaching authority or “Magisterium” of the Church headed by the pope has the God given responsibility to interpret both Scripture and Tradition which are the sources of all God’s spiritual truths.

The doctrine of Sola Scriptura originated with Martin Luther that the authority of the Church was not in the Church but in Scripture alone.

Sola Scriptura means that all truth necessary for salvation and spiritual life is found in Scripture; it does not claim that all truth is found is found in Scripture---the Bible says nothing about DNA, microbiology, the rules of Chinese grammar, or rocket science.

What some scientists call “scientific truth” other scientists will deny---like global warming, the age of the universe, or evolution; however Scripture is a “more sure word” standing above all other truth in its authority or certainty; it is “more sure” than the data we gather first hand through our senses (2 Peter 1:19); therefore Scripture is the highest and supreme authority on any matter to which it speaks.

Sola Scriptura does not claim that everything that Jesus taught or the apostles taught is preserved in Scripture; rather everything God requires us to know is given to us in Scripture; we are not to add to it or delete from it.

The Declaration of the Roman Catholic Church on Scripture
The doctrine of the Roman Church on Scripture... The Church has always had a high view of Scripture; the Council of Trent in 1546: “Scripture came from Christ and the apostles under the direction of the Holy Spirit;” Later the Church affirmed the “inerrancy of Scripture” at Vatican Council I, 1870; Pope Pius X in 1907 and Pope Pius XII 1943; the Vatican Council II in 1962 said: “Scriptures are divine revelation... firmly and faithfully without error” and contain “that truth which God wanted to put in sacred writings for our salvation.”

The dual authority of Scripture with Sacred tradition... The Council of Trent in 1546 stated that “sacred tradition” is an equal authority to Scripture; “Both sacred tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence.”

The Church backs up “sacred tradition” from Scripture (1Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15); these oral traditions were maintained and safeguarded by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13).

Some of the oral traditions besides the immaculate conception of the virgin Mary: infant baptism, the authority of the Catholic Church in matters of doctrine and morals, the perpetual virginity of the virgin Mary, the assumption of our Lady, salvation only through the Church, the infallibility of the pope when speaking ex cathedra, tradition declared as equal with the Bible, to name a few.

The Church maintains that sacred tradition contains nothing that is contrary to the Bible; the authority of the Catholic Church in matters of doctrine and morals was not ratified until the 4th Lateran Council in 1215.

The Denial of Tradition by the Reformers
The analyzing of the Scriptures to support tradition... The Scriptures do not teach a revelation or tradition different from what had already been revealed.

- 1 Corinthians 11:2 says that the believers at Corinth were to remain true to the teaching they had learned from one of Paul’s letters or when he spoke to them in person; the tradition was to be faithful to what Paul had taught.

- 2 Thessalonians 2:15 is the admonishment to hold to their present faith; to stand firm in what they had been taught.

The absence in Scripture of so called “sacred traditions”.... Those dealing with the virgin Mary and salvation through the Church; Paul warned: “learn from us, not to think beyond what is written” (1 Corinthians 4:6).

The affirming of Scripture as the sole standard of spiritual truth... Seen in The Westminster Confession of Faith and The 39 Articles of the Anglican Church; Sola Scriptura means Scripture alone is sufficient and the fact that Jesus taught and did many things not recorded in Scripture is not relevant to Sola Scriptura (John 20:30; 21:25).

The Difficulties of Sola Scriptura

Catholic objections to Sola Scriptura

1. The early Church did not have the entire New Testament... The last book of the New Testament was not completed until around 100 AD; the question the Catholic would ask is, “Who or what served as the official authority of the Church during this time?” They maintain it was the infallible authority of the Catholic Church as evidenced by settling the Arian controversy at the First Council of Nicea in 321.

While it is true that for the first 300 years the Church did not have the entire New Testament as we know it; but they did have some copies from the beginning; except for John’s writings the rest of the New Testament books were written between 45-67 AD and when received by a local church were copied and circulated (Colossians 4:16).

2. The canon of the Bible was not set until the fourth century... The 27 books of the New Testament, known as the canon were not settled until the end of the 4th Century; in determining the canon the Church used four criteria: The claim that
all Scripture was given under the inspiration of God; the contributors were apostles or those who had apostolic approval like Luke; the content had to have the authority of Christ; the conscience of the Church as the Church began to distinguish between true and false doctrine.

