

Some comments on James White's critique of Steve Ray's article in "This Rock" titled, *Why the Bereans Rejected Sola Scriptura*.

NOTE: Steve, my comments, including material I quote from other sources, are in Arial 12 pt, James is in Arial 10 pt, and yours is in Times Roman 10 pt, as well as being indented. I will also have a version in ASCII text (BEREANS.TXT) for those who cannot accommodate this version, which is in Microsoft Word 7.0 for Windows 95, which may not be accommodated by earlier versions of Word.

So here goes.....

"This Bereans passage has been commandeered by Fundamentalists for too long, and it is time Catholics reclaim it." —Former Baptist Steve Ray, *This Rock*, March, 1997, p. 24.

A Review and Rebuttal of Steve Ray's Article, *Why the Bereans Rejected Sola Scriptura*.

By Professor James White

Steve Ray is a nice guy. At least, we've had some civil discourse in the past via the Internet. He seems like an honest man who is convinced that the position he now embraces—Roman Catholicism—is the true and proper position to take. I start by acknowledging this, for I don't want anyone to think that I bear him any malice. I say this because beyond my recognizing his personal civility, I find little else in his written works that is commendable.

At least he gives you that, Steve. It's nice to know you are civil!

Steve Ray is the first person to tell you he is not a scholar. He's a layman who, as a Baptist, decided he needed to convert to the Roman Catholic faith. He has written a book, *Crossing the Tiber*, in which he defends his choice. As soon as I obtained the book, I noted a number of *glaring* deficiencies in the work: numerous errors in representing Protestant theology, a complete failure to interact with *any* level of Protestant apologetic response, etc. I informed Mr. Ray of this by e-mail.

And he cannot help but turn a humble remark into a degrading of you, Steve, even though he uses a kind tone here. He would have mentioned it even if you did not state you were a layman, I am afraid. He establishes the ground work for pumping up his own scholastic achievements at your expense. This is typical of James White's tactics of beating down the opponent before you start debating the issues.

In response, Mr. Ray indicated that his book simply developed out of a long letter to his parents defending

his choice to leave the Baptist faith and embrace the Roman. He asserted that it was not intended as an in-depth analysis of Protestant theology. This did not exactly satisfy my concerns with how often it completely missed the point of the debate, but I certainly accepted that this is how Mr. Ray views his book.

It was with some real consternation, therefore, that I read the March, 1997 issue of *This Rock* magazine, published by *Catholic Answers*. I have long criticized *Catholic Answers* for using a straw-man view of *sola scriptura* in their publications—a practice that, despite my criticisms, they continue unabated. But in this issue we find an article titled, *Why the Bereans Rejected Sola Scriptura* written by none other than Steve Ray. Now, an article in *This Rock* cannot logically be considered an extension of a letter to Mr. Ray's parents. This is "new" material. The article describes Mr. Ray as one who engages "in apologetics work in Michigan." This is a work specifically designed to be used to convince Protestants that their belief in *sola scriptura* is in error. Hence, I expected a little higher standard in something like this.

Of all the debates James has been involved with, *Sola Scriptura* is the one issue he is proud of and yet he does not seem to come out ahead. I think he has been soundly beaten by the best on this, and yet he insists on fighting that battle. The best debate that still needs to be answered is his exchange with Joe Gallegos that took place in 1993. I get into this more later....

The Old Anti-Catholic Ploy

Unfortunately, though Mr. Ray does his best to avoid inflammatory speech in personal conversation, the same is not the case regarding his article in *This Rock*. While avoiding a lot of the "shots" that mark the normal *Catholic Answers* type material (see examples elsewhere on our web page, including our response to a CA article on *sola scriptura* as well as our rebuttal of a recent attack by James Akin, Mr. Ray falls prey to the old "anti-Catholic" ploy. It's a false form of argumentation that *Catholic Answers* likes to use with regularity (they are hardly the only ones to do so, of course!). It's an invalid attempt to claim the "high ground" by calling anyone who disagrees with you and with your position an "anti-Catholic," while referring to yourself merely as an "apologist." Hence, you make your opponent look like the aggressor, while you are the defender, even when, in point of fact, you are attacking *their* position (while failing to do a whole lot to actually define and defend your own).

This is the first time I've seen the term "Anti-Catholic" made to be a ploy. From my youth, I have seen too many attacks from the Protestant pulpit that was against the Church *not* to use the term for such preaching. James goes off being the wounded puppy over remarks made by those more rabid than he, such as the likes of Dave Hunt. If we object to such statement like "papist" or "Romist" and other derisive terms as anti-Catholic, he will complain, I suppose.

Mr. Ray begins by identifying Dave Hunt's organization as an "anti-Catholic" organization. Later he makes the term "Fundamentalist" a synonym for "anti-Catholic," and uses the phrase "anti-Catholic" two more times, saying, "From the perspective of anti-Catholics, the *Thessalonians* would have been more noble-minded" and later, "Anti-Catholics love to associate themselves with the Bereans. . . ." It is quite honestly a shame to see Mr. Ray falling into the "us vs. them" mentality so soon after his conversion (1994). I truly doubt he refers to himself as an "anti-Protestant," so why he would adopt such terminology of others is difficult to understand, outside, that is, of the polemics of Roman Catholic apologists. I would like to call upon Mr. Ray (and all Roman Catholic apologists) to cease and desist in their use of such a ploy.

What are we then to call what Dave Hunt says about the Catholic Church? This individual certainly has little good to say about the Church and in fact, his tone is mostly abusive. I am at a loss as to what to call what Dave Hunt does, or does James think that he is a champion to a truth that justifies his manner? Now I have not read any (other than some quotes) of Dave Hunt's material, so I cannot speak first hand, but his reputation is far and wide as a very vocal individual who puts down the Church to the max, to the point of verbal abuse unbecoming of a Christian. If this is so, then do not Catholics have the right to label him for what he is?

Sola Scriptura: Misrepresented AGAIN

The main criticism that can be lodged against Mr. Ray's work is quite simple: he does not accurately portray (or possibly even understand) the Protestant position that he has abandoned, and is now intent upon attacking. This is a common problem in Roman Catholic apologetics: and the fact that many Protestants don't know their faith very well, and hence allow such misrepresentations to pass without comment or correction, only exacerbates the situation.

Yes, James is right about this one, but the trouble is, which Protestant denomination is he talking about? If the vast number of Protestant denominations had precisely the same doctrinal statement on Sola Scriptura, then we Catholics could be accurate about it. But ah, that is the rub; we can't because there is too many nuances on how the doctrine is defined.

Now, immediately, someone may say, "Yes, well, both sides always say that about the other." That's true. But there is a major difference: when we say someone has misrepresented the Protestant position, we demonstrate this by documenting what the Protestant position *is*, and how, *in context*, the Roman Catholic writer *should* have known better. We have explained what *sola scriptura* is over and over again in our apologetic writings and books. Mr. Ray *owns* my books on Roman Catholicism. He *could have* (if he wished) availed himself of many sources that would have saved him from the error of misrepresentation and straw-man argumentation. But he did not avail himself of those sources. Why? Only he can answer that question.

The problem is, James has a definition of Sola Scriptura that may work for a number of Protestant denominations, but it won't work for all for all. Perhaps it is because of Sola Scriptura, and the further claim that Scriptures is "self interpreting" that is part of the blame in there being so many versions of what Sola Scriptura is. How's that for circular reasoning?

We begin with the following presentation:

Which is where James should have began his discourse at the least. But consider what James has done so far. He has diminished you, hopefully, so that others who read this

will tend to discredit your article and accept his rebuttal. Steve, at this point in his rebuttal, don't you feel defeated already? <G>

But there is more. Before he discusses the main issues of the Thessolonians and the Bereans, that is more damage James attempts to do, to your discredit:

Sola scriptura, or the "Bible only," is a Protestant doctrine invented in the fifteenth century. It declares the Bible is the sole source of revelation and the only and final judge in all matters of the Christian faith. Martin Luther developed it as a reaction to the historic teachings of the Catholic Church and of the Fathers of the first centuries. Luther rejected the authority of the Church and the apostolic tradition and so was left with *sola scriptura*—the Bible alone.

It is hard to know where to begin. This is substantially the same kind of presentation made in his book, *Crossing the Tiber*. However, in that book, he accurately identified the Reformation as taking place in the 16th, not the 15th, century. Since he claims Luther developed the doctrine, and Luther did not even begin his theological work until (at the earliest) 1510, how Ray can speak of the "fifteenth century" is difficult to understand. But this is just the beginning of the errors. Martin Luther didn't invent the doctrine, of course. Even if Ray disputes every single statement from the Fathers that I have provided in written sources (see my chapter in *Sola Scriptura: The Protestant Position on the Bible*, 1995, Soli Deo Gloria Publishers, pp. 27-62), and rejects every Waldensian statement concerning the doctrine, he would still have to deal with the plain words of John Wyclif, who obviously believed in the doctrine and put it into practice. Such would place the doctrine, even under such an artificial construction as being the invention of Wyclif, in the *fourteenth* century, more than a century before Luther. If Mr. Ray encountered a Protestant who, in discussing Roman Catholic dogmatic formulations, misidentified the source of such formulations, and misplaced the dates by centuries, would he not have reason to question the validity of that person's conclusions?

