

Are the Books of the New Testament “Self-Authenticating” or was the Catholic Church Necessary to Define the Canon of Scripture?

By Steve Ray

Hello Protestant Friend:

I was very happy to receive your twenty-five-page letter which claimed that *sola Scriptura* (Bible alone) and *sola fide* (faith alone) were the faith and teaching of the Apostles. I found your reasoning very weak (sorry to say) and since I once believed these false doctrines myself I thought I ought to respond to your misconceptions. I have no animosity toward you for your views; in fact; I love you for taking the time to express your theology and I love you for your sincere faith in our Lord Jesus. Having once held these views myself, I know that they can be held in good faith and I assume that is the case with you.

Since this letter became longer than I originally expected, I decided to add an outline to help you understand the flow of my discussion. So, here it goes.

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I. OUR RECENT DISCUSSIONS

A. Intro: Self-authentication of the Biblical Documents

Anyway, to get serious, when we talked about the authentication of the sacred books contained in our Bible, you mentioned legal precedent for documents that were “self-authenticating.” In other words, as I understood it, there was no need for anyone (including individuals, authorities, councils, apostolic successors, etc.) to make such a *determination* as to which books were infallible, inspired, and canonical, since they were self-authenticating and could be *discovered*, but not *determined*. This is Norman Geisler’s view as well (Endnote 1) Whew! I hope that mouthful made sense.

You also said that the reason it took so long to discover the collected canon was due to the condition of man. If you don’t mind, and in the spirit of friendship and combativeness we have always had together and thoroughly enjoyed I will continue our tradition and take another salvo in this letter. I don’t have any Norman blood, but I do have French [passion], and German [precision and belligerence], and Irish [feisty], and English [verbose] blood in me. So, don’t blame me, blame it on my genes.

B. Federal Rules for Self-authenticating Documents

I am of the opinion that the sacred writings were not, and are not self-authenticating. I don’t mean they are devoid of divine authorship, nor that they are without the divine imprint. I only mean that internal and external evidence alone is not enough to clearly and definitively establish them as inspired, authoritative, and infallible. Since you mentioned it, I looked up the legal guidelines on the matter of self authentication in the Federal Rules (U.S. Code Title 18 Crimes and Criminal Procedure, Federal Rules no. 902) (Endnote 2). This is the section, as you well know, of *Self-Authentication*. The reason I looked this up is simple: you stopped me in my tracks when you mentioned this, not because I questioned the validity of my objection to self-authentication, but because I was not knowledgeable about the evidentiary rules.

Based on these ten rules, I don’t think the sacred writings would be allowed into court on the basis of the Federal Rules. I have included a photocopy of the section for your easy reference. These rules state that “*extrinsic evidence of authenticity as a condition precedent to admissibility is not required with respect to the following*” and then it list the ten conditions.

The conditions are actually quite stringent and demanding such as “*a document bearing a seal purporting to be that of the United States, [list other governmental agencies or domains] . . . and a signature purporting to be an attestation*” (no. 1). The second: “*A document purporting to bear the signature in his official capacity of an officer . . . having no seal . . . if a public officer having a seal and having official duties in the district . . . certifies under seal that the signer has the official capacity and that the signature is genuine.*” “Purports to be” is a key phrase in Rule 902. However, in the New Testament documents, none of the gospels “purports to be” by any author. They are “just there” purporting to be by no one. Nor do the other writings necessarily purport to be written by an apostle or have the “seal of approval” of an apostle included in the text. Just for the sake of argument, Paul claimed to be an apostle, but from the

words of Christ or the words of the Twelve, it can't be substantiated. It can only be substantiated if you accept Paul's own claims, or those of his followers (e.g., Luke), (Endnote 3) or if you accept the tradition of the Church.

These first two subsections of Rule 902 are pretty tough. The third covers *Foreign Public Documents* with the same criteria for the first two. The fourth are *Certified copies of public records*, in which the word "certified" stands out; the fifth are *Official publications* issued by public authority and are therefore open to verification if "push came to shove"; the sixth are *newspapers and periodicals*. This one is interesting and may be the closest to the historical situation in the first century in which documents were being passed freely around. The endnote to point #6 states, "*The likelihood of forgery of newspapers or periodicals is slight indeed. Hence, no danger is apparent in receiving them.*" However, we know from the first centuries that the attempt to forge or pass documents off as apostolic was a real problem. With over one hundred and fifty documents from the first two centuries that we know of, circulating under the name of an apostle or the claim of apostolic authorship, the rules of evidence would have had to be much more stringent.

Since none of the autographs (original apostolic writings) exist, all we have are copies and they could have been easily tampered with early on as is evident from the various endings for the gospel of Mark and other variant readings and alterations in many New Testament passages. We know Paul was protective of his writings because he understood the attempts that others would make to alter his epistles or forge documents in his name (1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; Col 4:18; 2 Thes 3:17; Philem 19).⁴ In 2 Thessalonians 2:2 Paul is concerned with forgeries, epistles written in his name. He writes, "*We beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.*" Remember that there are no autographs of New Testament documents. We do not have the luxury of knowing Paul's distinctive handwriting in his original autograph. We have only imperfect, handwritten copies of copies of copies . . .

Point #7 covers trade inscriptions; #8 acknowledged documents which again must be accompanied "*by a certificate of acknowledgment executed in the manner provided by law by a notary public or other officer authorized by law to take acknowledgments.*" Finally, #9 concerns Commercial paper and related documents and #10 Presumptions under Acts of Congress. It covers "*any signature, documents, or other matter declared by Act of Congress to be presumptively or prima facie genuine or authentic.*" Actually this is very close to what the Catholic would say: "How do we know this is genuine?" "Because of an act or determination of the magisterium (teaching office)."

In looking over the *Federal Rules of Evidence* it seems the sacred books—what you base your eternal hopes and sole source of revelation upon—would fare quite badly and be in real trouble. Would an objective judge today admit them as authentic apostolic writings, sacred text, divinely written, self-authenticating, for a final draft of the canon . . . without an original autograph, with only flawed copies extant, without a purported signature, without an official seal of some sort, without the possibility of collaborative sources, with disputed authenticity or authorship, etc.? I doubt it. Most New Testament documents don't have declared authors, none are certified within reason to be self-authenticating, and some are known to be written by a non-apostle or by someone unknown. A really interesting case. And, when we consider the import of

the decision, a split decision or mistrial would not be very comforting or “faith-building”—certainly not a strong evangelistic tool.

If we are to die for a document, or a collection of documents, as many early Christians were wont to do, we want to *know* it is authentic and infallible, without reasonable doubt. If we are to base our eternal destiny on it, and that of our children—heaven or hell—we want to be without a doubt that the component parts that are in our possession are authentic, inspired, and infallible. We also want the component parts to be collected into a closed canon that is also authentic, inspired and *infallible*—so that we *know* we have the words of Christ and his apostles. Protestant methodology, if I had been honest several years ago, or had known the real situation, would have driven me close to agnosticism.

With the above criteria (the Federal Rules) for positive identification of infallible books, a few books might possibly make it in a Federal court, but most would not. Let’s look at what we actually have:

Π Only a few New Testament documents reveal their author (Paul’s epistles, *James* [which one?], *Peter*, *Jude*, and the *Revelation* of John [which John?]). Both letters to Thessalonians purport to be written by Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. Others purport to be co-written by Sosthenes, Timothy, and Tertius. (I add “purport” to make a point, not to doubt the authorship.) The authorship of the “unsigned” documents is determined in most cases by Church tradition and speculation based on internal evidence, e.g. *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, *John*, *Acts*, and the Epistles of John.

Π A few claim apostolic authorship (Paul’s [though he was not one of the Twelve Jesus commissioned and we don’t have all his writings], *Peter*, *James* possibly, and with many challenges in the past, *Revelation*), but a claim can be challenged and it has been, especially in regards to the *Revelation*.

Π Others are written by Apostles, assumed on the basis of Church tradition (e.g., *Matthew*, *John*).

Π Some are clearly *not* written by an apostle or one who knew Christ (*Mark*, *Luke*, *Acts*, *Jude* [Jude 17], and *Hebrews* (Heb 2:3), and maybe others).

Π The authorship of others is uncertain and still challenged by scholars, just as they were questioned in the first centuries (*2 Peter*, *2 and 3 John*, *Hebrews*, and others).

C. Correct Criterion vs. Circular Reasoning

A criterion is a test or some recognized principle by which we can determine the correctness of a conclusion or judgment. Accordingly, the criterion of inspiration is the test or principle by which we distinguish inspired books from non-inspired books. Such biblical criteria should have various requisites: (a) it should by its very nature be apt to bear witness to the fact of inspiration; (b) it should be universally applicable to only and all the inspired books without exception; (c) it should be universally adapted to the capacity of all men, since there is a

question of something that must be believed; (d) it should be infallibly true. Such criteria are necessary, because the inspiration of the Bible is a dogma of the Church, accepted by all believers, and on the basis of such a criterion we must make an act of divine faith. A lot rests on the foundation of an inspired canon and such a requirement of faith would require a sure foundation.

But instead of these certain criteria, we have an inadequate explanation from Evangelicals. I attempted to find a good defense of the self-authentication theory. One of the best popular books on the scriptural questions is *God's Inerrant Word* edited by John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1974) based upon a Conference on the Inspiration and Authority of Scriptures conducted at Ligonier in 1973. The contributors were Montgomery, Packer, Gerstner, Pinnock, Frame, Jones, and Sproul. The chapter dealing with establishing the canon and its self-authentication is written by John M. Frame and entitled *Scripture Speaks for Itself*.

In this chapter, which is very poorly done, by the way, Frame writes, "*The authority of Scripture is a doctrine of the Christian faith—a doctrine like other doctrines—like the deity of Christ, justification by faith, sacrificial atonement. To prove such doctrines, Christians go to Scripture. Where else can we find information on God's redemptive purposes? But what of the doctrine of the authority of Scripture? Must we not, to be consistent, also prove that doctrine by Scripture? If so, then the self-witness of Scripture must not only be the first consideration in the argument; it must be the final and decisive consideration also*" (pg. 178).

It is one thing to prove a doctrine from a book that is proven authoritative. It is quite another thing to prove the authority of a book, from that book, before the book itself is proven authoritative. These two are very different situations. This is circular reasoning and gets us nowhere. It is even worse when we realize that the book (New Testament) is made up of twenty-seven component parts and was not a "unit" or canon for over three centuries. So, the Bible must not only prove that it is *itself*, in its present form, inspired and infallible, but it must also make that proof for each of the individual component parts. Discussing the *whole* as inspired is irrelevant until the component *parts* are proven to be inspired and infallible and I see that done nowhere in Scripture or Protestant theology.

Later, the author concedes this and tries to get around it. He writes, "*It is impossible to avoid circularity of a sort when one is arguing on behalf of an ultimate criterion. One may not argue for one ultimate criterion by appealing to another. And the argument over Scriptural authority is precisely an argument over ultimate criterion!*" (pg. 179). Here Frame makes my point for me. He admits it is circular! He makes the fatal flaw of assuming that the twenty-seven writings are the final criterion before they are proven to be. He takes a collection that tradition (the Catholic Church) has placed in his hands and begins to run in circles chasing his tail in his circular argument but proving nothing. Is the Bible the final criterion? No. If Jesus had stood in front of the believers in the fourth century and said, "These books are the final collection of what you are to obey as infallible and authoritative scriptures," where would the final criterion lie, in Jesus or the Book? The Book of component parts cannot be its own criterion for infallibility. Any judge would laugh you out of court with this process and argument.

