

Response to a Fundamentalist's Review of my book [Crossing the Tiber](#)

By Steve Ray

[Crossing the Tiber](#) can be seen and purchased by clicking [here](#)

Chris Bayack, pastor of Copperfield Bible Church in Texas, has written a review of my book. The fact that his review is feeble and naïve is reflected by the fact that he couldn't even get the title of the book right, calling it "Crossing the Timber" on the web page, instead of "Crossing the Tiber." (They said it was the webmaster's mistake and it was eventually fixed *after* I wrote this response). It is posted on an anti-Catholic website (to view, click [here](#)). I would hope that, for the sake of integrity, he would post my response on the web site alongside his review (or at least a link to this review, but they have proven not to have the integrity to do so). I will try to be more fair to my readers by providing the link to Bayack's writing.

I will go a step further and make the complete text of his review available on my web site along with this paragraph-by-paragraph response to be fair and objective.

Mr. Bayack's critique will be in *blue indented italics* and my response will be interspersed in normal text. I will respond a paragraph at a time. I only have a few hours to devote to this response. I should probably just ignore his review, but thought it may be best to make a quick response. He seriously misrepresents *Crossing the Tiber* and so I hope to point out a few things. My hope is that eventually Mr. Bayack will return to the fullness of the faith in the Catholic Church. He certainly has my prayers, as I love him as a brother in the Lord Jesus. So, here we go!

It is with sorrow that I must address the following critique of my book *Crossing the Tiber*. I write this response with sorrow for three reasons. *First*, it is sad when I have to *lock horns* with someone who claims the name of my Savior Jesus Christ, one with whom we should *lock arms* in love to take a united stand for Christ in the midst of a pagan culture. Catholics tend to work at narrowing the divide between Catholics and Protestants; whereas, too often the Fundamentalist Protestants work at keeping the chasm as wide as possible.

In my "ex-Fundamentalist" past I refused to believe that Catholics were even *Christians*. As far as I was concerned they fit in a camp somewhere alongside the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. They certainly weren't saved and they certainly weren't Christians.

Second, it is sad to see someone who has left the "one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church" to descend into the quagmire of denominationalism, sectarianism and private judgment. It is always convenient to be one's own "Pope," but it is actually such a sad state of affairs. I am dismayed at the divisions among Christians, especially as the number of competing sects and denominations reach the staggering figure of 33,000 worldwide (*Oxford University's*). They compete and disagree with each other and continue to practice the principle of split and divide in attempts to maintain purity in their

little groups. Jesus prayed that we would be perfected in unity, and in response the seamless robe of Christ has been ripped to shreds, not by the Roman centurions, but by the followers of Jesus.

Third, I write with sorrow because of the uncharitable and anti-Catholic tone, a patronizing tone, a condescending tone, one that is not becoming of one who claims the Savior as his own. There is a willingness to misrepresent me and my book and a desire to think the worst whenever possible. So yes, this brings me sorrow as well.

Mr. Bayack's is not the first critical review of my book *Crossing the Tiber*. An earlier challenge stated that I misrepresented Protestantism. Even the current reviewer, Mr. Bayack, admits that I understand the Evangelical Protestant religion. I accurately represent American Evangelicalism. The earlier protagonist said that he represented Catholicism fairly when he criticizes the Church because he goes directly to the official Catholic Church documents, making sure he accurately represents the Catholic Church. He has a distinct advantage in this matter! I simply asked the man, "Where can I go to find the official documents of Protestantism to fairly represent it?" With almost 30,000 competing denominations, which one do I go to for an official statement as to the beliefs of Protestantism? Who speaks for the Protestant? There is only one thing that unites all Protestants and that is their rejection of the Pope. He unifies Catholics and he is also the only unifying factor among all Protestants.