James amuses himself in a bruhaha over dates, be it the 15th or 16th centuries, but I was surprised that according to James, Wyclif preceded Luther in the previous century with the idea of Sola Scriptura. My Catholic Encyclopedia, the 1965 edition with about 16 volumes, says nothing about this for Wyclif and in passing, claims that Luther taught that "there is only one source of faith, and that is Holy Scripture. Each Christian conscience must interpret Scripture for itself under the guidance of the Holy Spirit." I wonder if James will object to this definition of Sola Scriptura?

So I comment: *So what?* How does all this effect his argument against your article other than an attempt to discredit you?

But far more damaging is the simple fact that Mr. Ray does not know what *sola scriptura* is. *Sola scriptura* does not say the Bible is the "sole source of revelation." Such is a basic, fundamental mistake on the level of saying, "The Immaculate Conception means Mary didn't need a Savior." Such would indicate that the person making the statement has never seriously interacted with any apologetic defense of the Immaculate Conception. In the same way, Mr. Ray's writings show a *consistent* pattern as well: he has not interacted with any serious Protestant apologetics works, either. Or, if he has, he gives no evidence of it.

At this point, I wonder if James really knows himself. Now I am sure his idea of what Sola Scriptura is matches his on denomination (Reformed Baptist, I think) but does it match what the whole body of Protestantism says it is?

Sola scriptura says the Scriptures are the sole infallible rule of faith for the Church. It does not deny the existence of "general revelation" in nature (hence the error of saying the "sole source of revelation"). It is interesting to note, however, that Mr. Ray, in his zeal for the Roman position, ends up taking the more conservative, traditional *partim-partim* viewpoint of tradition and revelation, for while many modern Roman Catholic theologians are moving toward abandoning the "two-source" view of revelation, Mr. Ray states his adherence to it plainly a number of times in his article (we shall note them in passing). Mr. Ray is a former Baptist. Hence, he might want to be familiar with what the Baptists in 1689 placed in their Confession of Faith:

No James, the Bible does not only say nothing about it being the sole source of revelation, it say nothing about it being the sole source of faith as well. I wonder who those Catholic theologians are, James speaks of? This would have been a good time to name them, but I suspect they have not found much favor with the Church.

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word; and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

The sufficiency of Scripture is clearly asserted, but it is a sufficiency carefully defined. No one claims the Bible is an omnipedia of all knowledge. Nor does anyone claim the Bible can tell you, specifically, what color fabric to place upon the pews of your new church building. But all things that are "necessary" for God's "own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in Holy Scripture." How like the words of Augustine:

What more shall I teach you than what we read in the apostle? For Holy Scripture fixes the rule for our doctrine, lest we dare to be wiser than we ought. Therefore I should not teach you anything else except to expound to you the words of the Teacher. (*De bono viduitatis*, 2)

Note well the words of Augustine: he says that the Scriptures fix "the rule for our doctrine." The Latin of the passage reads, "*Scriptura nostræ doctrinæ regulam figit*." Protestants say the Scriptures are the sole infallible *regula fidei*, the rule of faith. It seems Augustine believed the same.

I believe James quoted this to me once before, and unfortunately, I do not have a copy of Augustine's works here. My *Faith of the Early Fathers* by William Jurgens does not have it. But before I quote other works of Augustine that would tend to discredit what James claims what Augustine means in this quote, there is no doubt that the Church holds Holy Scriptures as "one leg" of "a man," [The Church] whose feet must stand in two places when determining doctrine and the truth; The "other foot" must rest in the Sacred Traditions of the Church. Joe Gallegos said this somewhere in one of his files and I have been unable to find it, but in any case, he has a marvelous rebuttal to the

same James white in his *Fathers.zip* file, and I am going to quote from it here:

Joe, this has got to be deja vu for you here!

Quote....

Again, private interpretation is not in the vocabulary of St. Augustine, hence St. Augustine is foreign to the formal aspect of Sola Scriptura. The testimonies from St. Augustine are legion affirming that Scripture, Tradition and Church are inseparable as opposed to Sola Scriptura (i.e. Bible and one's private interpretation to obtain the truth). I will end with the words of St. Augustine in his work dealing with the Manichean heresy:

"For in the Catholic Church, not to speak of the purest wisdom, to the knowledge of which a few spiritual men attain in this life, so as to know it, in the scantiest measure, indeed, because they are but men, still without any uncertainty...The consent of peoples and nations keep me in Church, so does her authority, inaugurated by miracles, nourished by hope, enlarged by love, established by age. The SUCCESSION of priests keeps me, beginning from the very seat of the APOSTLE PETER, to whom the Lord, after his resurrection, gave it in charge to feed his sheep, down to the present EPISCOPATE...The epistle begins thus:--'Manicheus, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the providence of God the Father. These are the wholesome words from the perennial and living fountain.' Now, if you please, patiently give heed to my inquiry. I do not believe Manicheus to be an apostle of Christ. Do not, I beg you, be enraged and begin to curse. For you know that it is my rule to believe none of your statements without consideration. Therefore I ask, who is this Manicheus? You will reply, An Apostle of Christ. I do not believe it.

Now you are at a loss what to say or do; for you promised to give knowledge of truth, and here you are forcing me to believe what I have no knowledge of. Perhaps you will read the gospel to me, and will attempt to find there a testimony to Manicheus. But should you meet with a person not yet believing in the gospel, how would you reply to him were he to say, I do not believe? For MY PART, I should NOT BELIEVE the gospel except moved by the authority of the Catholic Church. So when those on whose authority I have consented to believe in the gospel tell me not to believe in Manicheus, how can I BUT CONSENT?"

Epis Mani 5,6 [Joe, the emphasis was yours. WMP]

Likewise we have Augustine affirming the need for interpreting Scripture in light of Tradition/Church and never apart from them:

"Wherever this tradition comes from, we must believe that the Church has not believed in vain, even though the express authority of the canonical scriptures is not brought forward for it"

Letter 164 to Evodius of Uzalis

"To be sure, although on this matter, we cannot quote a clear example taken from the canonical Scriptures, at any rate, on this question, we are following the true thought of Scriptures when we observe what has appeared good to the universal Church which the authority of these same Scriptures recommends to you"

Cresconius I:33

"It is obvious; the faith allows it; the Catholic Church approves; it is true"

Sermon 117:6

"If therefore, I am going to believe things I do not know about, why should I not believe those things which are accepted by the common consent of learned and unlearned alike and are established by most weighty authority of all peoples?"

Letter called Fundamentals 14:18

"Will you, then, so love your error, into which you have fallen through adolescent overconfidence and human weakness, that you will separate yourself from these leaders of Catholic unity and truth, from so many different parts of the world who are in agreement among themselves on so important a question, one in which the essence of the Christian religion involved..?"

C. Julian 1:7,34

"The authority of our Scriptures, strengthened by the consent of so many nations, and confirmed by the succession of the Apostles, bishops and councils, is against you"

C Faustus 8:5

Note that St. Augustine appealed to the authority of the Church as opposed to his own internal witness regarding the validity/authenticity of the gospel!

Like the rest of the Fathers who interpreted the Scriptures in light of Tradition and Church, Augustine affirmed Catholic doctrines such as the real presence:

'For Christ was carried in his own hands when, entrusting to us his own Body, he said: "This is my Body." Indeed he was carrying that Body in his own hands'

Ennar. In Ps 33

JW> JG> St. Augustine speaking of religious usages...

JW> JG> "Those which we keep, not as being written, but as from Tradition, if JW> JG> observed by the whole of Christendom, are thereby understood to be JW> JG> committed to us by the Apostles themselves or plenary Councils, and JW> JG> be retained as instituted" Ep 118

JW> Given that this letter is twelve pages long, Joe, would you mind providing a JW> proper citation? The thing is 34 chapters long.... Be that as it may, is JW>.Augustine speaking of revealed truths? What is a "religious usage" as you JW> put it?

It doesn't matter what the character of 'religious usage' is James since St. Augustine affirms the authority of Tradition (on the basis of universal belief and antiquity) alongside the authority of the Scriptures. Remember Sola Scriptura is just that--the Scriptures Alone is all one needs...St. Augustine admits some doctrines on the basis of Tradition(such as infant baptism, heretical baptism) and interprets Scripture within the grid of Tradition/Church and not via the rule of Sola Scriptura. The farthest thing from Augustine, like the rest of the Fathers, is that he interprets Scripture within the milieu of tradition and Church as opposed to private interpretation.

JG> St. Augustine regarding infant baptism...

JG>"And if anyone seek for divine authority in this matter, though what is held by JG>he whole Church, and not as instituted by Councils, but as a matter of JG>invariable custom, is rightly held to have been handed down by apostolic JG>authority...." On Baptism 24

JW>Ah yes, back to having to fight with Cyprian on baptism.

Nevertheless you haven't dealt with the text that clearly shows Augustine affirmed the authority placed in 'the faith of the whole Church' as an authority coming from the Apostles. An authority in which the Scriptures are to be interpreted not apart from it!

Now to provide further evidence that St. Augustine did not appeal to the reformer's concept of Sola Scriptura.

Here we read clearly that for ambiguous and doubtful passages St. Augustine appealed not to Sola Scriptura but rather;

"the rule of faith which has gathered from the plainer passages of Scripture, AND from the authority of the Church, AND of which I treated at sufficient length when I was speaking in the first book about things"

On Christian Doctrine III, 2

Likewise we have St. Augustine appeal to another monument of Tradition (the universal/conciliar belief of the Church) for determining his canon of the New Testament Scriptures--Note that for St. Augustine, like Catholic apologists today, he appealed to the authority of Church/Tradition in regards to determining the canon of the New Testament and not his own private discernment of the canon. We read;

"Now, in regards to the canonical Scriptures, he MUST FOLLOW the judgment of the greater number of catholic churches...Accordingly, among the canonical Scriptures he will judge according to the standard: to prefer those that are received by all the catholic churches to those which some do not receive." On Christian Doctrine II,8

Similarly, St. Augustine affirms the authority of Tradition (via the monument of universal belief and usage) regarding prayers for the dead.