The Catholic sees another source of criterion—Christ still working through his body on earth through the Holy Spirit. Peter, being invested with the office of Royal Steward or Prime Minister (cp. Matt. 16 and Is. 22, and read my paper on “*An Old Testament Basis for the Primacy and Succession of Peter*”) was given the keys of the kingdom of heaven that accompany that office. The person (Peter) may die, but the office doesn’t. The keys (delegated royal authority) are assigned to the office holder (Is 22:15–22),⁵ and then passed on to the successor of the office. Offices are permanent, dynastic, and the keys don’t disappear but are passed on. This is the way the Church understood herself from the first century until the radical and substantive break of the Reformation.⁶ The Reformers then had to come up with new criteria for the canon and for infallibility. They discarded the first criterion and were forced to establish a new one that put them in the vicious cycle of circular reasoning. Calvin, as we will quote later, had the most subjective criterion.

After making the determination that Scripture is authoritative and infallible solely upon one’s reaction when reading it, John Frame continues by saying on page 179, “*So the question of the biblical self-witness is a momentous one indeed.*” No argument here, but he goes on to do a very poor job of “proving” his point. He would be laughed out of court. I will throw my lot with the Fathers—I am in good company. They understood something forgotten today by Evangelicals: Did Jesus promise us an authoritative Book, or an authoritative Church? *Sola Scriptura* was unheard of until it was forced upon the Reformers along with its unbiblical, unhistorical, and unreasonable claims. And to think that all of Protestant thought is founded on that one foundational “doctrine”.

Frame also comments, on page 181, that “*If, as orthodox people maintain, the biblical self-witness to its authority and infallibility is obvious, clear, and certainly if it is ‘persuasive’!—then we must face more squarely the question of why not-so-orthodox people see the matter differently. At one level, of course, it is legitimate to say that they fail to see the truth because of their unbelief: the god of this world has blinded their minds.*” Frame’s comment reminds me of your assertion that the canon was not “discovered” for over three centuries because of the “condition of man”. This is a tough mouthful to swallow for me, since I think it is evasive, and certainly again, circular reasoning. By the way, is this why Luther had such a hard time with the component parts of the New Testament?, And he was the designer and engineer of *sola Scriptura*.

D. The Early Church and the New Testament Documents

For my own education I did a little research into the acceptance/non-acceptance of the New Testament books in the first centuries and followed up with a bit from the Reformation. *This was a process of development of doctrine within the Church*, similar to the development of the doctrine of the Trinity or the deity of Christ. Here is a short summary of some of the development and formation of the New Testament canon.⁷ Did the writers of the New Testament understand their writings would some day be considered infallible, inspired scripture, and be collected into a New Testament?⁸ We gather information on the “self-authenticating” and collection of the canon from Eusebius, who wrote at the end of the third century and finished his history about 325 A.D.

“Nevertheless, of all the disciples of the Lord, only Matthew and John have left us written memorials, and they, tradition says, were led to write only under the pressure of necessity. For Matthew, who had at first preached to the Hebrews, when he was about to go to other peoples, committed his Gospel to writing in his native tongue, and thus compensated those whom he was obliged to leave for the loss of his presence. And when Mark and Luke had already published their Gospels, they say that John, who had employed all his time in proclaiming the Gospel orally, finally proceeded to write for the following reason. The three Gospels already mentioned having come into the hands of all and into his own too, they say that he accepted them and bore witness to their truthfulness; but that there was lacking in them an account of the deeds done by Christ at the beginning of his ministry” (pg. 152–153).

“But of the writings of John, not only his Gospel, but also the former [first] of his epistles, has been accepted without dispute both now and in ancient times. But the other two are disputed. In regard to the Apocalypse, the opinions of most men are still divided” (pg. 153).

“Among the disputed writings, which are nevertheless recognized n by many, are extant the so-called epistle of James and that of Jude, also the second epistle of Peter, and those that are called the second and third of John, whether they belong to the evangelist or to another person of the same name. Among the rejected writings must be reckoned also the Acts of Paul, and the so-called Shepherd [accepted my many in the East as canonical], and the Apocalypse of Peter, and in addition to these the extant epistle of Barnabas, and the so-called Teachings of the Apostles; and besides, as I said, the Apocalypse of John, if it seem proper, which some, as I said, reject, but which others class with the accepted books. And among these some have placed also the Gospel according to the Hebrews, with which those of the Hebrews that have accepted Christ are especially delighted. And all these may be reckoned among the disputed books. But we have nevertheless felt compelled to give a catalogue of these also, distinguishing those works which according to ecclesiastical tradition are true and genuine and commonly accepted, from those others which, although not canonical but disputed, are yet at the same time known to most ecclesiastical writers—we have felt compelled to give this catalogue in order that we might be able to know both these works and those that are cited by the heretics under the name of the apostles, including, for instance, such books as the Gospels of Peter, of Thomas, of Matthias, or of any others besides them, and the Acts of Andrew and John and the other apostles, which no one belonging to the succession of ecclesiastical writers has deemed worthy of mention in his writings” (pg. 156–157).

“One epistle of Peter, that called the first, is acknowledged as genuine. And this the ancient elders used freely in their own writings as an undisputed work. But we have learned that his extant second Epistle does not belong to the canon; yet, as it has appeared profitable to many, it has been used with the other Scriptures. The so-called Acts 2 of Peter, however, and the Gospel which bears

his name, and the Preaching and the Apocalypse, as they are called, we know have not been universally accepted, because no ecclesiastical writer, ancient or modern, has made use of testimonies drawn from them. But in the course of my history I shall be careful to show, in addition to the official succession, what ecclesiastical writers have from time to time made use of any of the disputed works, and what they have said in regard to the canonical and accepted writings, as well as in regard to those which are not of this class. Such are the writings that bear the name of Peter, only one of which I know to be genuine and acknowledged by the ancient elders. Paul's fourteen epistles are well known and undisputed. It is not indeed right to overlook the fact that some have rejected the Epistle to the Hebrews, saying that it is disputed by the church of Rome, on the ground that it was not written by Paul. But what has been said concerning this epistle by those who lived before our time I shall quote in the proper place. In regard to the so-called Acts of Paul, I have not found them among the undisputed writings. But as the same apostle, in the salutations at the end of the Epistle to the Romans, has made mention among others of Hermas, to whom the book called The Shepherd is ascribed, it should be observed that this too has been disputed by some, and on their account cannot be placed among the acknowledged books; while by others it is considered quite indispensable, especially to those who need instruction in the elements of the faith. Hence, as we know, it has been publicly read in churches, and I have found that some of the most ancient writers used it. This will serve to show the divine writings that are undisputed as well as those that are not universally acknowledged” (pg. 134–136).

Quoting from Irenaeus (c. 120–200 A.D.) Eusebius writes, “ *Matthew published his Gospel among the Hebrews in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching and founding the church in Rome. After their departure [death] Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also transmitted to us in writing those things which Peter had preached; and Luke, the attendant of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel which Paul had declared. Afterwards John, the disciple of the Lord, who also reclined on his bosom, published his Gospel, while staying at Ephesus in Asia.*’ [Then referring to the Apocalypse he quotes Irenaeus further], ‘*For it was seen, not long ago, but almost in our generation, toward the end of the reign of Domitian.*’ He states these things concerning the Apocalypse in the work referred to. He also mentions the first Epistle of John, taking many proofs from it, and likewise the first Epistle of Peter. And he not only knows, but also receives, *The Shepherd [of Hermas]*” (pg. 222–223).

I could go on and on showing, using the Fathers, that not all the books were immediately accepted, and no canon was assumed or definitive for 393 years after the resurrection, which throws doubt on the theory that they can be known simply by virtue of their “clear and obvious” self-authentication. Numerous canons existed, for example Marcion’s canon (d. c. AD 160) which excluded most of our current New Testament. Are the books of the Old Testament also self-authenticating? The canon of the Old Testament was not even agreed upon by the Jews until well after the Christian era began. In Jamnia (c. 90–100) the Jewish leaders discussed which Old Testament books were canonical, and even then there were continued discussions and uncertainties into the next centuries.⁹

And much of what we do know of the New Testament writings comes from tradition (who wrote Matthew, why should we trust the gospel of Mark, why do we consider Luke infallible, why trust Jude who was not even an apostle, etc. etc.). Throughout the early history it was apostolic tradition that was accepted as the “ecclesiastical authority” through which we knew the infallible books.¹⁰ This is not readily admitted in Protestant literature, just as Palestinians are not going to give “the whole truth and nothing but the truth” about the Israelis.

E. The Reformation and the Canon

If the canon was self-authenticating and therefore “known”, what happened at the Reformation? When Martin Luther rejected “popes and councils” he also realized that the canon was again up for grabs. He didn’t like *James* as we know, but he also placed *Hebrews*, *Jude*, and *Revelation* at the back of the book, not with the inspired books. It was only later that Philipp Melancthon convinced him to defer to long tradition and place the books back in the New Testament, back in the recognized order. How did Luther fail to recognize the self-authenticating writings?

Here is an extended quotation from *The Facts About Luther* by Patrick F. O’Hare (Rockford, IL: TAN Books, 1996, 1987), pgs. 202–205. It is long and you can skip it if you like, but I think you will find it interesting.

“The books of the New Testament fared no better. He rejected from the canon the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of St. James, the Epistle of St. Jude and the Apocalypse. These he placed at the end of his translation, after the others, which he called ‘the true and certain capital books of the New Testament.’ He says: ‘The first three [Gospels] speak of the works of Our Lord, rather than of His oral teachings; that of St. John is the only sympathetic, the only true Gospel and should undoubtedly be preferred to the others. In like manner the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Paul are superior to the first three Gospels.’ The Epistle to the Hebrews did not suit him. ‘It need not surprise one to find here,’ he says, ‘bits of wood, hay and straw.’ The Epistle of St. James, Luther denounced as ‘an epistle of straw.’ ‘I do not hold it,’ he said, ‘to be his writing, and I cannot place it among the capital books.’ He did this because it proclaimed the necessity of good works, contrary to his heresy. ‘There are many things objectionable in this book,’ he says of the Apocalypse; ‘to my mind it bears upon it no marks of an apostolic or prophetic character. . . . Everyone may form his own judgment of this book; as for myself, I feel an aversion to it, and to me this is sufficient reason for rejecting it.’ (Sammtliche Werke [Collected Works], 63, 169–170). At the present day and for a long time previously, the Lutherans, ashamed of these excesses, have replaced the two Epistles and the Apocalypse in the canon of the Sacred Scriptures.

“Luther declared time and again that he looked upon the Bible ‘as if God Himself spoke therein.’ ‘Yet,’ as Gigot says, ‘inconsistently with this statement, he freely charges the sacred writers with inaccurate statements, unsound reasonings, the use of imperfect materials and even urges the authority of Christ against that of Holy Writ.’ In a word, as is admitted by a recent Protestant writer: ‘Luther has

no fixed theory of inspiration: if all his works suppose the inspiration of the Sacred Writings, all his conduct shows that he makes himself the supreme judge of it' (Rabaud, p. 42). His pride was intense. He conceived himself directly illuminated by the Holy Ghost and second only to the Godhead. In this spirit of arrogance and blasphemy, he did as he willed with the Sacred Volume, which had been handed down through the centuries in integrity, truth, and authority. The old and accepted Bible he knew in his professorial days was an awkward book for him when in the period of his religious vertigo he rebelled against the Church which had preserved, guarded, and protected it during the previous fifteen hundred years. It went straight against his heresies, and he would not have it as it had been handed down in integrity and completeness. He twisted, distorted, and mutilated it. He changed it, added to and took from it, to make it fit his newly found teaching. He feels abundantly competent, by his own interior and spiritual instinct, to pronounce dogmatically which books in the canon of Scripture are inspired and which are not. Nothing embarrasses him. To make his Testament more Lutheran, though less scriptural, was his object. Reverent scholars decried his arbitrary handling of the Sacred Volume. He, however, cared little for their protests. In his usual characteristic raving, he cries out: 'Papists and asses are synonymous terms.' He will have his changes in the Sacred Text, right or wrong. 'Here one must yield not a nail's breadth to any, neither to the angels of Heaven, nor to the gates of Hell, nor to St. Paul, nor to a hundred emperors, nor to a thousand Popes, nor to the whole world; and this be my watchword and sign: tessera et symbolum.' [watchword and sign].