The earliest listing of New Testament books was compiled around 170 known as the Muratorian canon and it was discovered by Father Muratori in 1740; it contained all books but Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter and 3 John; the first listing of the 27 books was put together by Athanasius of Alexandria in 367; later it was the Synod of Rome (382), the Council of Hippo (393) and the Council of Carthage (397) that ratified what the early Christians had already determined to be sacred Scripture.

3. An “extra-biblical” authority identified the canon of the Bible... What the Roman Church is saying is, since the authority within the Church determined which books were canonical and which books were not, does this not give evidence of extra-biblical authority outside the Bible? The Roman Catholic Church claims to have given us the Bible; did they? The first century church early was called the Catholic Church meaning the Universal Church and so named by Ignatius of Antioch in 110; it was named Catholic based on the great commission to spread the gospel worldwide the Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church are not one and the same; the Roman Catholic Church evolved out of the Catholic Church perhaps at the time of the first official pope.

The Roman Church never had a pope until Leo I (440-461); he was the first bishop of Rome to declare himself pope based on “the glory of the blessed Apostle Peter... in whose chair his power lies and on his authority shines forth;” It was Pope Pius X (1835-1914) who declared he is “Jesus Christ hidden under the veil of the flesh. Does the pope speak? It is Jesus Christ who speaks.” It was Pope Pius XI (1857-1939) who declared “infallibility” when speaking on matters of doctrine and morals.

4. The belief that Scripture is “self-authenticating” does not hold up under examination... The issue is, do individual books of the Bible bear witness in themselves that they are inspired of God? Catholics would say “No” because there is too much disagreement and uncertainty over various book---James, Jude, 2 Peter, and Revelation; Athanasius (297-373), Jerome (342-420) and Augustine (354-430) were not in agreement on what books should be included; therefore since the authentication for Scripture does not come from Scripture, it must come from the Church.
5. The doctrine of Sola Scriptura created division and disunity which resulted in multiple Protestant denominations... Catholics have a good argument here; once Scripture was put in the hands of common people, individual interpretation resulted in thousands of different denominations; the Lord never intended His body to be fragmented; the Catholic Church has remained as one body in doctrine based on the authority within the Church to make that one doctrine; Catholics maintain a united interpretation, Protestants give a divided interpretation.

6. The final authority for doctrine and morals is in the Church and not in Scripture... The Church alone has been given the authority to interpret Scripture (1 Timothy 3:15); what this says is, if Scripture is infallible, and only the Church can interpret Scripture, then the Church is infallible.

The Doctrine of Sola Scriptura in Scripture

The dilemma over defending Sola Scriptura... Catholics will say there is no place in Scripture that says you cannot add to Scripture; you cannot use Deuteronomy 4:2 for Moses is talking about the Mosaic Law; you cannot use Revelation 22:18-19 for that refers only to the book of Revelation.

The discovery of Scriptures that support Sola Scriptura...

1. It is based on the completeness of the man of God who knows Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17); the word “complete” (exartizo) refers to the result of Scripture as it makes the man of God thoroughly accomplished to perform his ministry; Catholics refer to “the man of God” as the clergy of the Church and does not apply to all believers.

2. It is based on the commitment to contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 1:3); “the faith” is the sum total of all that we are to believe; “once for all delivered” is aorist passive meaning it was delivered at a point in time in the past; that is “the faith” has been once and for all time delivered to the saints by means of apostles and prophets (Ephesians 3:3-5).

3. It is based on the content of Scripture (2 Peter 1:3-4); Scripture provides us with everything we need for life and godliness; God’s Word is complete and we need nothing more.
4. **It is based on the completed construction of the foundation upon which the Church is to be built (Ephesians 2:19-22);** the Church is the household of God built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets to whom divine revelation was given (Ephesians 3:3-5); you don’t build on an incomplete foundation.

5. It is based on the claim of Paul that there is no gospel but what he preached (Galatians 1:8); Paul claims to have been given the total gospel and anyone who would preach a different gospel would be cursed.

6. **It is based on the command not to go beyond what is written (1 Corinthians 6:4).**

7. **It is based on the certainty that Jesus is the final and the fullness of God’s revelation (Hebrews 1:1-2);** Jesus is “the Word become flesh” (John 1:14).

8. **It is based on the criteria that the Holy Spirit is the only interpreter of Scripture (1 Corinthians 2:13);** Scripture is the final authority of God and He makes His will known by revelation (Ephesians 3:3-5), inspiration (1 Corinthians 2:14-16) and illumination (1 Corinthians 2:14-16); in each case the Holy Spirit is the divine agent doing the work (2 Peter 1:21); the Church is not the sole interpreter of Scripture but the Holy Spirit working individually through the lives of believers.