We read:

"In the books of Maccabees we read of sacrifice offered for the dead. Howbeit, even if their were no where at all read in the Old Scriptures, not small is the authority, which in this usage is clear, of the whole Church, namely that in the prayers of the priest which are offered to the Lord God at His altar, the commendation of the death hath its place"

De Cura Pro Mortuis I,3

Again, we find St. Augustine appealing to Tradition and Church (via Council/Conciliar belief etc.) regarding heretical baptism, Cyprian and the Donatist controversies and not the Scriptures alone...

"By this witness he gives sufficient proof how much more ready he would have been to bear his testimony, had ANY Council been held to discuss this matter which either embraced the whole Church, or at least represented our brethren beyond the sea. But such a Council had not yet been held, because the whole world bound together by the powerful bond of custom; and this was deemed SUFFICIENT to oppose to those who wish to introduce what was new, because they could not comprehend the truth. Afterwards, however, while the question became a matter for discussion and investigation amongst many on either side, the new practice was not only invented, but even submitted to the authority and power of a PLENARY Council" De Baptismo C. Donatists II,7

Likewise, St. Augustine appeals to Tradition and Church regarding the doctrine of infant baptism. In this passage we find St. Augustine affirm a couple of aspects of Tradition; 1)viewed as a belief held by the whole Church , 2) a belief that is entrenched in antiquity and 3)a belief that is unchanging. In addition, we find St. Augustine contrasting the apostolic authority of invariable custom with the authority placed in the Church(in Council)...Again we find St. Augustine, like Athanasius and the rest of the Fathers, upholding Church, Scripture and Tradition as opposed to the Scriptures Alone.

"And this is the firm tradition of the universal church, in respect of baptism of infants...and if one seek for divine authority in this matter, though what is held by the WHOLE Church, and that not as instituted by Councils, but as a matter of invariable custom, is rightly held to have been handed down by APOSTOLIC authority..." ibid IV,31

Hence for St. Augustine, Scripture is the criterion of faith but not at the exclusion of tradition and Church. That is why St. Augustine explicitly affirms (eg. heretical baptism, infant baptism etc.) what the Church has traditionally/generally held to be of apostolic authority. In addition, St. Augustine also affirms that this tradition is entrusted to the Church and preserved by apostolic succession. Regarding infant baptism and original sin St. Augustine affirms that his interpretation was in-line with the traditional teaching of the Church and not his private interpretation he writes:

"For who does not see in what degree Coelestius was bound by the interrogations of your holy predecessor and by the answers of Coelestius, whereby he professed that he consented to the letters of Pope Innocent, and fastened by a most wholesome chain, so

as not to dare any further to maintain that the original sin of infants is not put away in baptism? Because these are the words of the venerable Bishop Innocent concerning this matter to the Carthaginian Council....'by the purification of a new regeneration, purged all past sin by the washing of baptism.' What could be more clear than the judgement of the Apostolic See?"

C. Duas Epis Pelagianorum II,6

Likewise, here we have St. Augustine affirming his interpretation of Sacred Scriptures(re: Original Sin) is in-line with Church and tradition(as seen in the monuments of the Church Fathers) as opposed to his own private interpretation.

"What, moreover, shall I say of those commentators on the divine Scriptures who have flourished in the catholic Church? They have never tried to prevent these testimonies to an ALIEN sense, because they were firmly ESTABLISHED in our most ancient and solid faith, and were never moved aside from error. Were I wish to collect these together and to make use of their testimony, the task would be too long, and I should probably seem to have bestowed less preference that I ought on the canonical authorities, from one must never deviate" De Nup et Conc II,51

Unquote....[From Joe Gallegos: AGUSTN.TXT, part of *Fathers.zip*]

Wow! Now if that does not discredit the idea that St. Augustine espoused Sola Scriptura, then I don't know what does!

And we continue:

Now before too many of our Roman Catholic readers blow a gasket, I well know that Augustine asserted the Church has a role in preserving the truth, and especially when Augustine had to struggle against Donatism (and the influence of Cyprian), he appealed to "tradition." Yet, he did *not* appeal to tradition as Rome now teaches it, and did *not* deny *sola scriptura* so as to present a doctrine of *sola ecclesia*. Note his own words:

You ought to notice particularly and store in your memory that God wanted to lay a firm foundation in the Scriptures against treacherous errors, a foundation against which no one dares to speak who would in any way be considered a Christian. For when He offered Himself to them to touch, this did not suffice Him unless He also confirmed the heart of the believers from the Scriptures, for He foresaw that the time would come when we would not have anything to touch but would have something to read (In *Epistolam Johannis tractus*, 2).

The issue is not, and never has been, the validity of "tradition" as a *subordinate* authority. I above cited from the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith. It is a "subordinate standard," a "tradition" if you wish, that gives expression to certain aspects of divine truth. But it is not revelational, nor is it infallible. It is *subordinate* to Scripture, and liable to correction on the basis thereof. The Lord Jesus gave us the example in Matthew 15: we are to subordinate *all* traditions, even those that men claim are "divine" in origin, to the *ultimate* authority of Scripture. In this we agree with Basil of Caesarea:

James is clutching at a straw if he sees Augustine downplaying the role of the Sacred Traditions and the authority of the Church when it is the very same Church that so

carefully preserved the very Scriptures that, in James mind, *replaces* the authority of the Church! Of course Scriptures "lays down a firm foundation ...against treacherous errors"! It is a tremendous stretch for James to see the Sacred Tradition taking a back seat in this role. This notion is thoroughly trounced by the above devastating quote I provided above.

The hearers taught in the Scriptures ought to test what is said by teachers and accept that which agrees with the Scriptures but reject that which is foreign. (*Moralia*, 72:1)

This is something new for the Church? Has it not always been that the great test of any doctrine is the "two feet" principle I have outlined above?

If a certain novel doctrine is not found in the Sacred Traditions of the Church *and* not closely implied in Scriptures, it *fails*. Likewise with a given "interpretation" of Scriptures, (such as Sola Scriptura as a matter of fact) likewise fails to show up on Holy Traditions of the Church, it fails also. Even if it *seems* to have "two feet" it is certain that the doctrine is exposed to the close scrutiny for years, or better, centuries before it is declared as doctrine.

And likewise with Cyril of Jerusalem:

In regard to the divine and holy mysteries of the faith, not the least part may be handed on without the Holy Scriptures. Do not be led astray by winning words and clever arguments. Even to me, who tell you these things, do not give ready belief, unless you receive from the Holy Scriptures the proof of the things which I announce. The salvation in which we believe is not proved from clever reasoning, but from the Holy Scriptures. (*Catechetical Lectures* 4:17)

I note in passing that such citations, likewise, refute Mr. Ray's assertion that Luther was rejecting the "teachings of the Fathers of the first centuries." In reality, it is Mr. Ray who has abandoned them in his embracing of doctrines such as the Bodily Assumption of Mary and the Immaculate Conception.

Joe Gallegos to the rescue once again! James White brought up good ole' Cyril of Jerusalem in his debate with Joe, and here is how it went:

Quote....

Cyril----

JW>But in learning the Faith and in professing it, acquire and keep that only, JW>which is now delivered to thee by the Church, and which has been built up JW>strongly out of all the Scriptures. For since all cannot read the Scriptures, JW>some being hindered as to the knowledge of them by want of learning, and JW>others by a want of leisure, in order that the soul may not perish from JW>gnorance, we comprise the whole doctrine of the Faith in a few lines. This JW>summary I wish you both to commit to memory with all diligence among JW>yourselves, not writing it out on paper, but engraving it by the

memory upon JW>our heart...So for the present listen while I simply say the Creed, and JW>commit it to memory; but at the proper season expect the confirmation our of JW>Holy Scripture of each part of the contents. For the articles of the Faith were JW>not composed as seemed good to men; but the most important points JW>collected out of all the Scripture make up one complete teaching of the Faith. JW>nd just as the mustard seed in one small grain contains many branches, so JW>also this Faith has embraced in few words all the knowledge of godliness in JW>he Old and New Testaments. Take heed then, brethren, as hold fast the JW>traditions which ye now receive, and write them on the table of your heart JW>(NPNF II 7:32).

Cathechetical Lectures 5:32

JW>This is the tradition you are referring to, and I agree, that is what JW>Athanasius is referring to. A tradition comprised of that which has been JW>"collected out of all the Scripture" as said above. Yes, that's JW>what he is JW>alking about. I'm glad we now agree on that.

Yet you are missing a very vital point here James--tradition as found in it's various monuments such as Church Councils, the faith that has been transmitted from generation to generation coming from the Apostles, the faith expounded by the fathers of the Church in their writings, the catechesis of the Church, the faith expressed in the various Church liturgies etc... ARE PART of the RULE of faith for the Athanasius in order to determine the 'sense' and 'orthodox' intepretation of Sacred Scripture in it's fullness. Sola Scriptura says that ALL one needs to determine the doctrines contained therein is the Scriptures alone--no need for tradition or Church.