"The Inspired Word of God was nothing to Luther when it could not be made to square with Lutheranism. He is prepared to assume the whole responsibility for the changes he made, and believes he has the faculty of judging the Bible without danger of error. He believes he is infallible. 'My word' says he, in an exhortation to his followers, 'is the word of Christ: my mouth is the mouth of Christ.' And to prove this, he indulges in a prophecy: he proclaims that 'if his Gospel is preached but for two years, then Pope, bishops, cardinals, priests, monks, nuns, bells, belltowers, masses—rules, statues and all the vermin and riffraff of the Papal government will have vanished like smoke.' Luther with all this flourish of trumpets proved himself a false prophet. The Church that he thought would 'vanish like smoke' is still in existence and now as ever cries out in the words of her Founder: 'There will rise up false Christs and false prophets and they shall show signs and wonders to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. Take ye heed, therefore: behold I have foretold you all things.' (Mark 13:22–23).

"Not only did Luther knowingly make additions to the text and expunge from the canon some of the Inspired Books, but he distorted the meaning of several passages by interpretations that were erroneous and nothing short of blasphemous. He even went so far as to accuse the Divine Author of playful mendacity, of irony, when no other sense of the Inspired Words would suit the Lutheran cause."

Swiss Reformer John Calvin (1509–64) also had a precarious view of Scripture in the sense of how one knows inspired text and the formation of the canon. He simply makes it a matter of internal witness, a subjective criteria. Calvin wrote, *"Let it therefore be held as fixed,*

that those who are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit acquiesce implicitly in Scripture; that Scripture, carrying its own evidence along with it [self-authenticating], deigns not to submit to proofs and arguments; but owes the full conviction with which we ought to receive it to the testimony of the Spirit. Enlightened by him, we no longer believe, either on our own judgment or that of others, that the Scriptures are from God; but in a way superior to human judgment, feel perfectly assured . . . in holding it, [that] we hold unassailable truth; not like miserable men, whose minds are enslaved by superstition, but because we feel a divine energy living and breathing in it” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983], 1: vii, 3). He says that the knowledge of what is Scripture comes to each individual from “heavenly revelation.” On Calvin’s principles, should each person have the right and authority (and therefore the uncertainty) to determine their own canon of Scripture? Would Calvin’s criteria stand up in court according to the most liberal of rules for self-authentication? “Well Judge, I know it must be an infallible inspired writing because I “feel it” when I read it!” The judge may respond, “Even when you read Philemon or Third John, as opposed to Ignatius or Clement? Why have so many contested against your view? Why should your “internal witness” be considered binding on all believers?”

The problem was Calvin’s anti-hierarchical stance (except for his own authority of course which was infallible enough to condemn Servetus and others to the flames) which left him with no objective criteria. He rests on the tradition of the Church and at the same time he rejects the Church and her authority. Like Luther, he wants his cake and wants to eat it too. His theory would be inadequate to determine the canon, but it sounds good, and appears feasible, now that the Bible is actually in his hand. He is left wide open though, because without the Church there has been no consistency on the canon, as is shown by the early centuries, Marcion, Luther, Abuna Matta el-Meskeen, etc. Calvin’s means of “discovery” and “determination” are very similar to those used by the Mormons to verify the inspiration of the *Book of Mormon*. The Mormons claim to know the *Book of Mormon* is true, infallible, and inspired by God because when they read it, they get a “burning in the bosom”, which is an internal witness to verify the inspiration. In the *Book of Mormon* we read, “*And when you shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Spirit. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things*” (*Moroni 10:4, 5* [Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, 1981], 529). How are these two “self-authenticating” procedures different? The Mormons authenticate their *Book of Mormon* using Calvin’s methodology of an internal witness. Based on this subjective method alone, it is difficult to dispute their conclusions that the *Book of Mormon* is God’s word, or to defend the canon of our Bible.

F. A Fallible Collection of Infallible Books

I know a Coptic biblical scholar named Abuna Matta el-Meskeen who lives in a monastery in Egypt who has written, I am told, over two hundred books in Arabic, including commentaries of most New Testament books. We spent a good bit of time with him in the deserts outside Alexandria (where Athanasius spent many years in exile). He says he doesn’t consider the book of *Revelation* to be inspired or canonical. He says he just ignores it. Who is to say he is wrong? What criteria would you appeal to? Tradition? Why do Protestants so naively

hold to a collection of twenty-seven books (we're not dealing with the Old Testament here, though I am sending you a letter I wrote on that topic) without knowing whether it is an infallible collection or not. I think they do it on faith based unknowingly on a tradition they have received. Believe me, I am not calling you naive, I know better. I also held it as an unshakeable tenet of my faith up until two years ago.

I know R. C. Sproul admits that the classic Protestant position is that we only have a "*fallible collection of infallible books*".¹¹ I would never have admitted to that three years ago. I would have (and I think you would have to) fought to the death on that one. A *fallible* collection is not very assuring. If I was still an Evangelical and had to struggle over Sproul's statement, I think, like others, I would have seriously been pushed toward agnosticism.

In a recent tract entitled *Church Fathers and the Bible* put out by the virulent anti-Catholic organization *Mission to Catholics International*, they made the statement "*Canonists also determined which books belonged to the Scriptures, as people were confused concerning which writings were valid and which ones were not*" (San Diego, CA: Mission to Catholics, Inc.). I wrote Mr. Olson and Bart Brewer several letters, to which I never received an answer. I asked them, "*Can you tell me who these canonists were and what Church they belonged to? Also, were they part of some organization that had the authority to make such a profound determination? Did they write down their determinations and decisions, and, if so, where would I be able to get a copy? What criteria did they use to pick the twenty-seven books? Why do we accept their determination as binding on us today? How do we know they were right?*"

I come back to self-authentication. I really think Dave, that Protestants have a very weak position. I would not want to take it into court. It is too important to take this matter lightly. Why hold to a position recently devised (and a radical departure from fifteen hundred years of orthodox thought) to explain the canon and infallibility? They had to after the authority of the Church was overthrown. They were pushed into it. This is a novel teaching, not one accepted by the early Church. The early Christians understood the need for authoritative teachers in the Church. Reading Eusebius and the Apostolic and Church Fathers one realizes very quickly that Apostolic Tradition and Apostolic Succession were considered primary and crucial in the preservation of orthodoxy, development of doctrine, preservation of morals and unity, and the only authority that could close the canon. Closing the canon is really the crucial issue and the Achilles Heel of Protestantism.

I can't accept the claim that the canon was uncertain for 393 years (a time span equivalent to the period between the Pilgrims leaving Plymouth, England and today) due to the sinful condition of man. If the books are self-authenticating, then they are self-authenticating. Sinful man sure figured out some of them quickly, even considering their human condition. What does that say for Martin Luther when he struggled with the content of the canon throughout his life? Protestants claim that the Bible is *perspicuous* as well. But how so? Practice and history show the canon of the New Testament are neither self-authenticating nor perspicuous. On top of that the Bible never claims either of these for itself.

II. YOUR LETTER: ESPECIALLY ON INSPIRATION, SCRIPTURE, AND SOLA SCRIPTURA

A. 2 Timothy 3:15, 16: A Basis for the Canon of the New Testament?¹²

1. Old Testament or New Testament

A fallible collection of infallible books is really an oxymoron. But, now to the content of your letter dealing with *sola Scriptura*. You did a good job defending your position. It is as good as they come. Warfield, Sproul, and Geisler would commend you. However, as clear a thinker as you are and as superb a job as you did, I will attempt, I think successfully, to dismantle it and show the flaws in your syllogism. I will also challenge the “two prongs” of your argument for *sola Scriptura*. Bear with me as your friend, as I lay some groundwork.

Can we know that the component books of the New Testament, and therefore the New Testament as a whole, are inspired and infallible based on 1 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 3:15, or 1 Timothy 5:18? I say no. At best it can refer only to the Old Testament, Paul’s writings, and the *Gospel of Luke*. What about *Matthew, Mark, John, Acts*, etc? The extrapolation here is enormous. Again, you will probably agree, it would never stand up in court that those passages “prove” that the collection of twenty-seven books are inspired, infallible, authoritative, and inerrant. We will discuss the syllogism used later in this letter when we discuss Geisler’s book, but here it is briefly states:

*All “Scripture” is inspired (II Tim. 3:16).
The New Testament is also “Scripture” (I Tim. 5:18; 2 Peter 3:16).
Therefore, the New Testament is inspired.*¹³

Taking it a little farther, 1 Timothy 3:16 says nothing about the New Testament documents. The question is not whether all Scripture is inspired—we know it is. Paul is not trying to convince Timothy that the sacred writings he was raised on were inspired. Jews knew that already. What is in question here for us is *what is considered as Scripture*. It does not tell us. Paul is, in context, referring to the “Law and the Prophets”. Contextually and historically it does not include the New Testament. It can mean this, but only in principle and by extrapolation. If used as a proof, it actually proves too much, namely, that only Old Testament writings are inspired.

Now, in your letter to me (in which you challenge *Crossing the Tiber*) you attempt to make the case for *sola Scriptura* from this passage in Timothy. You state, “*Your contention that 2 Timothy 3:16 cannot be used as a support for ‘sola Scriptura’ is unfounded.*” First, let’s make a distinction. My case was that 2 Timothy 3:16 does not teach or establish *sola Scriptura* as a doctrine. *Establishing* and *supporting* are two entirely different things. This passage may be used in some way as a supporting preliminary “prong” in trying to defend the doctrine, but that certainly is not the same as saying it teaches or establishes the doctrine. If you remember my exact words in *Crossing the Tiber*, I did not use the word *support*. Support is a much softer word. My words were: “*The closest I came to establishing a biblical case for sola Scriptura was 2 Timothy 3:16, which was certainly not intended by St. Paul as a proof text for the sole sufficiency of Scripture. In fact, if it were used in that way, the text would prove too much, since the term “Scripture” in this passage is referring to the Old Testament (there was no New*

Testament canon yet) and would thereby exclude the New Testament from the proof.” My point was that 2 Timothy 3:16 was not a proof text that established sola Scriptura as a firm doctrine of the faith.

I continue going through your footnote #3 on page 18. We absolutely agree that all Scripture is inspired and therefore is infallible. But your conclusion does not follow: *“The passage therefore establishes the first prong (that the Scriptures are infallible) of ‘sola Scriptura’.* It does not. I will demonstrate that the structure of the verse in the Greek does not necessarily allow you to even make this statement. We have been trained as Evangelicals with the “accepted” translation of 1 Timothy 3:16 found in the KJV which states quite dogmatically that “all Scripture is inspired”, but I will challenge that rendering shortly. Luther, Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale, and Cramner translated it differently as we will see. This verse does not help you with the New Testament canon, and does not stand as a watertight proof text. It does not explain what Scripture is, as Warfield admits (later).