I am so thankful that God has called me out of such confusion and brought me into his Catholic Church where the visible unity and fullness of the faith has been maintained through the centuries in obedience to Christ's wishes (Jn 17:23). I have been a member of a wide variety of Protestant mainstream and "non-denominational Bible churches" and the liberation I have found in the Catholic Church is beyond description. For those who have not read my conversion story in *Crossing the Tiber*, I encourage them to do so.

We now begin with Mr. Bayack's review. He starts out,

"As one who was saved out of Roman Catholicism, I read with curiosity Stephen Ray's book Crossing the Tiber which is a modern-day attempt to show that the Roman Catholic Church is the true body of Christ. Ray, a layman who converted to Catholicism from Evangelical Protestantism, shares how he became a Catholic. To support this decision, he seeks to prove the validity of Roman Catholic doctrine, focusing on baptismal regeneration and the eucharist."

My response: I would agree with most of the above paragraph in that I did write the book, and I am a layman (as is Chris Bayack since he has no claim to apostolic succession or true ordination other than the vote of a group of people within his non-denominational denomination, see my web page for the writing on [Baptist or non-denominational ordinations](#)). I will also accept the description of my book as a "modern day attempt to show the Catholic Church is the true body of Christ." I do so today as millions have done before me. As I said in my book, "I am not the first to cross the Tiber, I won't be the last I am in good company!" By the way, for those who don't know it, the Tiber River runs

through the city of Rome and to say one has “crossed the Tiber River” is to say they have come home to the Catholic Church.

One point missed here is that the main issue for me in my conversion was not Baptism or the Eucharist, but rather the issue of authority. The first portion of my books goes into some detail on the issue of *sola Scriptura* and the issue of Apostolic Tradition and the Magisterium (which in Latin simply means “teaching office”).

“Crossing the Tiber is a masterpiece of selective scholarship. Ray uses extensive research to support his position as evidenced by nearly 450 footnotes of Scripture, technical commentary (Protestant and Catholic), personal commentary, and the church fathers. However, his presentation is largely one-sided and seldom takes into account serious, objective discussion that would challenge or destroy his conclusions. This is seen in four ways which are listed below.”

Just a side note before we get started: the words “Eucharist” and “Church Fathers” are by all grammatical standards to be capitalized. Not to major on the minors, but just to make the point. When one decides to be a critic, they ought to do it well in order to retain their credibility.

Selective scholarship? Everyone has to be selective in the number and quality of sources and quotes that one uses in a book. If not, the book would be a foot thick and lose the reader in the first pages. Mr. Bayack proves this principle even here as he critiques my book. *He* is very selective, not only in what he quotes from my book, but also the sources he bring to bear in an attempt to make his point.

Whether or not I am practicing “selective scholarship” is, I guess, a matter of opinion. I could have brought every objection of the protagonists to bear but that would have put my book outside the realm of publishability. I am telling *my* story, not Mr. Bayack’s and I share the discoveries that opened my eyes. There have been boatloads of books over the centuries written to refute every possible Protestant and pagan objection to the Catholic Church, so I didn’t feel it necessary to address every objection in my book. Also, with 30,000 denominations fighting for recognition, it is difficult in one book to address all their factions and bickering.

It is typical of a man like Mr. Bayack to expect more from a book that he doesn’t like, than the book was intended to do or be. This of course is a double standard among anti-Catholics who pump out one book after another criticizing the Catholic Church, each full of poor scholarship and bland assumptions, but the anti-Catholic crowd loves them because the are all singing the same song.

My book was to give a simple explanation of my conversion and simply explain the issues that “flipped the switch” for me not an argumentative treatise destined to become a theology textbook. Had my objective been to confront the panoply of Protestant objections, it would certainly be a larger book, but it would have been quite easy to do.

But there are many such books and another is probably not needed. Like the rich man's family in Luke 16, if the anti-Catholics don't listen to what has already been written, what makes me think they would listen to one more book proving the Catholic faith.