Even Cyril denied the formal insufficiency of the Scripture since he writes above:

'But in learning the faith and in professing it, acquire it and keep ONLY, which is now delivered to thee BY THE Church, and which has been built up strongly out of the Scriptures.' Cat V:12

Note that Cyril didn't say ALL we need for 'learning the faith' is the SCRIPTURES ALONE but included those teachings that have been authoritatively handed down such as we have in the Creeds(a monument of tradition). In addition, Cyril does not separate the Scripture, tradition and Church.

Regarding teachings not contained in the Scriptures and the authority of the Church we read:

'Learn also diligently, and FROM THE CHURCH, WHAT ARE THE BOOKS of the Old Testaments, and WHAT are the books of the NEW' Cat IV:33

Granted the Church was still grappling with the issue of the canon of but the point is that Cyril recognized the authority of the Church to define HIS canon (which is a teaching not contained within the Scriptures themselves)...

JW> JW> In regard to the divine and holy mysteries of the faith, not the least JW> JW> part may be handed on without the Holy Scriptures. Do not be led JW> JW>

astray by winning words and clever arguments. Even to me, who tell JW> JW> you these things, do not give ready belief, unless you receive from the JW> JW> Holy Scriptures the proof of the things which I announce. The salvation JW> JW> in which we believe is not proved from clever reasoning, but from the JW> JW> Holy Scriptures. --St. Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 350)

JW> JW> _Catechetical Lectures_ 4:17.

JW> JG> Good Old St. Cyril....What makes you think that the rule of faith for St. JW> JG> Cyril only involves Scripture James?

JW>Oh, I don't know, Joe....I guess the point that is very clear to me from the JW>above is, "Test what you are taught by Scripture." Doesn't sound like JW>someone who believes in the infallibility of the magisterium, but rather the JW>infallibility of the Scriptures.

JW> JG> "But in learning the Faith and in professing it, acquire and keep that JW> JG> only, which is now delivered to thee by the Church, AND which has JW> JG> been built up strongly out of all the Scriptures" Cat V:12

JW> JG> So let's not put Sola Scriptura in the mouths of the Fathers...

JW>I would like to thank you, Joe, for bringing this passage up, Just as this JW>series started, with your citation of Irenaeus, so it ends—with further JW>confirmation of the truth of sola scriptura. Why do I say this? Well, again, JW>the mere reading of the passage you cite IN CONTEXT proves the exact JW>same point I made at the beginning regarding the definition of "tradition" in JW>Irenaeus. Please note the citation you provided in full:

JW> But in learning the Faith and in professing it, acquire and keep that JW> only, which is now delivered to thee by the Church, and which has JW> been built up strongly out of all the Scriptures. For

Cat V:12

Again...James you are ignoring the use of the conjunction 'AND' here. You are trying to insert a wedge between the Scriptures and Church's Tradition for St. Cyril. Cyril does not admit any interpretation apart from tradition or Church. Cyril interprets Scripture in light of the faith which has been delivered to the Church; IOW Cyril's rule of faith consists of Scripture and the Church's tradition. Cyril makes use of both.... Like the rest of the fathers, Tradition is that faith that is 1)held by the Church universal 2)a faith that was transmitted from the Apostles and entrusted to the Church and transmitted from generation to generation via catechesis...an authority alongside the Scripture...

JW>There are many things to note here, Joe. First, the "faith" being JW>discussed is merely the creed, just as it was with Irenaeus when he JW>spoke of "traditions." There is nothing in the Creed that is not found in JW>Scripture, Secondly, Cyril says that the creed is merely the

Exactly--and the creeds are one of the many 'touchstones' of Tradition! In addition, there isn't anything in the Creed not found in Sacred Tradition either...

Nevertheless there is something confessed in the Nicean creed which you wouldn't hold onto but Cyril (and the rest of the Fathers) would...ie

'We acknowledge ONE BAPTISM for the forgiveness of sins'

Please tell me James who is affirming this touchstone of Tradition such as the Nicean Creed as authoritative, binding and part of the rule of faith--Cyril or James White a proponent of Sola Scriptura?

JW>Testaments." Where is your oral tradition, Joe? Doesn't the Faith

James...the oral tradition originated with the Apostles--as did the written tradition...both were handed down and entrusted to Christ's Church...the oral tradition that was not written down was passed onto the Church from generation to generation via various ministrations of the Church The various =monuments= to this original deposit of faith coming from the Apostles that was not written down is found in such things as the writings of the Church Fathers, Creeds, Liturgy, Archeological artifacts, the faith of the living Church, Church Councils etc...

In sum, Cyril holds on to traditions such as the canon of the Sacred Scriptures and traditions such as Creeds...that is why Cyril finds(all over his writings) in Scripture the Real Presence in the Eucharist. We read:

'Having learnt these things, and been fully assured that the seeming bread is NOT bread, though sensible to taste, BUT the BODY of Christ; and that the seeming wine is NOT wine, though the taste will have it so, but the BLOOD of Christ..' Cat XXII:9

Where did Cyril learn these things and where did he get his assurance from?

Unquote....[From Joe Gallegos: CYRIL.TXT, part of *Fathers.zip*]

The main element of Mr. Ray's misrepresentation of *sola scriptura* can be seen in just this: the doctrine speaks of a rule of faith that *exists*. What do I mean by this? One will search high and low for any reference in any standard Protestant confession of faith that says, "There has never been a time when God's Word was proclaimed and transmitted orally." You will never find anyone saying, "During times of enscripturation—that is, when new revelation was being given—*sola scriptura* was operational." Protestants do not assert that *sola scriptura* is a valid concept during times of revelation. How could it be, since the rule of faith to which it points was at that very time coming into being? One must have an *existing* rule of faith to say it is "sufficient." It is a canard to point to times of revelation and say, "See, *sola scriptura* doesn't work there!" Of course it doesn't. Who said it did?

Ah yes, "enscripturation!" That last time I discussed this with James, I believed I asked him about where was the authority and sole source of faith in those days. I forget my exact words, but if, say, ten years after Pentecost, whence came the authority? Where was it to be found a source of faith? It certainly was not contained in the New Testament, as it simply was not written yet! This is my simplistic approach, I suppose, and it certainly can get me into trouble at times, but if it is true that the *apostles* had that authority, and that Christ established his church, is not that church (the body headed by the apostles and their successors) that has that authority? **ALL** of the *Word* was oral!

Not one scrap on papyrus!

Now, does James think that the enscripturation process means that for the time being, the Church and her apostles and successors had this thing called the *sole source of faith*? But then when the enscripturation process was completed, does all of the source of faith shift to the written word? Is the Church then disenfranchised from that point on?

But immediately the Roman Catholic apologist makes a fatal logical error: "Well, if there was a time when God's Word was orally transmitted, why can't it be today?" Such assumes the very thing Rome won't ever dare step out and prove: that her self-proclaimed "traditions" are in fact, inspired revelation that has existed since the days of the Apostles. Indeed, many Roman apologists deny that tradition is in fact *geo,pneustoj*: God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16).

Who me? Well Steve, do you make this claim? <G> I don't think Joe Gallegos ever said that, nor any Catholic apologist that I know of. In fact, if any institution declared it first, ("God breathed") it was the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church! And the "Scriptural foot" is indeed, 2 Tim 3:16! [The other "foot" being the Sacred Traditions of the Church.]

Some of "Tradition" may be inspired (i.e., Scripture), but many are uncomfortable having to defend the idea that "oral tradition" is in fact revelation and is inspired.

I know of at least one person who is "uncomfortable " with it! His name is James White! I know of no Catholic apologist who is uncomfortable at all with defending the idea that the *oral Word*, (Which **IS** that very Sacred Tradition) as given to the apostles by Christ, is indeed, **inspired!**

If the Roman apologist wishes to say, "Well, there was a time when God-breathed revelation was orally transmitted prior to the enscripturization of that revelation," that's fine. But to go beyond this statement to, "And, that situation continues today, so that our traditions are equal with Scripture in authority" is to leap out of the realm of both scriptural teaching and historical reality. It is a self-evident fact that a doctrine such as the Bodily Assumption of Mary has no historical connection to the Apostles themselves. To make it an inspired "tradition" is to say revelation is still being given (a position even Rome denies).

In other words, James comes as close to agreeing with the idea that the authority of the Church (Matt 16:19) did indeed go **poof** and departed a now powerless, non-relevant church once the New Testament was written, collated, the inspired writings separated from the inspired (I wonder how they know that?), and after centuries of careful copying from one monastery to the other, and when finally that same Church declared it closed, finished, no more inspired writings allowed, the Church strips herself of her authority she has enjoyed for at least 300 + years, all because we now have the WORD all written-down nice and pat!

As Rush Limbaugh says: "I demonstrate absurdity by being absurd!"

Sola scriptura speaks to the Church as she exists in her normative state. Times of revelation are not normative. They are now passed. So how does the Church have sure access to the truths of God today? By reference to nebulous, a-historical traditions, or to the sure and unchanging Word of God in the Scriptures? *Sola scriptura* says the Church always has an ultimate authority to which to turn: and the Church isn't that ultimate authority! The Church is in need of revelation from Her Lord, and that she finds in Scripture, not in "traditions" that are uncertain. [For more information on this topic, see *The Roman Catholic Controversy*, pp. 55-101.]

And now finally, we get to the meat of James Rebuttal! Well Steve, if you did not feel defeated before, where James got involved in attempting to prove Sola Scriptura to you, you sure ought to now, right? <G>

Welcome to the debating tactics of one James White!