Are you still with me? This is a lot longer than I first anticipated and my fingers are getting tired. Oh well, you are a lawyer and used to this kind of stuff and I like to research and write. Next you write, *“Assuming arguendo (for the sake of the argument) the validity of your claim that the passage only refers to the Old Testament Scriptures, such point is simply irrelevant to determining whether sola Scriptura is valid doctrine unless you mean to claim that only the Old Testament is infallible.”* As you know, I would not make that claim. However, in the context of Paul’s letter, and allowing the Bible to speak for itself, within its historical context (scripture interpreting scripture), “all Scripture” here clearly refers to the sacred writings of the Old Testament (more later). One must then extrapolate from that, after the fact, that the New Testament is infallibly inspired Scripture. Paul does not mean that in his letter to Timothy. The real question is, in the larger picture of the Church, later in the first century and thereafter, *what is Scripture?* From a Protestant perspective, since the Scriptures are the only infallible revelation of God, where do we find in this sole infallible revelation that the New Testament is inspired, or what components make up the final canon. What is Scripture?

You then make the statement that *“the infallibility of the New Testament does not, of course, rest solely on this passage (see 2 Peter 1:20–21).”* Again, 2 Timothy 3:16 does not establish the inspiration of the New Testament except through extrapolation or sheer faith in tradition, but let’s look at 2 Peter 1:20–21.¹⁴ Does this passage establish conclusively the infallibility of the New Testament? Again only if you make certain assumptions which are not given in the Scriptures themselves. Again the question arises, “What is Scripture?” Do we see an infallible teaching here that this applies to *Jude*, 2 and 3 *John*, *Hebrews*, or any other specific book? When Peter wrote these words did his readers assume he meant the apostolic writings that were not yet collected and not even completed? A short survey of conservative New Testament scholarship will resound in

the negative¹⁵—only wishful thinking or a leap of faith based on a Protestant tradition or assumption will conclude that 2 Peter 3:16 refers to the New Testament documents.

2 Peter is referring to the Old Testament writings, the prophets of old. Once we establish that the New Testament, and its component parts are each also Scripture, as is the Old Testament, and prophetic writings, *then* and only then, in principle and in theory, based on this passage, we can extrapolate that the New Testament documents are also inspired and infallible, but we certainly have not established from these passages what comprises Scripture, the infallibility of the New Testament, the content of the canon, or the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*.

Next you wrote, “*Your contention that Paul’s statement in 2 Tim 3:16 must be limited to the Old Testament is unpersuasive. His statement is in the form of a general proposition, and advert to no specific Old Testament passage. As a general proposition, the statement would include within its terms any writing that qualifies as Scripture.*” Again I agree with your statement as far as it goes, but the canon of the New Testament is the issue and we need to be careful not to leap to conclusions based on assumptions or on what we consider “general propositions”. Does 2 Timothy 3:16 include, unquestionably, the New Testament documents? Kenneth Wuest, Baptist Greek scholar writes, “*‘Scripture here is ‘graphe’ . . . used of the writings of the Old Testament prophets, and of the Old Testament scriptures in general. The expression speaks, not of the Old Testament scriptures as a whole, but of each separate passage considered as a unit. . . . The context in which Paul is writing is limited to the Old Testament scriptures. One could translate, ‘Every scripture is God-breathed.’ The context limits these writings to the Old Testament writings. Thus, does Paul declare the divine inspiration of the Old Testament. The New Testament had not yet been completed, and Paul does not refer here to its divine inspiration*” (Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1942], vol. 2, pg. 150).

Your “general proposition” does not come close to answering, “What qualifies as Scripture, and who has the authority to determine that?” You assume the New Testament documents, and then try to justify your assumption, but it is not found delineated in the only infallible writings which is the Protestants’ only source of divine revelation. Upon what certain criteria are the books known to be exclusively twenty-seven and infallible? You say in your letter that 2 Timothy includes the New Testament in principle, but this is only true if you can establish that the twenty-seven writings of the New Testament are infallibly scripture and fall within that principle. This has certainly not been done as we will see. We will also analyze the syllogism “(a) *All Scripture is inspired, (b) the New Testament is scripture, therefore, (c) the New Testament is inspired*”. This syllogism is Geisler’s attempt at a proof, and you use it knowingly or unknowingly, and we will discuss it later as we get to that point.

The criterion being used by Protestants is no where near as stringent as those laid out on page six, nor in the Federal Rules. That doctrine which lies at the root of all others, that lays the foundation for Protestant theology, ought to be much more convincing, clear, and certain.

2. Anarthrous Construction and Warfield

Your comment from Warfield's book concerning the "anarthrous construction"¹⁶ (no article to make it a specific object). You write, " 'sacred writings' appears here 'anarthrously because it is set in contrast with the oral teachings which Timothy had enjoyed, as something still better [than the oral teachings]. ' Thus, although Paul clearly viewed Scripture as having, in contrast to oral teachings and traditions, an exalted and infallible authority, he nevertheless understood the canon of Scripture to be open at the time he authored his second epistle to Timothy. "

This conclusion by Warfield is certainly unfounded, especially the conclusion that it "clearly" showed Paul accepted the written portion of God's revelation as more important than that which was spoken. I will do a little background to show why I think it is overly optimistic, and more "wishful thinking" or eisegesis" than sound exegesis.¹⁷ Let me refer to a few Evangelical biblical scholars to show that Warfield is building a house of cards on a very flimsy, sandy foundation. Why no article (anarthrous)? According to the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, the reason is "because of the technical character of the expression no article is needed".¹⁸ So, the anarthrous is not to indicate superiority of the written over the "taught", it is simply to avoid a redundancy. Technical terms don't require an article. The same point is made again by J. N. D. Kelly in the next paragraph.

So, let's dig a little deeper. Here is an extended passage (sorry) from J. N. D. Kelly's *The Pastoral Epistles* (London: Adam & Charles Black 1963), pgs. 200–203:

*"Paul now prescribes the sovereign remedy against being taken in by such charlatans, viz. loyal adherence to the gospel message as opposed to the fanciful novelties (cf. 2:16) which they hawk around. **But as for you, he says, contrasting Timothy with the specious deceivers just mentioned, stand by the things you have learned and have been convinced of. His confidence in these truths should have a twofold basis. First, he knows from whom (the pronoun is plural in the Greek) he has learned them. These truths of the Christian tradition have been imparted to him, not by clever individualist adventurers whom nobody can vouch for but themselves, but by people like his mother and grandmother (cf. 1:5), the Apostle himself, and other witnesses of proved reliability; and he has given his firm assent to them.***

*"The second motive for his confidence should be his sure grounding in Scripture; **from a child, as he knows full well, he has been familiar with***

the sacred writings. Jewish parents were expected to teach their children the Law from the age of five onwards. The expression **sacred writings** (Gk. 'hiera grammata') is found only here in the Bible, in which the noun denoting Scripture is normally 'graphe' (singular or plural). Commentators have exerted themselves needlessly to think out reasons for its choice in the present passage, much the least plausible theory being that the plural covers specifically Christian writings, including the letters of Paul himself, as well as the O.T. Those who take this view believe that the writer belonged to the second quarter of the second century, and that therefore a reference to authoritative Christian literature is to be expected. Even on this assumption, however, (a) there is nothing in the sentence which in the least suggests Christian writings, and (b) it is incredible that the writer, who is presumably doing his best to represent the Apostle as reminding Timothy of his youthful education, should fall into such a clumsy anachronism.

Actually by **sacred writings** Paul means, of course, the O.T.; there is abundant evidence that this was a stock designation for it in Greek-speaking Judaism (cf. Philo and Josephus). The absence of the definite article in the Greek confirms that it is used technically. His use of the phrase, in place of the more usual 'graphe', is of a piece with his (or his amanuensis's) predilection in these letters for a more rabbinical idiom. The O.T. was the only canonical Scripture for Christians as well as Jews in the apostolic age and for several generations after it. Irenaeus (c.180) was the first writer to speak unequivocally of a 'New Testament'; but as early as 2 Pet. 3:15 f. Paul's letters were being ranked with 'other Scriptures', while for Ignatius (c. 110) 'the gospel' was an equivalent authority to 'the prophets' (e.g. Smyrn. 5:1; 7:2). (Underlined sentence my emphasis.)

"[P]aul develops his doctrine of the value of the O.T. in a sentence which commentators have found bafflingly ambiguous. **Every Scripture**, he states, **is inspired by God and profitable . . .** There need be no hesitation about the noun (Gk. 'graphe'), at any rate so far as its broad reference is concerned. While it literally means 'writing' or 'book' and could conceivably cover writings or books in general, both the context and N.T. usage require that it should have the narrowed-down sense of **Scripture**, i.e. the O.T. Much more difficult is the total expression (Gk. 'pasa graphe') here rendered **Every Scripture**. In the singular 'graphe' can denote (a) a book of Scripture, (b) Scripture as a whole (e.g. Gal. 3:8; 22; Rom. 11:1: cf. also 1 Tim. 5:18), or (c) a particular passage of Scripture (e.g. Mk. 12:10; Jn. 19:37; 20:9; Acts 8:35). The first usage, frequent in Hellenistic Judaism, is entirely lacking from the N.T., and we are probably justified in excluding it here. Many (e.g. AV, RSV, Moffatt) prefer the second, and translate 'All Scripture', and in favor of this is the fact that the Apostle is clearly thinking of the O.T. in its entirety. On the other hand, there is no

*definite article in the Greek, and where 'pas' ('all' or 'every') is used with a noun in the singular without the article it usually means 'every' rather than 'whole' or 'all'. The problem is complicated by the fact that we cannot be sure how strictly this dogma was observed in the first-century 'koine', but the balance of argument seems in favor of **Every Scripture**. Having spoken generally of **the sacred writings**, Paul may now be anxious to emphasize their usefulness in all the individual passages which make up the whole.*

*“There has also been much discussion about the construction of the sentence, for there is no verb corresponding to **is** in the original. Since the particle translated **and** has the alternative meaning 'also', **inspired by God** can be construed either predicatively as above (so AV, RSV), or as a qualifying adjective (i.e. 'Every inspired Scripture is also useful . . .': so RV, NEB). Commentators who favor the latter argue that a direct affirmation of the inspiration of Scripture is out of place here, since Timothy had presumably never doubted it and Paul's object is to stress the 'usefulness' of the O.T. [not its inspiration]. Yet a reminder of its divine origin is perfectly appropriate in a passage intended to impress on his disciple its value both as authenticating the Christian message and as a pastoral instrument. A decision is not easy, but in support of the version adopted it can be argued a) that it seems natural, in the absence of a verb, to construe the two adjectives in the same way; b) that the construction of the sentence is exactly parallel to that of 1 Tim. 4:4, where the two adjectives are predicative; c) that if **inspired by God** were attributive, we should, in the circumstances, expect it to be placed before **Scripture**, while 'also' is pointless; and d) that **Every inspired Scripture** seems to contain a hint that certain passages of Scripture are not inspired. . . .*

“Because God speaks through it, the O.T. is pastorally useful for instruction.”

The point here is of course, that the verses that Warfield has built so much upon to buttress his view on New Testament inspiration are not infallible, in fact, they are probably not at all correct, and his “anarthrous conclusion” is not shared by biblical scholars and exegetes, nor by the Greek grammars.

3. Correct Translation of the Greek Text

And to build an edifice on Warfield's understanding of 2 Tim 3:16, as you have done, seems a bit too optimistic. It is not at all certain that Paul is saying that “all Scripture is inspired” in the way you have used it. In fact, it is probably preferable to translate Paul's words as “Every God-breathed scripture is profitable”. If so, it hinders the syllogism used to prove the inspiration of the New Testament.

A few examples:

The American Standard Version: “Every scripture inspired of God *is* also profitable for teaching.”

Latin Vulgate: “Omnis Scriptura divinitus inspirata et utilis ad docendum.”

New Testament in Basic English: “Every holy Writing which comes from God is of profit.”

New English Bible: “Every inspired scripture has its use for teaching.”

NASB: “Every Scripture inspired by God is also profitable” (alternate reading).