And if one considers the genre of my book, and the intended audience, they will recognize that my book was not necessarily written for an "academic audience." If Mr. Bayack had read the Preface it may have helped him understand how the book began and gave him insight into the purpose and limitations of the book.

One day I sat down to write my good Baptist father a letter to explain to him why I had joined the Catholic Church. I had been raised on all the standard anti-Catholic fare (*The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop, the teaching that the Catholic Church was the whore of Babylon and the Pope was the Antichrist, etc.). My father has been a Baptist since 1954 when he found Christ, but he was not scholar or a college professor. The "letter which became a book" was written to my wonderful father. Had I attempted to address all the objections, I could have done so, but it would have overshoot the target and lost the audience. Just wait for my next book about St. Peter and the Primacy of Rome and you will see what I mean "I could have done so."

Are there Protestant arguments that will challenge our Catholic position? Of course there are, especially if they are taken out of their biblical and historical context, as Mr. Bayack and his ilk are ready to do at a moment's notice anything to slam the Church it seems, even if the truth must be stretched a bit. *Are there arguments that can destroy the Catholic position?* Good grief, no! The best and the brightest minds in Christendom have always been Catholic.

The petty and uniformed Protestant objections have been more than adequately answered over and over again though men like Mr. Bayack either have ignored the answers or refused to be confused with the facts. Far from destroying the Church, the more one learns and educates themselves the more they dare to remove the bag from their heads the more they find themselves attracted to the Catholic Church. Chesterton understood and I quote him in the book as saying:

"He has come too near to the truth, and has forgotten that truth is a magnet, with the powers of attraction and repulsion. . . . The moment men cease to pull against it [the Catholic Church] they feel a tug towards it. The moment they cease to shout it down they begin to listen to it with pleasure. The moment they try to be fair to it they begin to be fond of it. But when that affection has passed a certain point it begins to take on the tragic and menacing grandeur of a great love affair. . . . When he has entered the Church, he finds that the Church is much larger inside than it is outside" (G. K. Chesterton, *The Catholic Church and Conversion* (1927), in vol. 3 of *The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press; 1990), 92, 94.

1. Stephen Ray Says That the Roman Catholic Church Has the Ultimate Authority to Determine the New Testament. Stephen Ray states that the authority of the early church gave us the New Testament. Protestants must trust the

declaration of the infallible Church to know which books make up their infallible New Testament. . . . It was the tradition and the authority of the Catholic Church that established their canon (p. 54-55, italics in original). If the Church had no authority to recognize and decide which writings were inspired and to close the canon, then we would have no guarantee that these writings are, in fact, inspired (p. 55). He argues why tradition is equally authoritative with Scripture and states, The New Testament was never intended as a complete church manual (p. 76). Passages like 2 Thessalonians 2:15 are used in support. ”

There is nothing radical in my claim at this point. Even honest Protestant scholars agree that we have the New Testament thanks to the Catholic Church. It is too bad that Mr. Bayack doesn't bring all the information I cite to light on this matter, but only a few lines from my book. Sometimes I wonder if people don't just skim the book looking for proof texts to argue against.

As I quote in my book, and which Mr. Bayack must have overlooked, was the interesting and honest admission of Evangelical theologian R. C. Sproul concerning the canon of Scripture. He states that the Roman Catholic has “an *infallible* collection of infallible books” in their canon whereas the classic Protestant position is that they have “a *fallible* collection of infallible books” (see *Essentials Truths of the Christian Faith*). The documents of the New Testament are not “self-authenticating (see my Study entitled [*Did the Catholic Church Decide, or, are the New Testament Documents Self Authenticating*](#)). The Protestant does not have a New Testament apart from the Catholic Church which is something honest Protestant scholars will freely admit. How does the average Protestant know what books belong in the New Testament? By faith in the determination made by the bishops of the Catholic Church. I have attached my list of *Questions for “Bible Christians.”*

Why the difference? Because the Catholic Church understands herself to have the authority, as led by the Holy Spirit and the promises of Christ, to make a determination. Who speaks for God among the Protestants? They accept the infallible canon of the Catholic Church *by faith* just as they piggyback off the Catholic Church for so many other things. The average Protestant accepts the books of the New Testament without ever seriously asking, “How do we know?”