The Bereans and *sola scriptura*

Mr. Ray's article has a text block that reads as follows:

The Berean Jews accepted oral teaching, the tradition of the Apostles, as equal to Scripture, in addition to, and as an "extension" of the Torah.

The article attempts to undermine the use of Acts 17:11 as a "proof-text" for *sola scriptura* by arguing that in point of fact the Bereans did not operate on a basis consistent with Protestant claims regarding the supremacy of Scripture. Mr. Ray states that the Catholic response to this passage has often been "mediocre." But, he claims, "Not only can the text be explained easily by Catholics, but it is actually a strong argument against *sola scriptura* and a convincing defense of the teaching of the Catholic Church." Such is a pretty tall claim! Does Mr. Ray succeed in his task? Let's start by looking at the passage in question.

(Acts 17:10-12) The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. [11] Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. [12] Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

One of the key phrases is "these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica," so Ray goes back and looks at what had happened there:

(Acts 17:1-9) Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. [2] And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, [3] explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." [4] And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. [5] But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. [6] When they did not find them, they began dragging

Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; [7] and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." [8] They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. [9] And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.

Now, before we look at Mr. Ray's ingenious argument, let's examine the passage and see what Luke has to tell us. We see that Paul, as was his custom, went into the synagogue as the first missions "starting point" upon arriving in Thessalonica. This was his custom everywhere he went, for he would find there a place where the Scriptures were known and hence a common ground could be established. For three weeks he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, using the Old Testament (as we call it today) to demonstrate the truth about the Messiah. Paul met with some success, for some Jews, as well as "God-fearing Greeks" and a number of the leading women believed the message. The "God-fearing Greeks" refers to those who, while not completing the proselytization process, attended the synagogue and listened to the reading of the Scriptures. Nothing is said about the character of the dialogues outside of Paul's reliance upon the Scriptures as his source of teaching. We are told, however, that as soon as people began to follow Paul's teachings, the Jews became jealous. We are not told that they were able to refute Paul, or anything else. Instead, jealousy was their motive. While they had not been able to get the God-fearers to convert, Paul succeeded in convincing them of the truths of the gospel and eliciting from them their belief and obedience.

What follows is not overly relevant to our inquiry here, aside from the fact that an uproar ensues, and Paul and Silas are forced out of town, leading them to Berea. In contrast with the jealous Jews who had stirred up trouble, Luke tells us that those in Berea were more "noble-minded." Rather than stirring up trouble, they eagerly listened to the message of Paul and Silas. At this point, however, we need to look closely at the text. The term "noble minded" is *euvgene,steroi*, which is the adjectival comparative form. Luke is making a contrast between the *attitude* of the Thessalonians and that of the Bereans. As F.F. Bruce points out in his commentary on Acts, the term originally referred to nobility, but eventually came to mean "open minded." How did they show their open-mindedness? They did so by eagerly receiving the message of the Apostles, daily examining the Scriptures to see if what they were receiving was in accordance with God's truth. The Greek text indicates that these were not two different activities: the receiving of the message and the searching of the Scriptures on a daily basis are *one action* in Luke's description. The "daily examining the Scriptures" is a description of the *means* by which the Bereans received the word of the Apostles. A.T. Robertson points out that the term "searching" as in "searching the Scriptures" (*avnakri,nontej*) means "to sift up and down, make careful and exact research as in legal precesses as in Ac 4:9; 12:19, etc.).

Now, the reason this passage is relevant is quite clear: here you have individuals comparing the Apostolic message against the Scriptures. What is the ultimate source of authority for the Bereans? Plainly, it is the Scripture. And just as obviously, the Apostles have no problem at all with this procedure. Hence the necessity of addressing this passage on the part of Mr. Ray.

Let me get this straight: Is James assuming here that the Berean Jews did not have a "Sacred Tradition" of their own that was not always compared with Scripture, which by the way, (not you guys but others who may ultimately read this) as the Old Testament? And certainly we know that these very same Jews knew of the predictions of a Messiah that was to come. Now, here comes the wild-eyed, probably disheveled man (Paul) with a very tall tale of the "Messiah that has come!" As I think about this in my natural tendency to be skeptical, I would probably have been like the Thessalonians!

But here we have the WORD (with a little help of the Holy Spirit, no doubt) falling on the ears of the Bereans, and no doubt *wanting to believe it!* And of course, to confirm this

new faith, seek the Scriptures for final confirmation. Now here we have it folks - The Bereans, believing in the authority of the Scriptures (The Old Testament) and at the same time, believing in a new revelation, that at this point, is *still verbal*. This is an important point. Now whether the Berean Jews already had an oral tradition or not, they sure do have one now!

Steve, that was kinda your whole point, right?

Getting Around Acts 17:11

So how does Mr. Ray get around this passage? He begins by asserting that the Bereans actually *condemn* the position of *sola scriptura*! How? Let's see. He begins by stating, upon citing Acts 17:1-9, "The Thessalonians rejected Paul and his message, and, after denouncing him, they became jealous that others believed." Yet, where does the text say this? The text says nothing about rejecting Paul's message. Luke says, "But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar." The motivation of the Jew's action is plainly jealousy, nothing more. Of course they did not embrace the message: if they had, they would not have been jealous! Why make a point of this? Note Mr. Ray's own words:

Why? "For three weeks he [Paul] reasoned with them from the Scriptures in the synagogue, as was his custom." They did not revile Paul the first week or the second; rather, they listened and discussed. But ultimately they rejected what he had to say. They compared Paul's message to the Old Testament and decided that Paul was wrong.

Where does Luke speak of their comparing Paul's message with the Old Testament and concluding he was wrong?

Oops, wait a minute here, just what does James think Paul and the Jewish scholars were doing in the Thessalonian synagogue in their "reasoning from the scriptures" anyway? It is no accident that the incidents at Thessalonica are closely followed by the events in Berea, where Paul is doing "as was customary" there as well. It is quite obvious that Paul and the Thessalonians were indeed, checking the Scriptures to compare them to what Paul said, just as at Berea!

Luke gives only one reason for their rejection: jealousy. This was nothing new. This is not the first time Paul encountered the jealousy of the Jews.

So what? There are many reasons for the Thessalonians rejecting Paul and his teachings, be it a fright that their way of life is threatened by a new order (as in, "It's so nice to dream of a redeemer savior coming some day, but please, not today!"), a call to abandon a slack in their worshipping of God and in their sinful accesses, and yes, *Jealousy*, perhaps brought on by all of those things? Or perhaps it was just plain skepticism, something I would be guilty of! In any case, it can certainly be said that they rejected Paul's message, and if it is a claim that his teachings do not jibe with the Old Testament writings, then it could certainly be said that they were in a *scripture only*

mode, and for an imperfect reason to boot.

Another point: How related are the events in Thessalonica and Bereoa that they should be placed so close together in Scripture? Here is an interesting quote:

Paul in Thessalonica and Beroea [Acts 17:1-15]...To this strand Luke added two scenes, at Thessalonica and Beroea respectively, both highly schematic and of parallel structure: customary synagogue beginning, discussion of the Scriptures, success with (especially) women of high ranking, outbreak of persecution under Jewish instigation.

The New Jerome Biblical Commentary , pp. 754, article 92

Please note the last part of the final sentence of that quote. Even in Beroea, there was an "outbreak of persecution under Jewish instigation." What that does is complete the perfect coupling of the two experiences, at Thessalonica and at Bereoa. [Latter part of Acts 17:13] And yet it would seem that James wants to separate the two events, such that the "discussions with them from the Scriptures [Acts 17:2 NAB] at Thessalonica is somehow different from the "...willingness [to] examine...the scriptures daily' [Acts 17:11 NAB] at Beroea.

It's beginning to look like the Thessalonians may have been more *Sola Scriptura* after all!

I certainly don't get the idea that Paul was defeated in public debate on the issue of the witness of the Old Testament to the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Oh, how non sequitur for James to say this. I don't think this is what you were thinking about at all, Steve. Being rejected is not a personal defeat when we see nothing by rejection and not refutation here. But perhaps James is already thinking that he has you personally defeated here?

Why is Mr. Ray intent upon reading into the action of the Thessalonians this idea of comparing the message of Paul to the Scriptures and finding it wanting?

Does James think you are putting down Paul here because the Thessalonians rejected him? In any case, completely non sequitur. Again, perhaps he smells a complete victory in his refutation of your article. Balderdash! <G>

Because it is his position that the *Thessalonians* were actually believers in *sola scriptura*, while the Bereans were not! How does he come to this tremendously surprising conclusion? First, he attempts to draw a distinction between the Thessalonians and the Bereans as to their *make-up*:

When Protestants use this passage as a proof text for the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, they should realize that those in question were not Christians; they were Hellenistic Jews. There was no doctrine of *sola scriptura* within Jewish communities, but the Scriptures were held as sacred.

Everyone realizes that the Bereans were not Christians when Paul and Silas first arrived. Then again, neither were the Thessalonians. In fact, the make-up of the two communities was the same: Hellenistic Jews, with God-fearers also in the congregation in the synagogue. There is no meaningful difference in the ethnic make up of the synagogue in Thessalonica and the one in Berea. If there was no doctrine of *sola scriptura* in Berea, nor was there one in Thessalonica.

By the same reasoning, if the two communities were the same, why then did Paul get rejected by one but accepted by the other? The fact that the two communities of Hellenistic Jews were for all intents and purposes, equal, then there must be a reason for the diverse results of Paul's preaching to them. What in the world is it? Could it be that the former had a little "hardness of the heart," that the other did not? Steve, your suggestion that the Thessalonians practiced a little *sola scriptura*, as far as I was concerned, was taken by me as simply a thought provoking suggestion that was not to be taken as serious fact. Correct me on this if I read you wrong.