RSV: “Every scripture inspired by God is also profitable” (alternate reading).

Rheims: “All Scripture, inspired by God, is profitable to teach.”

Greek New Testament: “πάσα γραφή θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν” (Literally word for word “*Every or all, writing, God-breathed, and or also, useful*”).

Many of the Greek Grammars say the same. For example Baptist Archibald Robertson writes in his classic set *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book, 1931), vol 4, pg. 627, “*Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable.*” Notice, if it is translated in this manner we find Paul saying that what you learned from the sacred writings make you wise unto salvation and every scripture that is inspired by God is also profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteous, in addition to making us wise to salvation. I am not saying this is the definitive meaning of the verse, only that it cannot be assumed the way we have learned it in the past, at least not enough to build an edifice upon, as we will see Norm Geisler do in a minute.

Marvin Vincent in his *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887, 1980), vol. 4, pg. 317, writes, “*All Scripture. Better, every Scripture, that is, every passage of Scripture. . . . Is given by inspiration of God. . . . And is profitable. According to A.V., kai (and) is merely the copula between two predicates of graphe. It is divinely inspired and is profitable. According to the interpretation given above, kai has the force of ‘also’. Every divinely-inspired Scripture is, besides being so inspired and for that reason, also profitable, etc.*”

Newport White writes, “*The sentence is best taken as a repetition and expansion of that which has just preceded. . . . : ‘Every writing which is inspired by God is also profitable’*” (The Expositor’s Greek Testament, ed. by W. Robertson Nicoll [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979], vol. 4, pg. 175).

French biblical scholar, Celas Spicq writes, “*2 Tim. The verb ‘esti’ [is] should probably be restored not after ‘graphe’ [scripture, writing], but before [useful]: ‘Every Scripture inspired by God is useful . . .’ [God-breathed] is attributive and not predicative*” (Theological Lexicon of the New Testament [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publ., 1994], vol. 2, pg. 193, n. 2).

And one more (then I'll move on) from the technical notes in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*: “*This verse has no verb in the Gr. but ‘is’ has to be inserted somewhere in English to make sense. ASV took ‘God-breathed’ as attached to ‘graphe’ (‘Scripture’), and so reads, ‘Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable . . .’ Bernard (CGT) and White (EGT) both defend this translation on the twofold basis that (1) there is no evidence in the context that the inspiration of the Scriptures was being called into question and (2) the emphasis of the entire passage is on the usefulness of the Scriptures in fitting the believer for service. Bernard notes that this was the interpretation of Origen, the Vulgate and Syriac versions, Martin Luther, and also the early English translations of Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale, and Cramner.*

“*On the other hand, Lock thinks it is better to take ‘theopneustos’ as a predicate adjective: ‘All Scripture is inspired by God ... and therefore useful’.* Simpson presents a convincing fourfold defense of this translation, and notes that Chrysostom interpreted it this way” (Ralph Earle, *1, 2 Timothy in The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. by Kaiser, Waltke, Boice and Tenney [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978], vol. 11, pg. 410).

Oops, one more. There are many and I could keep on going but I think I have made the point. William Barclay, New Testament scholar writes, “*‘All God-inspired scripture is useful for teaching.’ . . . We must note that Paul here makes a distinction. He speaks of ‘all God-inspired scripture.’ The Gnostics had their own fanciful books; the heretics all produced their own man-made things; but the great books for a man’s soul were the God-inspired ones which tradition and the experience of men had sanctified.*”¹⁹

I conclude with the simple fact that your whole idea, based on Warfield, is questionable at best, and poor at worst. Stating that the New Testament documents are self-authenticating, and then using 1 Timothy 3:15, 16 to build the case that all the component books of the New Testament are inspired and infallible is really stretching credulity. I am, of course, not challenging the inspiration of scripture, or even that 2 Timothy 3:16 says scripture is inspired—I know it is. I am only challenging your methodology and the edifice you build upon such scanty “proofs”, far from convincing, which end up being merely Protestant assumptions, something that comes with the territory. But more than that, I am challenging the attempt, since the advent of Protestantism and its simultaneous rejection of the teaching authority of the Church, to set up various internal and insufficient criteria to determine the inspired status of documents and/or the limitations of the canon, when Bible books, whether in their matter or their form, are insufficient to serve as a criterion for their own status of inspiration and infallibility.

4. Universal Negative: Nothing Else Inspired and Infallible

(As to your extended treatment of the fallible aspects of the apostles, attempting to establish the second plank of your proof for *sola Scriptura*, we can discuss that at another time. It is difficult to prove such a universal negative.²⁰ Catholics have understood and convincingly explained the passages you cited as proofs of no other infallible authority, and these passages in no way undermine the teaching authority of the Church—properly understood. The teaching authority of the Church is not without guidelines and limitations which most Protestants haven't understood. Galatians 2:11–14, for example was responded to by Tertullian in relation to the teaching authority of Peter, as early as the second century. This is a topic for another day. However, you have not proved the universal negative, even close, that nothing else can be inspired.)

B. 2 Peter 3:16: Substantive Proof of the New Testament Canon?²¹

You have stipulated the fact that you have at best a “fallible collection of infallible books.” 2 Peter is one of the weakest links in your fallible canonical chain. It was disputed in the first centuries, distrusted during the Reformation, and its Petrine authorship is doubted by most, if not all scholars today, even conservative scholars. Three typical Evangelical sources will demonstrate this. Michael Green is representative. In his commentary *The Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude* in the *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* series, he writes, “*This epistle has had a very rough passage down the centuries. Its entry into the Canon was precarious in the extreme. At the Reformation it was regarded as second-class Scripture by Luther, rejected by Erasmus, and regarded with hesitancy by Calvin*” (pg. 13).

British scholar J. N. D. Kelly writes, “*Scarcely anyone nowadays doubts that 2 Peter is pseudonymous . . . We must therefore conclude that 2 Peter belongs to the luxuriant crop of pseudo-Petrine literature which sprang up around the memory of the Prince of the Apostles*” (*A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1969], 235–236).

The third and last representative Evangelical commentator I will use is Richard Bauckham. He writes, “*The language alone make it improbable that Peter could have written 2 Peter, while the author’s preference for Hellenistic terminology can only implausibly be attributed to Peter. It is likely enough that the author of 2 Peter was Jewish, but a strongly Hellenized Jew. . . . But certainly Peter cannot be the real author of both letters [1 and 2 Peter]*” (*Jude, 2 Peter* in the *Word Biblical Commentary* [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983], 158–159.)

To say the least, the usual case for authenticity is seriously lacking. Apostolic origin is doubtful at best, non-existent as worst. It is then, possibly if not probably, the apostolic tradition of the Church passed on pseudonymously in the name of an apostle. This is one of the weakest links in the canonical chain, especially for one who claims a fallible canon. To build the case for the infallible authority of the remaining segments of

the New Testament upon such a weak link, seems very desperate indeed. If I were taking this to court I would settle out of court or drop my case, knowing as I do the ramifications.

The second reason that 2 Peter 3:16 does not provide a watertight case is that there has been some question as to the meaning of this passage. In order to build such a weighty house upon such a slim foundation, an open and shut case would certainly seem preferable. Even though I believe 2 Peter 3:16 refers to Paul's writing as inspired scripture, and the Catholic Church understands this passage in the same light, it is not without question by biblical scholars. For example read this quotation from Michael Green:

“Peter gives a very high place to Paul’s writings. They are placed alongside the other Scriptures. This phrase, ‘tas loipas graphas,’ can be taken in two main ways. [First], it may distinguish Paul’s letters from Scripture. (See Bigg’s note in loc). Thus in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 hoi loipoi means ‘others who are not Christians’, not ‘other Christians’. This makes good sense. The false teachers twist Paul: they also twist the other Scriptures, i.e. the Old Testament. It is certainly implied, as in any case we know, that Paul’s letters were held in such high esteem that they were read in church. In the Jewish synagogue, on which the Church was based, there were normally two readings, one from the Pentateuch and one from the Prophets. On occasion, letters from important leaders of Jewry were also read in synagogue. In the Christian Church, equally, there will have been two or perhaps three readings, from the Old Testament (Law and Prophets) and from apostolic writings. See Colossians 4:16. These Christian writings were kept in the church chest, and there is ample evidence that these apostolic writings were held in the highest respect, though rarely, for half a century, specifically called Scripture.

*“[Second], alternatively, it may include Paul’s letters in Scripture. If so this need not demand a late date for the Epistle. Sometimes graphe, ‘Scripture’, was used in a broad sense (e.g. James 4:5; 1 Clement 23:3) to refer to material which does not appear in the Canon of the Old Testament, but was hallowed by long usage. There can, in any case, be no question that long before AD 60 Christian writings were being read in church alongside the Old Testament, and consequently were well on the way to being rated as equivalent in value” (Michael Green, *The Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude* in the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980]. 147–148).*

To summarize, I think 2 Peter 3:16 gives little comfort or foundation for the Protestants’ edifice. It certainly does not give the unquestioned and substantial evidence to establish the foundation of all Protestant doctrine—*sola Scriptura*. The foundation of

Protestant doctrine, *sola Scriptura*, is not even taught or assumed in Scripture. Maybe that is why there has never been a book written in its defense in four hundred years, dissimilar to all other foundational Christian doctrines.

C. 1 Timothy 5:18²² & Luke 10:7²³: Substantive Proof of the New Testament Canon?

In your letter you make the observation (as does Geisler, whom we will discuss later): “See 1 Tim 5:18 where Paul refers to Luke’s gospel as Scripture.” The implication is that Paul claims Scriptural status for Luke’s gospel by quoting something Luke had written and referring to it as scripture (using the connective *kai*). Even if that point is granted, it only comments on Luke’s gospel and proves nothing about the remaining New Testament documents. But there are a few things to consider, which make this quotation an unlikely proof of New Testament infallibility and inspiration, and certainly not a sure thing—not something I would want to depend on for my life. What it proves is the inspired status of Jesus’s words as passed on through the oral tradition.

John Calvin writes, “He does not quote ‘The laborer is worth of his hire,’ as a passage of the Scripture but **as a proverbial saying** which common sense dictates to all. In the same way when Christ said the same thing to His apostles, He was expressing something which common consent acknowledged to be true” (John Calvin, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries* Vol 10, [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; 1964, 1980], 262).

Vincent writes, “ ‘The laborer is worthy’, etc. A second scriptural quotation would seem to be indicated, but there is no corresponding passage in the O. T. The words are found in Luke 10:7, and, with a slight variation in Matt. 10:10. Some hold that the writer adds to the O. T. citation a popular proverb, and that Christ himself used the words in this way. But while different passages of Scripture are often connected in citation by *kai* it is not according to N. T. usage thus to connect Scripture and proverb. Moreover, in such series of citations it is customary to use *kai* *palin*, (and again), or *palin* simply. See Matt. iv. 7 ; v. 33; Jn. xii. 89; Rom. xv. 9-12; 1 Cor. iii. 20 ; Heb. I. 5; ii. 13. According to others, **the writer here cites an utterance of Christ from oral tradition, coordinately with the O. T. citation, as Scripture.** Paul, in 1 Th. iv. 15; 1 Cor. vii. 10, appeals to a word of the Lord; and in Acts xx. 35 he is represented as quoting, ‘it is more blessed to give than to receive’ as the words of Jesus. In 1 Cor. ix, in the discussion of this passage from Deuteronomy, Paul adds (ver. 14) ‘even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel, which resembles the combination here. **This last is the more probable explanation**” (Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* Vol. 4, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887, 1980], 267□268).