Mr. Bayack, as I did myself just four years ago, believes in *sola Scriptura* as the foundation and source of all his knowledge of God and the faith. Yet the funny thing is, *sola Scriptura* is never taught or even alluded to in the Bible itself; in fact, it itself is unbiblical. The foundational principle of Protestantism is surprisingly not found in the Bible. I don't have time to repeat my whole book here so I recommend that anyone interested in this issue, read *Crossing the Tiber* and check out the [*Studies & Writings*](#) page on my web site.

“However, stating or implying that any organization has authority to declare books inspired is to challenge God's authority. The Bible is divine in origin and God in His sovereignty superintended its dissemination to man. ”

God sovereignly superintended the writing of the New Testament documents as well as their dissemination this is good Catholic theology. But, as one considers the matter, God used *men* in both instances. He gave us the inspired writings not just by “divine superintendence” but also through the pens and minds of men Peter, Paul, James, Matthew, John, and the others. Men! God gave us the inspired writings through men, not through some supernatural writing on the wall it was through His Church. Yes, God sovereignly superintended the writing, copying, and collecting of the inspired writings, but with collecting, as with the writing, he used men. This is basic stuff and shouldn’t even be a point of contention. I know from experience that it is a hard pill for Fundamentalists to swallow.

And who makes the claim that a mere *organization* of men has the authority to declare books inspired? I certainly don’t. I am talking about the *Church, which is the Body of Christ!* This is no *mere* organization. In Acts 15 the Church through the Apostles and elders made binding decisions on all believers! It is the Church, the body of Christ of which Christ Himself is the Head that discerned the New Testament. And what does St. Paul say about the Church what Mr. Bayack would like to say about the Bible that the Church is the “pillar and foundation of the Truth” (1 Tim 3:15). This is not just an *organization*, this is a living *organism*, and this is the government of God. This is the *Church!* Jesus tells us that believers are required to “listen to the Church” (Mt. 18:17).

If Mr. Bayack challenges the fact that Jesus Church has such authority (having been given the authority to “bind and loose”) it is *he* that challenges God’s authority, setting himself up the final judge of truth and rejecting the Church that Jesus founded and indwells. Dangerous position to be in in my estimation.

“In other words, the early church no more gave us the New Testament any more than Isaac Newton gave us gravity. Because of its divine origins, all men and institutions are under its complete authority.

Let’s take a look at this analogy for a minute. Sounds good at first right? But look at it closely. Jesus gave us Twelve Apostles who were the foundation of the Church in a unique way (Rev 21:14; Eph 2:20). These Apostles and their disciples preached orally the Gospel and the Kingdom of God and also, as part of the tradition they deposited in the Church, they wrote the New Testament documents. So, did the Church give us the New Testament? Yes. Did they do it apart from God? No. These Fundamentalists, such as Mr. Bayack, always say it has to be *either/or* and are not willing to accept that fact that it was *both/and: both* God *and* the men he called to teach His truth.

Did Newton give us gravity? No. But Newton *did* discover and define gravity. Did the Church give us the Bible? Yes and no. Did the Church in subsequent centuries discover and define the canon as Newton did gravity? Yes, and the Protestants have their New Testament based on Catholic tradition (Endnote 1).