That seems to have passed over James head when he read it. Indeed, the suggestion that the Bereans were *against* *sola scriptura* is likewise simply that; a suggestion that has *more* validity then the standard suggestion that they were *for* *sola scriptura*, the very argument you were refuting, and that is the whole point!

He must be consistent in using the same standards for both, for he certainly makes no attempt at substantiating his implicit assertion that there was some difference between the two groups.

This mystifies me, as I certainly did not read that in the article. So far, James is at his usual form. His response to your article does not address the meat of your suggestions, but rather attacks it from the peripheral.

Now, Mr. Ray goes on to expand upon his claim about the Jews:

Although the Jews are frequently referred to as "the people of the book," in reality they had a strong oral tradition that accompanied their Scriptures, along with an authoritative teaching authority, as represented by the "seat of Moses" in the synagogues (Matt. 23:2). The Jews had no reason to accept Paul's teaching as "divinely inspired," since they had just met him. When new teachings sprang up that claimed to be a development of Judaism, the rabbis researched to see if they could be verified from the Torah.

Mr. Ray's understanding of Matthew 23 goes far beyond anything that particular passage can substantiate. The seat of Moses was simply the seat upon which a person sat to read the Scriptures in the synagogue. But he is right that the Jews had a great body of tradition: and the Lord Jesus taught us to subjugate those traditions to the Scriptures in Matthew 15:1-9, including those that the Jews themselves claimed were "divine" in origin. Which is exactly why the Bereans are commended: they are doing what

they *should* have done when faced with a new message. They are testing that message for consistency against the ultimate rule of faith for God's people: the Scriptures. At this point, however, Mr. Ray utterly departs from the text and says:

If one of the two groups could be tagged as believers in *sola scriptura*, who would it be, the Thessalonians or the Bereans? The Thessalonians, obviously. They, like the Bereans, examined the Scriptures with Paul in the synagogue, yet they rejected his teaching. They rejected the new teaching, deciding after three weeks of deliberation that Paul's word contradicted the Torah. Their decision was not completely unjustified from their scriptural perspective. How could the Messiah of God be cursed by hanging on a tree like a common criminal, publicly displayed as one who bore the judgment of God? What kind of king and Messiah would that be? This seemed irreconcilable to them (see Simon J. Kistemaker, *Acts* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1990], 614).

Steve, there is not so much of a hint that you seriously believed that the Thessalonians were Sola Scriptura, making the supposition that If they could be tagged then which tag is the best one? Like the Thessalonians, the early fathers often show that a rejected "Catholic doctrine" was suggested in the early church, (The early rumblings of a possible heretical idea) but the Bible does not specifically teach it, it was rejected. (Even the slightest implications are not found.) Could I then say that the early fathers believed in sola scriptura? No, *unless* it can be shown that the suggested doctrine is indeed, implied in Scripture. But since it can be shown that what Paul taught them at Thessalonica is indeed, soundly shown in Scripture, then the tag "Sola Scriptura" seems to fit the Thessalonians to a tee!

One's breath is taken away by the tremendous leap taken here. Where does Luke say a *word* about the Thessalonian Jews carefully examining Paul's teaching on the basis of *sola scriptura* and, as a result, rejecting it?

And here, James makes my case! Steve, is it not a strong implication that the Thessalonians studied the Scriptures similarly to the Bereans? (Per my quote from the *The New Jerome Bible Commentary*.) When it gets down to the nitty gritty, Protestants will always insist the Bible must be a specific as a last will and testament from a lawyer, especially if it is to protect a tightly held doctrine. Least I forget, I again point out that the account of the Bereans that follow that of the Thessalonians is for a very good reason - the contrast between the two groups. I can very well be secure in my feelings that the Thessalonians studied the Scriptures just as carefully as the Bereans did! But by some "hardness of the heart," Paul's explanation of the gospels were rejected.

Of course, he says nothing of the sort. Instead, he says that Paul operated on the basis of the supremacy of Scripture in preaching to the Thessalonians, and as a result, he was successful in convincing some of the truthfulness of his message. But others, *acting out of jealousy*, started a riot. Nothing is said at *all* about their taking three weeks to deliberate and come to some kind of scriptural conclusion! This is purely wishful thinking on Mr. Ray's part. Sadly, he then attempts to provide some kind of basis for this tremendous leap by citing Kistemaker's work on Acts. Yet, if one reads the source cited, one finds the

exact opposite of Ray's own assertions:

What difference does it make that Paul is rejected out of jealousy, when the final result is that rejection? Jealousy is the result of a multitude of sins that can certainly rule the hearts of men.

Paul follows the example set by Jesus, who opened the Scriptures for the two men on the way to Emmaus and for the disciples in the upper room. Jesus showed them from the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead (Luke 24:25-27, 44-46). The term *explaining* comes from the Greek verb meaning "to open." Paul opens the Word and sets the explanation of the messianic prophecies before his listeners. By appealing to the Scriptures, he has a common basis to prove that the Messiah has come in the person and work of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Paul demonstrates that the Christ *had* to suffer, die, and rise from the grave. Luke, in his Gospel and Acts, also clearly illustrates that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are governed by divine necessity (refer, e.g., to Luke 2:49; 4:43; 13:33; 24:26; Acts 3:21). "It is Luke's underlying concern not to depict Jesus' death as the tragic failure of a prophet but to present the death and resurrection of Jesus as necessary saving acts of God."

In his presentations, Paul discusses three facts: the Christ had to suffer, he had to rise from the dead, and he is Jesus proclaimed by Paul. The Jews objected to the teaching that Christ died on a cross, because to them a criminal hanging on a tree (cross) was under God's curse (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13). The doctrine of the resurrection is the recurring theme the apostles proclaim wherever they speak (see 2:24; 32; 13:30, 33, 34, 17:31). And identifying Jesus with the Messiah is Paul's personal objective ever since his conversion on the Damascus road (refer to 9:22). (Kistemaker, pp. 613-614).

There is certainly nothing supportive of Mr. Ray's thesis in these words from Kistemaker. In fact, just the opposite is true. Kistemaker is not even here speaking specifically of the Thessalonian Jews, but of the Jews Paul encountered in his ministry in general. The reason Mr. Ray does not provide a reference to a commentary speaking of the Thessalonians coming to a reasoned, considered conclusion on the basis of an examination of the Scripture is simply this: the text doesn't even hint at such an idea. Yet, despite this, Mr. Ray says,

Now I don't have *Kistemaker* that Steve quotes from, but from what Steve quotes, it makes perfect sense. It is obvious that Steve is establishing the *type* of arguments, Paul would have to use to convince the Jews that Jesus Christ was indeed, the Messiah that was predicted in the Old testament. I could care less what Listermaker says, as what we see is the *prototype* argument Paul uses in his mission everywhere, be it to the Romans, the Galatians, the Ephesians, and the Collossians. Oh, and how about the Philippinians? Betcha bottom dollar Paul used those same arguments to the Hebrews as well. It is so easy for me to include in that category, the good people of Thessanolica and Bereoa as well.

We can see, then, that if anyone could be classified as adherents to *sola scriptura* it was the Thessalonian Jews. They reasoned from the Scriptures alone and concluded that Paul's new

teaching was "unbiblical."

It is simply amazing that a person can go from the jealousy of the Jews to the idea that they were crypto-Protestants practicing *sola scriptura* and therefore missing the truth of Paul's message! We are given no references to scholarly sources here, either, for the same reason: such a conclusion has no connection with the text.

No James, don't go putting words in Steve's mouth concerning the Jews of Thessalonica, but then, are they not perhaps a good prototype of what was to come? The only common parallel we have of this situation are the Christians of today. But let's consider the Jews in general who rejected the preaching of Paul and the remaining apostles. All of them had the Old Testament to compare with what the apostles preached about the Messiah, who meets all of the requirements of the Old Testament, still rejected him. I am not sure I would call them *Sola Scriptura* adherents because I believe they also had a tradition that approximated the Sacred Traditions of the Catholic Church of today. No, they were not "crypto-Protestants" anymore than I am a "proto-Jew."

I will say this again. Steve is a Rush Limbaugh fan, I believe, and Rush often says: "I demonstrate absurdity by being absurd." I'll bet Steve knows what I am talking about here.

But remember that Mr. Ray says the *Bereans* actually *denied sola scriptura*. How is this? Let's listen:

The Bereans, on the other hand, were not adherents of *sola scriptura*, for they were willing to accept Paul's new oral teaching as the word of God (as Paul claimed his oral teaching was; see 1 Thess. 2:13). The Bereans, before accepting the oral word of God from Paul, a tradition as even Paul himself refers to it (see 2 Thess. 2:15), examined the Scriptures to see if these things were so. They were noble-minded precisely because they "received the word with all eagerness." Were the Bereans commended primarily for searching the Scriptures? No. Their open-minded willingness to listen was the *primary* reason they are referred to as noble-minded-not that they searched the Scriptures. A perusal of grammars and commentaries makes it clear that they were "noble-minded" not for studying Scripture, but for treating Paul more civilly than did the Thessalonians with an open mind and generous courtesy (see I. Howard Marshall, "The Acts of the Apostles" in the *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1981], 5:280).