“The proposition is supported by two citations linked together under the formula ‘For the scripture saith,’ precisely in the Pauline manner (cf. Rom. 4:3, 11:2; Gal. 4:30,

etc.). The first citation is from Dt. 25:4, and the second is exactly paralleled by Lk. x. 7, where the words are attributed to Jesus. The same passage from Deuteronomy is cited by Paul in I Cor., ix. 9 under the caption, 'For it is written in the law of Moses'. With this the apostle links the Lord's command (I Cor. ix. i4), but does not as here cite His words. The two sayings were evidently closely associated in the apostle's mind, **and there is no need to suppose that he is quoting from the canonical Gospel**, although that cannot be entirely ruled out. He may be citing from a collection of the words of Jesus, and if so it is clear that such a collection was placed on an equality with the Old Testament, at least as far as the authority of each was concerned. To the apostle the words of Christ would naturally assume an importance proportionate to his conception of Christ's Person. It cannot be maintained, on the contrary, that both Jesus and Paul cite from a current proverb, for Jesus did not describe it as such and Paul here classes it as Scripture, which he could never have confused with a proverbial saying. Scholars who maintain the non-Pauline authorship of the Pastorals claim that their position presents less difficulty, for the later writer might actually be using Luke's Gospel (cf. Scott): which could not be said of Paul if the prevailing estimate of the date of Luke's Gospel is correct (i.e. 80–85 A.D.)" (Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles in the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, Vol. 14 [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957], 105).

"The laborer is worthy of his hire (axios ho ergates tou misthou autou). These words occur in precisely this form in Luke 10:7. It appears also in Matt. 10:10 with tes trophes (food) instead of tou misthou. In I Cor. 9:14 Paul has the sense of it and says: 'so also the Lord ordained,' clearly meaning that Jesus had so said. It only remains to tell whether Paul here is quoting an unwritten saying of Jesus as he did in Acts 20:35 or even the Gospel of Luke or Q (the Logia of Jesus). There is no way to decide this question. If Luke wrote his Gospel before A.D. 62, as is quite possible and Acts by A.D. 63, he could refer to the Gospel. It is not clear whether Scripture is here meant to apply to this quotation from the Lord Jesus" (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In The New Testament* Vol. IV, *The Epistles of Paul*, by [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House; 1931], 588).

The dates for 1 Timothy and Luke are significant. Paul was beheaded in Rome very near 67 A.D. (*New Bible Dictionary*) and estimated by some at 65 A.D. (*Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*), and others as early as 62 A.D. (*Harper's Bible Dictionary*). The conservative date for *1 Timothy* is shortly before his death, probably between 62 and 66 A.D.²⁴ Dates for Luke's gospel are uncertain, but John Nolland in his three volume series on Luke,²⁵ which represents the latest scholarship on the gospel, writes, "Taken together, the considerations that we have reviewed encourage a date of the Gospel between the late sixties and the late seventies of the first century, although it is not possible to be rigid even about the limits of this range." So, with the likelihood that Paul wrote his epistle in the mid-sixties, it is unlikely that Paul quoted from Luke who probably wrote his Gospel at a later date. Again, the self-authenticating case for the inspired status and canon of the New Testament is weak at best, and nonexistent at worst.

“As usual, Paul quotes the Old Testament as ‘Scripture.’ But does the introductory formula, ‘For the Scripture says,’ apply also to the second quotation? Bernard and others think not. But White (Expositor’s Greek Testament, 4:135) seems to favor it, and Lock allows the possibility that this may be “the earliest instance of the Lord’s words being quoted as ‘Scripture’” (Ralph Earle, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Vol. 2 [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan; 1978], 380). But even here, it is not Luke that is being quoted as Scripture, but the Lord Jesus, probably from oral tradition. His words were well known to many through the tradition of the Apostles and the living ears of those who heard Him (e.g., Acts 20:35). It is a long leap from saying that the Lord’s words as passed down are considered equal to Scripture, to claiming that this passage affirms the infallibility and inspiration for Luke’s Gospel. It is even a longer leap to say this ambiguous citation is claiming infallibility and inspiration for the whole New Testament. What it does point to is the substantial body of oral tradition being circulated among the early Christians.

By quoting the words of Jesus as Scripture, Paul would be claiming the words of Jesus as equal to Scripture. This is a far, *far* cry from saying he is claiming inspiration for Luke, or to extrapolate it even farther and assume Paul is claiming inspiration for the whole New Testament which wasn’t even finished being written yet. Again, I would make peace with my adversary along the way. I wouldn’t want my case, if I held this view, to see the inside of a courtroom.

D. Summary Using Norman Geisler’s Syllogism

How do we conclude that the New Testament writings are infallible, inspired, authoritative, inerrant, and canonical? Norman Geisler makes, what he considers to be, a logical conclusions regarding the inspiration of the New Testament.²⁶ But first he admits that the claims of inspiration he has been discussing up to this point are concerning the Old Testament. He writes, *“While it must be recognized that much of what has been claimed refers explicitly only to the Old Testament Scriptures, nevertheless, logically and implicitly the New Testament is included within this same claim of inspiration.”* Is it? Let’s look at his reasoning and you decide if you would take *this* confidently into Court for a major case.

Geisler continues: *“The New Testament is “Scripture.” Stated in logical or syllogistic form, this argument is as follows:*

All “Scripture” is inspired (II Tim. 3:16).

The New Testament is also “Scripture” (I Tim. 5:18; 2 Peter 3:16).

Therefore, the New Testament is inspired.

What kind of reasoning is that? This is the Protestant case for the infallibility and inspiration of the New Testament? This line of reasoning is flawed at every step and is a

good example of the corner Protestants have backed themselves into. One must ask what “Scripture” Paul was referring to as *inspired* in 2 Tim. 3:16. The context and historical placement of Paul’s writing make it abundantly clear that he is referring to the Old Testament (see 1 Tim. 3:15, 16; and elsewhere when he refers to the *Scriptures*)²⁷ since there was not New Testament yet and no one had even hinted at the various writings being inspired. Even Geisler agrees as shown above. We even have cases of documents not in our canon being quoted by New Testament writers as *scripture* or of *the prophets* which are nowhere to be found in our inspired Bible of today (e.g., James 4:5; Jude 9, 14; Matt. 2:23). Geisler’s next step is just as disingenuous as his first, since 1 Tim. 5:18 comes nowhere close to providing the substantial proof that he needs to make his case, and 2 Peter 3:16 *at best* only claims “Scripture-status” for the epistles of Paul, and even here we have another problem: if all of Paul’s writings are inspired Scripture (and we don’t know which writings Peter was referring to) then why was the first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 5:9) not preserved and passed on to us for our current canon? And what about Paul’s letter to Laodicea (Col 4:16)—important for them, but not for us? Are we deprived of some of God’s written word?

Geisler then draws the conclusion that the New Testament is inspired. I agree it is, but certainly not based on this feeble and unsubstantial reasoning. Self-authenticating? Nope. The Protestant case for self-authentication is nowhere close to defensible, especially not in light of the Federal Rule for Evidence. The Protestant case for inspiration of Scripture is weak, even after reading B. B. Warfield’s *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (his appendix on the canon is especially inadequate) at best and very ineffective at worst. Remember, I am not denying the inspiration of the New Testament. I am just saying that the “logical” reasoning of the Protestant is really illogical and is based on presuppositions that force them to fall back on weak syllogisms in a feeble attempt to substantiate the claims of infallibility, inspiration, and a closed canon. That is what happens when the teaching authority of the Church has been denied and jettisoned. The Catholic on the other hand, doesn’t have to stoop to such flimsy reasoning to have a basis for an inspired text.

Jesus didn’t leave us a book (he never even mentioned writing or books), he left us men, a teaching authority, who in turn passed on the deposit of faith, both orally and written.

So, we’re back to the fact that Scripture is inspired, but you have demonstrated nothing to show me what Scripture is from a Protestant theology. It is like saying to me as we walk through a used bookstore filled with rare books, “all special books are valuable.” I would probably agree with you. My next question would be, “which books are special”? You would try to give me some general criteria that would not work (written by an apostle, Luther’s requirement that it preach Christ, Calvin’s subjective internal witness, etc.). You would say “They are self-authenticating; it is obvious.” However, there may be fifty other people in the store mulling over thousands of books,

each coming to different conclusions as to which books are “special” and therefore “valuable”. We may even find that the confusion has been going on for many years. There are a few that most agree on but no one has the final criteria to judge them and no one knows the precise number of “special” books there really are. The confusion is finally settled by the Commissioner of Rare Books. He makes a determination based on his office, expertise, and authority. Everyone accepts the final collection and the question is closed. A very inadequate illustration but it gives a shadow of the Catholic position.

E. Catholic Teaching in a Nutshell

By the way, Warfield ends his discussion of 2 Timothy 3:16 by stating, “*It is to be observed that the apostle does not stop here to tell us either what particular books enter into the collection which he calls Sacred Scripture or by what precise operations God has produced them. Neither of these subjects entered into the matter he had at the moment in mind . . . leaving to other occasions any further facts concerning them which it might be well to emphasize*” (B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* [Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1970], 134–135). Here we end back where we start. How do we know what books are inspired and therefore infallible? If so much was riding on this collection of books, why didn’t the apostles clarify it for us? John lived to almost 100 A.D. (into the reign of Trajan, 98–117 A.D.). By this time the New Testament documents had all been written and passed around for years. If the apostles understood the matter to be as crucial as *sola Scriptura* Protestants do, why didn’t John select the canon for the Church and leave the infallible rule (canon) before he died? John should have done so to give us assurance of the books and to do so quickly so people didn’t have to remain uncertain for another 293 years. Wasn’t it his duty, as the last living apostle—the last chance at a clear revelatory canon. Why did he leave it up to the Church?

For that matter, why didn’t Jesus close the Old Testament canon when he had the opportunity, to avoid all the confusion in later years? If the Book was the final word, let’s establish its boundaries and announce its intent. Why did he leave it up to his Church? Did he trust his Church to make such a binding decision, not only of *what* the canon would be, but also that there would *be* a canon. A reading of the New Testament, and the writings of the early Church, demonstrates that Jesus never promised us an authoritative book, neither did the apostles, nor did they seem to apprehend or comprehend a canon, nor mention it. They *did* both promise an authoritative Church though. The canon of Scripture was not the means of combating heresy in the first centuries of the Church: apostolic tradition and succession were the means. Tertullian stated that the heretics use the Scriptures to defend their heresies, but the Church based her defense on the tradition and succession passed down from the apostles.

The same apostolic succession and tradition became the basis for the determination and closing of the canon. Actually the term *canon* was used for the

apostolic tradition before being applied to the Bible. Henry Chadwick writes, “*But the term ‘canon’ was being used for the standard of authentic teaching given by the baptismal confession of faith well before it came to be used for the list of accepted books*” (The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity, ed. by John McManners [New York, NY: Oxford Univ Press 1992], 28).