Protestant historian Henry Chadwick writes, “In later Christian debate the history of the

formation of the biblical canon has at times become a sensitive issue: were the books admitted to the church's canon because they were self-authenticating, and a passive act of the community was to acknowledge their inherent authority? Or did the church actively create the canon in response to Marcion and other sectarian leaders whose inspired writings were either more or less than the church accepted? Both questions have to receive affirmative answers, and they are not mutually exclusive. The books were acknowledged because of their content as witnesses to the apostolic gospel; their formal acceptance as canonical scripture was a matter of discussion and decision by gradual consensus among the communities of the late second century and afterwards. But the term canon was being used for the standard of authentic teaching given by the baptismal confession of faith well before it came to be used for the list of accepted books. **The criterion for admission was not so much that traditions vindicated an apostolic authorship as that the content of the books was in line with the apostolic proclamation received by the second-century churches**" (*The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, ed. by John McManners).

This insight by Chadwick is confirmed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which explains it beautifully: "It was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books" (CCC 120).

In other words, in the fourth century there were hundreds of writings claiming apostolic authorship and Christians were uncertain as to which were authoritative and which were not. (It is very frustrating having to tell this information all over again after having already written it in my book *Crossing the Tiber*.) Based on the Apostolic Tradition preserved in the Apostolic Succession the Church discerned which books belonged in the canon. This is just basic history. Reading Eusebius' *History of the Church* (325 AD) one can see this clearly. Even in Eusebius' time Christians were still debating over which books belonged in the canon of Scripture and that was almost four hundred years after the death and resurrection of Christ.

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

Are all men and institutions under the authority of the Bible? Of course, and if Mr. Bayack had been honest he would have told his readers that I clearly state that in my book. I write, "The New Testament writings were produced by the Church, yet the Church was subject to them. A parallel situation is the birth of Jesus, whereby the Blessed Virgin gave him birth, yet she was subject to him. Mary gave birth to Jesus, the

Living Word, just as the Church gave birth to the written word, yet each is subject to her offspring. The Catholic Church teaches that the primary author of the New Testament writings is the Holy Spirit God is the author.”

“Stephen Ray blames supposed Protestant traditions and biases for keeping him from seeing certain truths in Scripture. As a Protestant, I had allowed the “traditions of men” to invalidate the word of God (p. 57). But he never addresses the problem of Roman Catholic tradition contradicting Scripture. An objective presentation cannot ignore this.”

The Catholic Church *does not* contradict the Bible so there was nothing I needed to address! Even if there were, it was not the topic of my book. There are two kinds of “tradition” in the Catholic Church: “Tradition” with a capital “T,” and tradition with a small “t.” It is very convenient for Fundamentalist critics to ignore this, because by causing confusion in their reader’s minds they can gain a great advantage. Tradition with a capital “T” is Apostolic Tradition, which is the teaching of Jesus as passed on to us by the Apostles. It is infallible and has always, from the earliest days of the Church, been considered God’s word. When the Apostles spoke God’s word, or wrote God’s word, when did it cease to *be* God’s word? It didn’t. Protestants attempt to preserve the written portion of God’s word but they unhappily and to their own detriment ignore the unwritten portion of God’s word.

Did Jesus promise us an authoritative Book? Did He commission His disciples to put together a library? No. Did the Apostles promise us an authoritative Book? No. But, did Jesus promise us an authoritative Church? Yes and so did the Apostles. These are just basic truths and it amazes me that I missed them for so long so I can fully understand why others are blind to them.

Traditions with a small “t” are dispensable and changeable. Celibacy of priests is not an Apostolic Tradition; it is a Church discipline. If the anti-Catholic can also confuse these two categories he again can gain a great advantage by playing off the misinformation and ignorance of his audience.

Roman Catholic tradition does *not* contradict Scripture or frankly, I wouldn’t be a Roman Catholic. Ignorant people like to claim Catholicism contradicts the Bible, but it was actually the great fidelity of the Catholic Church to Scripture and the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles that eventually caused me to convert to the Catholic Church. And, Protestants *do* invalidate the word of God by their traditions. Read this section in my book for more information.