Does a "perusal" of grammars and commentaries give us such an indication? Let's start with one that Mr. Ray has already cited, that being the commentary of Kistemaker:

Let us make it clear what Steve is talking about here before we go on. *Both* the Thessalonians and the Bereans studied the Scripture with Paul! So it is obvious that being "open-minded" has nothing to do with the Bereans studying the Scriptures! But then, I almost forgot; only Bible-reading Protestants are "open-minded," right? <G>

Noble-mindedness. Luke compares the worshipers at the Berean synagogue with those at Thessalonica and praises the Bereans. Paul develops a close and loving relationship with the

Thessalonians (see I Thess. 2:11); nevertheless, in respect to noble-mindedness the Bereans excel. They are more open to the truth of God's Word than the people of Thessalonica are.

The reason for the openness of the Bereans lies in their receptivity to and love for God's Word.

What? Does this really mean that the Thessalonians loved "God's Word" *less* than the Bereans? How do we really know that? We know that they studied those very same Scriptures from what I have already discussed before, but to isolate the "open mindedness" of the Bereans to simply the love of the Scriptures is a bit too restrictive, and in fact, a statement of personal belief that has no basis in fact. Again, only Bible-readers are "open-minded!" Balderdash once again!

For them, the Scriptures are much more than a written scroll or book that conveys a divine message. They use the Old Testament as the touchstone of truth, so that when Paul proclaims the gospel they immediately go to God's written Word for verification. They do so, Luke adds, with great eagerness. Note well, the adjective *great* indicates that they treasure the Word of God. Luke ascribes the same diligence to the Bereans as Peter does to the Old Testament prophets, who intently and diligently searched the Word and inquired into its meaning (I Peter 1:10). The Bereans open the Scriptures and with ready minds learn that Jesus has fulfilled the messianic prophecies.

The implication here is that the Thessalonians think *less* of the Scriptures than the Bereans do! This is amazing! How in the world do you know this? I once visited modern Thessalonica, and I saw a strong Christian community, both Orthodox and Catholic (and probably other Christians) so perhaps something stuck! I think this Kistemaker fellow is giving the Thessalonians a bad name!

Day by day, the Bereans examine the Scriptures to see whether the teachings of Paul and Silas accord with God's written Word. They do so not from unbelief and doubt but from honest analysis and eagerness to learn the message of God's revelation. Although Luke fails to mention that God opened the hearts of the Bereans (compare 16:14), in verse 12 he records that "many of the Jews" believe the gospel. These people believe because they know God's Word. The situation in Berea differs from that in Thessalonica, where "some of the Jews were persuaded" (v.4).

And how in the world do we know that the Thessalonians were any less diligent in studying the Scriptures as well? The only thing Kistemaker seems to have going for him is the fact that the Thessalonians *rejected* Paul and his followers. It does not automatically follow that they studied the Scriptures any less arduously than the Bereans.

How about Richard Longenecker in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), p. 471?

Luke gave the Jews at Berea undying fame by characterizing them as being "more noble" (*eugenesteroi*) than the Thessalonian Jews because they tested the truth of Paul's message by the touchstone of Scripture rather than judging it by political and cultural considerations. So they examined the Scriptures daily (*kath hemeran*) to see whether what Paul proclaimed was really true, and many believed.

But it does not follow that the Thessalonians studied the Scriptures any *less* than their Berean brothers? That is what you are implying, right James? Is it just possible that the Thessalonians might have studied the Scriptures *more diligently* (but culpably) simply because of the many little imperfections we all have in a resulting "jealousy" that was the ultimate motivator? As you can see, I can speculate on Scripture as good as anyone!

And we note the words of Ivor Powell in *The Amazing Acts* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1987), pp. 295-296:

When the same speaker ministered in the next synagogue, the listeners were not swept off their feet by eloquent oratory; they searched the Scriptures "ever day to see if what Paul said was true." (*The New International Version*). Apparently, they had more faith in the Word of God than in the man who expounded it. When Paul cited certain prophetic utterances, the listeners unrolled their scrolls to see if the prophets had indeed made such predictions. Luke said the people in Berea were "more noble" than the Jews in Thessalonica, and that probably meant they were more educated. Farrar said, "Instead of angrily rejecting this new Gospel, they daily and diligently searched the Scriptures to judge Paul's arguments and references by the word and the testimony—they were more generous, more simple, more sincere and truth-loving."

Again, what we see is interesting speculation on the part of a Protestant writer that favors the idea of the exclusivity of Scriptures over the spoken word. Steve, I see a pattern here that you might have already detected, and it is something that only converts see clearly. As a Protestant, what was the emphasis for your "source of inspiration" to know what being a Christian was all about? The BIBLE, of course! In fact, it was supposed to be your *only* source, remember?

Now as Catholics, we see that there is something else that goes along with it in our "private exegesis" of Scripture, we now include the Magisterium of the Church in the loop. (Probably the greatest reason why I feel safe in the bosom of Holy Mother Church - Seems as if Christ knew what He was doing). This is not to downplay the reading of Scriptures, of course, but my point is, Protestants, in their struggle, hold on to the exclusivity of the Bible as their only source of all faith, always emphasize the almost slavish "searching of the Scriptures." It is the epitome of their faith, because it is their *only* source of that faith.

Now how many times have you heard (as a Protestant) that Paul was probably a very eloquent preacher? In fact, I recall hearing that he was probably the greatest preacher that ever was! Maybe he was and maybe he was not, but it strikes me very strange to see a Protestant writer (an assumption, as I do not know of this Igor fellow) that

downgrades Paul eloquency in the spoken Word, in favor of the studying of the Old Testament! Does that make sense to you? Do you detect that same Protestant agenda here as I do?

And what of the very commentary Mr. Ray cites, that of I. Howard Marshall? On page 280 we read:

The account of Paul's reception at Beroea is the classical description of a more well-disposed and open-minded (RSV *more noble*) response by the Jews to the gospel. They were zealous to hear what Paul had to say, and so they met with him *daily* (and not merely on the sabbath). Nor did they accept what he said thoughtlessly and uncritically, but they themselves examined the Scriptures to see whether the case which Paul developed from them (as in 17:2ff) was sound. Here was no mere emotional response to the gospel, but one based on intellectual conviction.

Steve, in emphasis, I also add the fact that Paul's gospel was *oral only* at that time.

And A.T. Robertson commented:

Examining the Scriptures daily (kaqV h`meran anakrinontej taj grafaj). Paul expounded the Scriptures daily as in Thessalonica, but the Beroeans, instead of resenting his new interpretation, examined (anakrinw means to sift up and down, make careful and exact research as in legal processes as in Ac 4:9; 12:19, etc.) the Scriptures for themselves. In Scotland people have the Bible open on the preacher as he expounds the passage, a fine habit worth imitating. Whether these things were so (ei ecoi tauta o`utwj). Literally, "if these things had it thus." The present optative in the indirect question represents an original present indicative as in Lu 1:29 (Robertson, *Grammar*, pp. 1043f.). This use of ei with the optative may be looked at as the condition of the fourth class (undetermined with less likelihood of determination) as in Ac 17:27; 20:16; 24:19; 27:12 (Robertson, *Grammar*, p. 1021). The Beroeans were eagerly interested in the new message of Paul and Silas but they wanted to see it for themselves. What a noble attitude. Paul's preaching made Bible students of them. The duty of private interpretation is thus made plain (Hovey).

Why do all these commentators say the same thing? Because the text is plain beyond dispute,

There is a serious problem here with what A. T. Robertson seems to imply and what James White wants to perpetuate. It implies that the Jews had no central authority for determining such things and in fact and unless someone could show where I might be in error, the Jews were indeed, without a central head. Was the Temple in Jerusalem the "Vatican" of Judaism in those days? I don't think so. Where could the Jews of Beroea go to for advice and a determination of who is right and who is wrong? I know of none. They seemingly determined, on the spot, that Paul's teachings was right. What else could they do but to do so themselves without a central authority to do so.

I would hasten to add, however, that we simply do not know how much the traditions of the "Covenant of Abraham and Moses" had as an influence here, but I suspect that since it did not contradict the Scriptures they had at hand, it was not a particular actor in

the matter.

But the point I want to make is, Christ seemingly established a Church with great authority (Ala Matt 16:18-19) that produced a divine organization that has no precedence in what we see in the Old Covenant of the Old Testament. Protestants deny this, of course, therefore, the Jews of the Old Covenant are apparently the "model" for Protestant Christianity because they had not the authority of a Church that a future Christ would impart in all it's glory.

To admit this would destroy their whole doctrine like a house of cards!

and Mr. Ray is simply desperate to avoid the plain meaning of the text. This error is then compounded by his errant belief that *sola scriptura* is somehow contradicted by the acceptance of "new revelation," as if *sola scriptura* is meant to be applied during times of revelation rather than being a normative rule for the Church.

Steve, don't loose heart here! <G> "Desperate" did he say?

He writes,

The Bereans searched the Torah no less than the Thessalonians, yet they were eager to accept words of God from the mouth of Paul, *in addition to* what they already held to be Scripture, that is, the Law and the Prophets. Even if one claims that Paul preached the gospel and not a "tradition," it is clear that the Bereans were accepting new *revelation* that was not contained in their Scriptures. These Berean Jews accepted oral teaching, the tradition of the apostles, as equal to Scripture, in addition to, and as an "extension" of, the Torah. This is further illustrated by the Christian community's reception of Paul's epistles as divinely inspired Scripture (see 2 Peter 3:16; here Peter seems to acknowledge Paul's writings as equal to the "other Scriptures," which can be presumed to refer to the Old Testament).