We both agree that the New Testament is inspired. You, from a subjectivized “self-authenticating” principle or an internal witness (Calvin), and I because of an ordained teaching authority that has the authority to make such a determination (i.e., discovery). Yours is “internal” only, mine is “internal” and external”. In *Crossing the Tiber* I have this footnote, “*It is a matter of apostolic authority. Those who deny any authority in the Church have no reference point or absolute outside of themselves, and are left competing with everyone else’s finite, fluctuating feelings and conclusions, or some ambiguous ‘tradition’. Along with the Bible, the Catholic has the apostolic succession, commissioned by the risen Christ through the Apostles; the Protestants have the Bible alone. But the irony is, the Protestants received their Bible from the Catholic Church. But, in rejecting the authority of the Catholic Church, they really don’t have the New Testament either but only what they hope or believe is the inspired Bible. They depend on the Catholic Church’s authority to close the canon. The Catholic Church has both the authority of the Church (Christ’s body on earth, his continuing Incarnation) and therefore, the authority of the infallible Word. In denying one, the Protestant loses both; in affirming the one, the Catholic retains both.*”

So, you have a fallible collection of infallible books²⁸ (logical inconsistency) and I have an infallible collection of infallible books (logical consistency). Your position, by the way, is new, and a radical departure from the orthodoxy of the primitive Church, and a product of the reactionary fires of the Reformation. Mine is ancient, having been established in the first centuries and carried down the years consistently, based on the apostolic tradition and succession, and the Fathers. Protestants are riding the coat-tails of the Catholic Church. Even Luther acknowledged this point, “*We concede—as we must—that so much of what they [the Catholic Church] say is true: that the papacy has God’s word and the office of the apostles, and that we have received Holy Scriptures, Baptism, the Sacrament, and the pulpit from them. What would we know of these if it were not for them?*” (*Sermons on the Gospel of John, Chap. 14–16* (1537), in vol. 24 of *Luther’s Works* [St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publ. House, 1961], 304).

The Catholic position, held from the first centuries, is very sufficient, reasonable, historical, biblical, and convincing. The position is beautifully summarized in *Dei Verbum*, or in English, *Constitution on Divine Revelation*. I will not go into detail here. If you are interested, I have ample historical, theological, and biblical details we can discuss. But, unless you are curious and open-minded to something other than the traditional and novel Evangelical treatment, it would do no good to ramble on about it here. It may be a good topic for another day. Suffice it to say, it is a solid and convincing

case, substantial enough to satisfy the brightest of minds for 2,000 years, based on the authority of Christ who is the *first* and final criterion, who authorized his Apostles, and Peter his Royal Steward (Prime Minister or Vicar),²⁹ to preach (orally is the only command we hear from Jesus, not writing) the whole truth. The apostles understood their position to be an office that was successive (e.g., Acts 1:20) and that they passed their office and authority on to the bishops (ample biblical and historical evidence; e.g., see *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* [esp. sect. 44] written in 96 A.D. by a man who knew and was ordained by Peter and Paul). The men die, but the office continues. Jesus is still “incarnated” in his Church in a real way. Who speaks for the Bible? We’ll save all this for another day.

III. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS FROM YOUR LETTER

A. Augustine, Calvin, and the Councils

I have to comment on your quote from Augustine’s letter to the heretic Maximinus, taken from Calvin’s *Institutes*.³⁰ I will recall the quotation in your letter for the matter of context:

*“I ought not to oppose the Council of Nice to you, nor ought you to oppose that of the Arminium to me, as prejudging the question. I am not bound by the authority of the latter, not you by the former. Let thing contend with thing, cause with cause, reason with reason, on the authority of Scripture, an authority not peculiar to either, but common to all.”*³¹

Calvin takes this seriously out of context and misapplies it. Calvin is obviously using it to say something that Augustine would not be pleased with. Augustine’s acceptance of the Council’s and Rome’s authority is well documented. Even here he admits that the Council of Nice is binding on him by saying, “*I am not bound by the authority of the latter*” implying that he *is* bound by the authority of the former. The council’s were binding in Augustine’s ecclesiology. Remember, it was Augustine who said, “*Roma locuta est; causa finita est*”, or in English, “*Rome has spoken, the matter is closed*” (Sermons 131, 10).³² Maximinus was a heretic who rejected the Church but accepted the Scriptures, albeit a perverted understanding (like all the heretics did). Augustine is simply stating the fact that Maximinus does not accept the Council of Nicea as binding and so Augustine is not opposing it on him. Augustine is appealing to common ground, the Scriptures, to defend the orthodox doctrine.

This quote does you no favors, it only establishes the fact that Augustine *did* accept the orthodox councils of the Church, and condemned those who didn’t, and used the Scriptures as common ground when confronting one who does not understand or hold to the authoritative councils. It is like the conversations between you and I: we pretty much stick to the Bible, reason, and history, which we both have in common. I have not tried to prove points or persuade you by appealing to Councils you reject, nor do you

attempt to persuade me by using the Augsburg Confession as authoritative. So, Augustine's quote does nothing to comfort you, nor to support your claim, and Calvin should be ashamed of himself for wrongly using one who is his better, and twisting his words out of context.

A few lines later in the *Institutes*, Calvin also contends that the Councils “*contain nothing but the pure and genuine interpretation of Scripture.*”³³ Do you what other distinctly Catholic doctrines the Councils taught and defined? You may be surprised.

B. The Noble-minded Bereans and *Sola Scriptura*³⁴

Another short issue, one concerning your comments on the Bereans on page 24 of your letter. You actually have turned the whole situation on its head and therefore misunderstood the whole import of the situation. We are told that the Bereans were more noble-minded (open-minded, better disposed, fair-minded).³⁵ The Bereans were more noble-minded than whom? The Thessalonians. What did the Thessalonians do? They rejected Paul's message, rejected his words, became jealous, and treated him with contempt and violence—they threw him out of town. Why? “*For three weeks he reasoned with them from the scriptures*” in the synagogue and the Jews rejected what he had to say.³⁶ They obviously listened and disagreed with Paul. There were many running around with all kinds of new teachings supposedly based on the Scriptures. Heresies and sects were as numerous in the Roman Empire as they are today.

Who were the ones who held to *sola Scriptura*? The Thessalonians. They also, like the Bereans examined the Scriptures with Paul in the synagogue and rejected his teaching. They did not accept the new teaching that they decided contradicted the Torah. The Bereans were not adherents of *sola Scriptura* for they were willing to accept Paul's words as the word of God (as Paul claimed his very oral teaching was).³⁷ The Bereans, before accepting the oral word of God from Paul, a tradition as even Paul himself refers to it, examined the Scriptures to see if these things were so. They were noble-minded precisely because they “received the word with all eagerness”. This was the primary reason they are referred to as noble-minded, not that they searched the Scriptures. A perusal of grammars and commentaries make it clear they were “noble-minded” not for studying Scripture, but for treating Paul better, more civilly than the Thessalonians—with an open mind and generous courtesy. They were noble-minded for they were eager and warmly greeted Paul; the Thessalonians were not noble-minded for they abused Paul in an egregious manner.

But the Bereans, what were they doing? They were eager to accept words of God *in addition to* what they held already to be Scripture, that is the Old Testament. These Jews were actually accepting oral teaching, the tradition of the apostles, to be equal to Scripture—the actual word of God—in addition to the Torah. From a *sola Scriptura*

position, the Thessalonians would have been more noble-minded for they stuck to the Scriptures alone and rejected any additional binding authority.

Why did the Bereans search the Scriptures? To see if Paul was in line with what they already knew—to confirm additional revelation.³⁸ They could not submit to his apostolic teaching and oral tradition blindly. But, once they *did* accept the credibility of Paul’s words, as the oral and spoken word of God, they put such on a par with Scripture and recognized its binding authority! After this point, like the few who believed in Thessalonica, they espoused the apostolic tradition and the Old Testament equally as God’s word.³⁹ Therefore they accepted the apostolic authority and the councils (e.g., Acts 15, which would be binding on these new Gentile believers). Those who held to *sola Scriptura* rejected Paul because Paul claimed to be the voice of “additional revelation” (something the Church has never claimed, since revelation ended with the death of the last apostle); those who were willing to accept the apostolic tradition as binding were more noble-minded. This passage proves too much for one who espouses *sola Scriptura*. Anti-Catholics love the Bereans, but the Bereans actually condemn them.⁴⁰

C. Is the Catholic Church “Coequal” with the Sacred Writings?

Two last comments: It is often a misconception or caricaturizing of the Church and her teachings that cause otherwise honest and inquiring folks to draw back. They listen to “slander” and unhappily accept information that is not accurate and assume it is true. It is not truth one learns about Israel if the “truth” is gleaned from exclusively Palestinians. In your letter you reveal some major misconceptions that I would like to address quickly because they touch on what we are talking about together and because they discolor the truth.

On page 20 of your letter you write, “*The notion that ‘apostolic succession’ somehow confers authority on the Catholic Church coequal with Scripture is an extravagant claim.*” Let me first say that if the Church teaches this I agree with you. Problem is the Church doesn’t teach this and never has. In fact, this would be considered heresy. What the Church does teach is important and very well balanced. “*But the task of authentically interpreting the Word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. 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 in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit; it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed*” (*Dei Verbum* from the Second Vatican Council, reaffirming the First Vatican Council, chap. 2, sect. 10.)

The example I used in *Crossing the Tiber* was this: “*The New Testament writings were produced by the Church, yet the Church was subject to them. A parallel situation is*

the birth of Jesus, whereby the Blessed Virgin gave him birth, yet she was subject to him. Mary gave birth to Jesus, the Living Word, just as the Church gave birth to the written word, yet each is subject to her offspring.”

The Church views herself more as a custodian of the Scriptures, which she rightfully is. It is through her, as Luther said, that we have the Scriptures today. And all the nonsense about the Church keeping people from the Bible and burning the Scriptures is all a vast exaggeration and lie. I was always taught that the Church chained Bibles so that the average person could not read it. Now I realize they were chained so that people *could* read it. With no printing presses and Scriptures being copied by hand, they were each worth the equivalent of three years’ wages. A valuable booty for thieves. The Bibles, usually one per parish, were chained so that the parish would always have a copy. I also found out that universities also had their books chained.⁴¹ Also, there were many copies of the vernacular Bible in Germany, copied and distributed by the Catholic Church, long before Luther was born. (I could give you the names of all the editions but I have already written too long.) There are some amazing prejudices out there spreading misinformation that is really quite harmful. Not you of course, but a lot of what I have read in the past and continue to hear today, usually from well-intentioned folks. We can discuss this some other time as well.

D. Can Catholics Interpret the Bible?

Another misconception commonly held which is harmful and untrue is that Catholics not allowed to interpret the Bible for themselves. This is ridiculous. I think only six passages have been definitively interpreted and the rest is open to us within the parameters of Church teaching. The Church encourages her faithful to read the Scriptures and interpret and apply them to their lives. There have only been very short periods when this was not encouraged, even discouraged, but always for very good reasons. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* gives extraordinary instructions on how to interpret the Bible. I have never seen it stated better, even with all the books I’ve read on Bible study and interpretation. *Dei Verbum* states, “*For in the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets His children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power in the word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life. . . . Easy access to sacred Scriptures should be provided for all the Christian faithful. That is why the Church from the very beginning accepted as her own that very ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament [because it was in the vernacular]. . . . The sacred synod also earnestly and especially urges all the Christian faithful, especially Religious, to learn by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures the ‘excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ (Phil 3:8), ‘For ignorance of Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.’ . . . Therefore they should gladly put themselves in touch with the sacred text itself.”*

The Church loves, preserves, submits to, serves, and teaches the sacred Scriptures. She has valued the sacred deposit and “pondered the sacred page in her heart.” The Church, through her experience, love, discernment, calling, and example provides proper parameters to understand and interpret the Scriptures, like a mother for her children. And I, for one, have never enjoyed the reading of the Sacred Books more in my life. Nor have I, and I can speak for the many other converts I know, had more freedom and pleasure in the Scriptures and in the Christian life. Praise God for his wonderful revelation and the Holy Spirit given to assist us in its application to our souls and very lives.

IV. SIGN-OFF AND FINGER-RESTING

There are so many more things to comment on. I am always so frustrated that the Catholic position is so poorly understood. Dave, I am really sorry this was so long. Once I got started I couldn't stop and I really had fun putting this together. You are a great friend and if I thought my challenge would harm or ruin our friendship, I would never write. I consider you somewhat of a Renaissance man who is intelligent and well-informed in many areas. You think clearly and love the Lord passionately. For all this I am endeared to you and deeply value our long-lasting friendship. *Good* friends are hard to come by and you have always been one of my very best, and will continue to be even if you get mad at me. Please take this letter in the continued spirit of love and passion for truth (which we have always shared) in which it is being written. I love you Dave!