In reality, the Bereans accepted the message of Christ because it was consistent with the Old Testament revelation.

Hummmm.....I don't see Steve rejecting this idea at all. Looks good to me as well.

Even introducing "canon" issues here is to continue the tremendous misuse of this passage already begun in attempting to turn the Thessalonians into crypto-Protestants and the Bereans into crypto-Catholics. And we note in passing (as Wayne Grudem notes in his *Systematic Theology*, pp. 84-85) that 2 Peter 3:16 refers to *writings*, not to vague and undefinable "oral traditions."

James, might I suggest that instead of you thinking that Steve makes the Thessalonian Jews as "crypto-Protestants," may I suggest that instead, you have Protestants turned into "crypto-Thessalonians?" Far fetched? Oh, I agree, but it is no more ridiculous then your assertion here! In fact, I will go so far as to see the actions of the Jews of Berea as "proto-Catholic Church!" After all, do not we Catholics claim that Holy Mother Church has "two feet" in the testing of doctrine as the existence in both Sacred Tradition *and* Holy Writ? I know you don't agree with this, but this is what we claim and

perhaps an area that you might want to refute if you can.

From the perspective of anti-Catholics, the *Thessalonians* would have been more noble-minded, for they loyally stuck to their canon of Scripture *alone* and rejected any additional binding authority (spoken or written) from the mouth of an apostle. In fact, at the Council of Jamnia, around A.D. 90, the Jews determined that anything written after Ezra was not infallible Scripture; they specifically mentioned the Gospels of Christ in order to reject them.

Mr. Ray would do well to deal with the criticism of Jamnia found in Beckwith's fine work, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985). But in any case, we have here yet another straw-man, an argument based upon either misrepresentation or ignorance of the issues at hand. The Thessalonians were not noble minded because they rejected the message preached *out of jealousy*.

But just don't forget that they also studied the Scriptures, similarly as the Bereans did. Please don't make the claim that a "failure" to do this resulted in the ultimate decision to reject Paul and his teaching.

The Bereans were noble minded because they listened to the message and tested it by Scripture. Any attempt to read into the passage some concept of "extra-biblical oral tradition" or to read *out* of the passage the plain supremacy of Scripture, is yet another example of how Roman Catholic apologists are at a real loss when it comes to engaging in serious exegesis of the Scriptures.

And likewise did the Thessalonians, and yet they rejected Paul.

But concerning exegesis of Scripture, I cannot really comment, since I am not an expert, but boy oh boy, I can still use my noggin, and the absolute best exegesis, Protestants have not yet discovered! My opinion, of course, but it counts for naught, since I am not a professor of theology or whatever. What is my point here? Simply that such a non sequitur comment only serves to attempt to diminish the integrity of your opponent, but instead, diminishes your own stature and respect in the apologetic community.

But in the midst of this misrepresentation, Mr. Ray stumbles upon a truth without, seemingly, knowing it. Sensing that he has done nothing to escape the simple fact that the Bereans *tested* the claimed apostolic message for consistency *by Scripture* and *without an infallible magisterium*, he attempts to explain their action:

Why did the Bereans search the Scriptures? Because they were the *sole* source of revelation and authority? No, but to see if Paul was in line with what they already knew-to *confirm additional revelation*. They would not submit blindly to his apostolic teaching and oral tradition, but, once they accepted the credibility of Paul's teaching as the oral word of God, they put it on a par with Scripture and recognized its binding authority.

Note the phrase, "to confirm additional revelation." Here you have individuals going *directly* to Scripture and *testing* a message for consistency. Yet, when I do the *very same thing* with Roman theology, I'm told

I'm engaging in "private interpretation" and that I am endangering my soul.

Please, James, I know of no one who accuses you of "endangering your soul" other than other Protestants who disagree with your views. If a Catholic said this, then we have a Catholic who must be careful in such accusations as any Christian must be. I have no idea just where your heart is as only the Lord God can know.

But I want to address this thing called an "infallible magisterium" you are hung up on. Now, I don't know if the Jews ever had such a thing as an infallible magisterium, but may I suggest that this is possibly one of the things, Christ wanted to include in His New Covenant that continues, as the Old Covenant of the Old Testament concludes? After all, where do you see God, in His original Covenant with Abraham and Moses, give such awesome power to the religion of Israel as He gives to his new Church in Matt 16:18-19? Now, I know you are sick and tired of having that part of the New Testament quoted to you again, so I will not do it, but please search for me and see if such power of authority is given as not only in that famous quote, but also in Matt 18:18, John 20:22-23 (the power to forgive or retain sins), John 21:15-20 (The final commissioning of Peter), and finally, the last command before He ascended, Matt 28:19, the role the apostles and His Church is to play "until the end of the age" [NAB].

No, the Bereans probably did not have that "infallible magisterium" on the occasion of Acts 17, but they sure did join that body who certainly did! They became one of many early Christians, in a universal Church, charged with a mission, empowered with an authority that was not contested (seriously and by early heresies) until the times of Luther - or was it Wyclif, Calvin, Wesley or whoever.

Before then, it went essentially unchallenged....

For all his attempts, Mr. Ray has utterly failed to overthrow the plain teaching of the passage: the Bereans did not seek for some "oral tradition" nor an "infallible magisterium."

Steve never claimed that they did, but rather, "it" came to them! Paul came to beroea, not the other way around. They heard what Paul had to say, and they tested it against Scripture, and found it *true*! They therefore accepted it, became Christians and by golly, participated in that very same "infallible magisterium" you are so worried about!

They allowed the Scriptures to function *just as the Baptist Confession of Faith says they should*. Mr. Ray won't admit it, but one thing is plain as day: the Bereans did not believe in *sola ecclesia* as he does: they did not look for an infallible Church with an infallible magisterium to tell them what was, and what was not, Scripture and truth. [Indeed, we note with some level of irony that from the Roman Catholic position, an infallible definition of the canon was still 1500 years in the future!]

James, I will repeat what Steve has already said: The Bereans were **Hellenistic Jews**, *not* Christians when Paul came to them. Did they believe in a "sola Ecclesia" at that

time? NO! Did they have any idea what an "infallible magisterium" was? NO! Did they believe this when they became Christians? Most probably not, simply because while we have the Scriptures which implies such a thing (the quotes I have already given), this took a while before even the infant Church realized the full implications of the idea, just like the Church did not have a full understanding of our present doctrine of the *trinity* and other refinements (some you do not accept).

Finally, Mr. Ray follows the old line of misusing 2 Thessalonians 2:15:

After that, like the converts who believed in Thessalonica, they espoused apostolic Tradition and the Old Testament equally as God's word (see 2 Thess. 2:15, 3:16).

Paul nowhere speaks of "apostolic Tradition" in his writings. In 2 Thessalonians 2:15 Paul speaks of his preaching the gospel to the Thessalonians orally and by letter, nothing more. It is a tremendous stretch to assert that we have here a basis for some nebulous, ever-changing "oral tradition" that eventually gives the basis for such doctrines as papal infallibility and the Bodily Assumption of Mary.

And I would not blame Paul for not speaking of it, as he probably did not fully understand it either! Neither did the infant Church. If you were to go back and discuss the trinity with him, he probably would be scratching his head, wondering what in the world you were talking about! I dare say that even his own writings, if you were to suggest to him, would end up being declared divinely inspired and a part of Scripture, he would probably run you off!

Why is it, James, with a professorship in your pocket (I'm glad for you here) and yet, I see that same implication that the "New Testament Church," in all her raw infancy, seems to be considered fully developed, with a leather bound bible in hand, (as if miraculously dropped into your hands by angels from heaven) had all of the earmarks of the Protestant idea of the infant Church? I know I am being simplistic with you here, but it is the curious and serious thinking non-educated Christian fellow like myself that you must convince. But I read the writings of the early fathers and see nothing of the kind. What I see is what I see in no other Church except the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church! These things are the facts that convince me, James.

In Conclusion

After a decade of trying, I still await a *serious* interaction in writing from a Roman Catholic apologist on the doctrine of *sola scriptura* that does not engage in the most egregious forms of misrepresentation and argument-begging.

ROTFL!!! Sorry, James, but I have *Fathers.zip* in my hands, and I think Joe Gallegos is still waiting for your reply!

After a while, one begins to wonder why it is that the doctrine cannot be discussed openly and honestly.

Why do we continuously have to point out basic error after basic error as we have above? If Rome's claims are so strong and so overwhelming (certainly a claim Rome's defenders make all the time), why the constant misrepresentation? If we had to continuously misrepresent Rome's doctrines, would we not, by so doing, be demonstrating that we do not have solid answers to her claims?

James, this is too much! Now that I have rubbed you nose in an obvious refutation of your position, I have yet to see any convincing argument from you that will sway this person from believing otherwise. Sola Scriptura does not make any more sense then to state that we can dismiss the Supreme Court of the United States, and all elected members of Congress and simply say, "The Constitution of the United States is sufficient for us." We can govern ourselves just as well without that "body."

I do hope that Mr. Ray has misrepresented his former faith purely out of ignorance, not out of malice. And if that is the case, and I truly hope it is, I hope he will reconsider his pledge of allegiance to an authoritarian system that has led him so far from the truths of the Scriptures.

I have all the faith in the world that Steve has indeed, "come home" to the truth, the authority, and that body of Christians that can truly say that their origins trace themselves to the very Church founded by Christ who promised that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

God's infinite blessings to all who read this. Holy Spirit, guide me!

PAX

William M. Putnam