Your friend,

Steve Ray

Endnotes:

1. See *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995) and my critique of his chapters on the *Apocrypha* and *Scripture*, which I have enclosed under the title “The Old Testament Canon, the Septuagint, and the ‘Council of Jamnia’”.

2. *Federal Rules: Criminal Procedure, Evidence, Appellate Procedure, U.S. Code Title 18 Crimes and Criminal Procedure* (St. Paul, MN: West Publ., 1979), pgs. 184–186.

3. With the sole exception of the weakest link in the canon, for those who have a “fallible canon”: 2 Peter 3:16.

4. “Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write” (2 Thes 3:17): “At this point Paul took the pen from the hand of his amanuensis to add a final personal greeting. It was not an uncommon practice in the ancient world for the one who had dictated a letter to write the last sentence or two in his own hand. That Paul dictated his letters is obvious from references such as Romans 16:22, where the amanuensis (*Tertius*) is, in fact, named. **Here Paul alerts his readers to this practice, and this**

should help them distinguish genuine letters from spurious ones written in his name. It may be, too, that Paul simply wanted to stress the importance of what he had to say in his letters” (Edited by Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989] emphasis mine).

5. “Thus says the Lord GOD of hosts, “Come, go to this steward, to Shebna, who is over the household. . . . In that day I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your girdle on him, and will commit your authority to his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”

6. Even Luther wrote, “*I never approved of a schism, nor will I approve of it for all eternity. That the Roman Church is more honored by God than all others is not to be doubted. St. Peter and St. Paul, forty-six Popes, some hundreds of thousand of martyrs, have laid down their lives in its communion, having overcome Hell and the world; so that the eyes of God rest on the Roman Church with special favor. Though nowadays everything is in a wretched state, it is no ground for separating from the Church. On the contrary, the worse things are going, the more should we hold close to her, for it is not by separating from the Church that we can make her better . . . There is no sin, no amount of evil, which should be permitted to dissolve the bond of charity or break the bond of unity of the body”* (Luther to Pope Leo X, January 6, 1519, more than a year after the 95 Theses, Patrick F. O’Hare, *The Facts About Luther* [Rockford, IL: TAN Books, 1987], 356–357).

7. Mostly from Eusebius’ *Church History* in vol. 1, series 2 of the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982). I gave you a copy of the Penguin edition about a year ago.

8. Gary Demarest speculates the question by writing, “*To Paul and Timothy, the Scriptures were the writings contained in the Old Testament. . . . It would be fun to ask Paul or any of the other authors of the New Testament books such as Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John whether he was aware that his writings would come to be bound in the same book that he called the Holy Scriptures. I’m certain that his answer would be an unqualified no. I don’t think he would ever have entertained such a thought”* (Gary Demarest, *1, 2 Thessalonians, 1, 2 Timothy, Titus* in *The Communicator’s Commentary* ed. by Lloyd J. Ogilvie [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984], vol. 9, pg. 282). Demarest then goes on to acknowledge the “*men and women of long ago who both gathered and recognized the twenty-seven writings, now called the New Testament, as being a part of the Word of God written.*”

9. See my paper on “*The Old Testament Canon, the Septuagint, and the “Council of Jamnia”*”.

10. Thus the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in its *Constitution on Divine Revelation* (8, 2), “*Through the same tradition the Church’s full canon of the sacred books is known, and the sacred writings themselves are more profoundly understood and unceasingly made active in her; and thus God, who spoke of old, uninterruptedly converses with the bride of*

His beloved Son; and the Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the Gospel resounds in the Church, and through her, in the world.”

11. R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992), 22.

12. 2 Tim 3:14–17: *“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”*

13. Norman Geisler and William Nix, *General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press; 1971), 51–52.

14. 2 Pet 1:20–21: *“First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”*

15. E.g., *“A second objection, which would undermine the author’s appeal to Old Testament prophecy, must now be met. The opponents denied the divine origin of the prophetic writings, claiming that although the prophets may have received signs, dreams, and visions, their prophecies were their own human interpretations of these, not God-given interpretations. (This is probably the view that is contradicted in the difficult v. 20b.) The author’s reply insists on the divine inspiration of the prophets’ words”* (Harper’s Bible Commentary ed. by James L. Mays [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988]). See also Matthew Henry, etc.

16. *“The Absence of the Article [anarthrous]: “Sometimes with a noun which the context proves to be definite the article is not used. This places stress upon the qualitative aspect of the noun rather than its mere identity. An object of thought may be conceived of from two points of view: as to identity or quality. To convey the first point of view the Greek uses the article; for the second the anarthrous construction is used. Also [as in 1 Timothy] in expressions which have become technicalized or stereotyped, and in salutations, the article is not used”* (H. E. Dana and Julius Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* [Toronto, Canada: MacMillan Company, 1995], pg. 149).

17. I asked a good friend of mine with a degree in New Testament and prolific in Greek what he thought of Warfield’s exegesis of this passage. He said, *“It seems to me that Warfield has it exactly backwards. To claim that an ‘anarthrous’ word carries special significance compared to some other word in a context, because it is anarthrous seems complete back-asswards to me. One could make this argument if one word had the article and the other didn’t, making one more concrete and the other more abstract. Then the argument would at least have a shred of plausibility.”*

18. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968] under *gravmma* in Logos Bible Software 2.0.

19. William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1975), pg. 199.

20. A clever discussion on proving a universal negative is in Peter Kreeft's book *The Best Things in Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), starting at page 53: "*On Superstition and Santa Claus*". The antagonist, Peter challenges Socrates, "*Prove to me there is real magic.*" To which Socrates replies, "*No, you must prove to me there isn't. You are the one who claims to be sure, remember?*"

With your second prong in your argument for *sola Scriptura* you state that nothing else is inspired. This is a tough thing to prove as it is a universal negative. How do you know? Has the only infallible authority, the Bible, told you explicitly that the written words in the Bible *alone* are inspired? All I have to do is demonstrate *one* plausible exception and your case falls flat. You make the assumption that nothing else is inspired, since you have no direct revelation from God, in the only source of inspired writing that specifically states that fact. This claim of yours is based not on fact, or revelation, but on an assumption that is part of the Evangelical Protestant tradition. We will discuss this issue at another time since it is a whole different topic.

21. 2 Peter 3:15, 16: "*So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.*"

22. 1 Tim 5:18: "For the scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain,' and, 'The laborer deserves his wages?'"

23. Lu 10:7: "And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages; do not go from house to house."

24. "*It is obvious that the second Epistle to Timothy was written not later than 67 A.D. It may have been as early as 65. This means that 1 Timothy and Titus were probably written between 62 and 66. If we assume omitted details in the Acts accounts, earlier dates might be possible*" (Ralph Earle, *1 Timothy in the Expositor's Bible Commentary* ed. by Frank Gaebelien [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978], vol. 11, pg. 344).

25. John Nolland, *Luke 19:20 in the Word Biblical Commentary* [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1989], vol. 35a, pg. xxxix).

26. Norman Geisler and William Nix, *General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press; 1971), 51–52.

27. I am not inferring that the New Testament is not inspired, for as you clearly know, I do believe it is inspired, and I'd die to defend it. I am saying that in the historical context Paul is obviously referring to the Old Testament. The New Testament is also inspired Scripture but one cannot use this passage to prove it, only to assume it, and then not to define it. The Protestant has a very indefensible basis for claiming inspiration for the New Testament whereas the Catholic can claim so with confidence and sound reasoning.

28. R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House,

1992), 22.

29. Contrary to the nefarious connotations attached to the title *vicar*, it only means a deputy, or representative, or visible substitute, as the Vizier in Egypt or the Steward in Israel was the visible substitute who was “over the house” in the king’s physical absence. Even “Bible churches” have pastors who act as visible vicars along with their board of directors, deacon board, or presbytery.

30. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), vol. 2, Book Fourth, pg. 407.

31. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), vol. 2, Book Fourth, pg. 407.

32. Augustine also proclaimed “*For my part, I should not believe the gospel except as moved by the authority of the Catholic Church*” (in his epistle *Against the Epistle of Manichaeus* (5) in *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, first series [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983], vol. 4, pg. 131). The anti-Catholic editor of this volume, Philip Schaff, sees this as a “*distinct assertion of the dependence of Scripture for authority on the Church.*” Augustine had no misconceptions about the authority of the Catholic Church, Rome, or the Councils. To imply he rejected or minimized the authority of the Church, and the See of Peter in Rome, is to grossly misrepresent Augustine. It is he who also wrote, “*In the Catholic Church . . . the succession of priests from the very chair of the Apostle Peter,—to whom the Lord after His resurrection committed His sheep to be fed,—down even to the present bishop [of Rome]*” (*T. viii Contr. Ep. Fund. Manich. col. 269*; quoted in *The Faith of Catholics* [New York, NY: Fr. Puset & Co., 1885] Vol. 2, pg. 82). I could go on *ad infinitum* on this topic. Augustine was a full-fledged Catholic.

33. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), vol. 2, bk. 4, pg. 407.

34. Acts 17:1–15.

35. “*Noble-minded, open-minded; ou|toi h\|san eujgenevsteroi tw’n ejn Qessalonivkh/ these were more open-minded than those in Th. Ac 17:11*” (William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 2nd ed., rev. and augmented [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979], 319).

“*Thus the Jews of Berea ‘were more noble [in character] than those of Thessalonica’ in their welcome and cordial treatment of the apostles*” (Celas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publ., 1994], vol. 2, pg. 94).

“*A willingness to learn and evaluate something fairly - ‘willingness to learn, to be open-minded, to be noble-minded; ‘the people there were more open-minded than the people in Thessalonica’ Ac 17.11*” (*Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* ed. by Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida [New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1989], no. 27.48).

“*Originally refers to nobility of birth, it came to denote those qualities which were expected in people so born, in the same way as Eng. ‘noble’. Moffet renders ‘more amenable’,*

LC (better) ‘more generous’, . . . It is the equivalent of Lat. *generosus*, ‘noble’, ‘liberal’, ‘free from prejudice’” (F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975], 238).

36. Acts 17:1 ,2: “After Paul and Silas had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three sabbath days argued with them from the scriptures.”

37. 1 Thes 2:13: “And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.”

38. There is no doubt that Paul did not *just* teach the Old Testament. He clearly sees himself as the presenter of new revelation. An example is Ephesians 3:1–5: “For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.”

39. 2 Thes 2:15: “So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter.”

2 Thes 3:6: “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.”

1 Cor 11:2: “I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you.”

40. Dave Hunt, the radical anti-Catholic, has a newsletter entitled *The Berean Call*. I think he may have to change it to *The Thessalonican Call* to stick faithfully with his staunch position on *sola Scriptura*.

41. “Why chain books? Before the invention of Printing books were scarce and dear, and it was the custom of the College authorities to lend single volumes to students for one year, to be returned with evidence of their having been profitably studied. [Since they were often mistreated and not returned] chaining seemed a natural way of securing them for general use. . . . The custom of fastening books to their shelves by chains was common at an early period throughout all Europe. When a book was given to a mediaeval library it was necessary, in the first place, to buy a chain, and, if the book was of especial value, a pair of clasps; secondly, to employ a smith to put them on; and, lastly, a painter to write the name and class-mark across the fore-edge. . . . When religious zeal made many people feel the want of spiritual food, it led to the chaining of single volumes in churches, where any parishioner, able to read, could satisfy his soul” (Gerald Donaldson, *Books* [New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1981], pg. 16).