“For example, Catholicism has forbidden clerical marriage for centuries. But this clearly goes against Scripture. First Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 list one qualification of an overseer as the husband of one wife which literally reads in the Greek a one-woman man. This does not mean that single men are disqualified from the ministry but that all men in ministry, married or single, must practice moral purity. And remember what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 9:5, “Do

we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?” A married clergy was very much the norm in the early church just as it should be today. In fact, the forbidding of marriage is a “doctrine of demons” as Paul writes in 1 Timothy 4:1-3.”

The Catholic Church does not forbid marriage to person, nor does it teach that marriage is evil or contrary to God’s plan. It simply says that due to the demands on a priest, and in order they may better serve the Jesus and His Church it is best that priests be single following the example of Jesus and St. Paul. This falls under the category of Church discipline, not Church dogma, and could be changed at any time. Paul speaks of those who forbid marriage, yet he is unmarried and encourages servants of God to remain celibate, as he is (1 Cor 7).

What does Paul mean about elders being the “husband of one wife”? “Clearly, it is not only polygamy that Paul means to exclude but also a second marriage, a marriage that would take place either in the case of conversion from paganism (1 Cor 7:12-16) or after the death of the first wife. In 1 Cor 7:39 (and Rom 7:2-3) Paul allows remarriage after the death of the spouse, but even there he declares that it would be better for the bereaved spouse to remain unmarried. In the present instance he makes the second marriage a disqualification” (*Jerome’s Biblical Commentary*).

This is confirmed by Protestant author J.N.D. Kelly in his commentary *The Pastoral Epistles*. “This is the plain meaning of *the husband of one wife*. On this matter, as on many others, the attitude of antiquity differed markedly from that prevalent in most circles today, and there is abundant evidence, from both literature and funerary inscriptions, pagan and Jewish, that to remain unmarried after the death of one’s spouse or after divorce was considered meritorious, while to marry again was taken as a sign of self-indulgence. Paul certainly shared this view, and while permitting a widow to marry again esteemed her more blessed if she abstained from a second marriage (I Cor. vii. 40). In general, while opposed to the ultra-asceticism which discountenanced marriage and applauded unnatural feats of self-denial (cf., e.g., his criticism of spiritual unions in I Cor. vii. 36-38), he had a great respect for complete sexual abstinence, where it was possible, regarding it as a gift from God, and also held that periodical restraint within marriage was spiritually valuable (ib. 7:1 7). In the context of such presuppositions it was natural to expect the Church’s ministers to be examples to other people and content themselves with a single marriage. In the early Christian centuries, we should note, second marriages were not absolutely forbidden, but were regarded with distinct disapproval.” I don’t think the same “New Testament thinking” prevails in “Bible churches” today, unfortunately.

The Church, which was given the authority to “bind and loose” and to make requirements upon the faithful, has the authority to require the priests to be celibate. Does the Church “forbid marriage” as Mr. Bayack states? No. It only says that if someone is called by God to be celibate and to be a priest they need to be remain celibate. Priests know that celibacy is a requirement and they go into the priesthood with full knowledge of the requirement. It is a free choice on their part as it was a free choice on St. Paul’s part. Mr.

Bayack may not realize it but there are actually many married priests in the Catholic Church. Converted clergy from other ecclesial communities can become priests even though married and many of the Eastern rites have married clergy. I just spoke with a priest, a widower, with thirteen grandchildren.

Mr. Bayack should also put Paul's statement about "forbidding marriage" and the "doctrine of demons" in its proper historical and theological context. I used to say the same silly things myself as a Fundamentalist that Catholics practiced the "doctrines of demons" before I looked more carefully at the facts. I was foolish to attribute the doctrine of demons to the Church's understanding of the calling and gift of celibacy in the Catholic Church (Mt 19:11-12; I Cor 7:7, 8, 26, 32-35). A student of Scripture realizes that St. Paul is dealing with the heresies related to dualism that were already rampant in the first century. The Essenes and the Gnostics are both examples.

The *Jerome Biblical Commentary* states, "The prohibition of marriage and certain foods reflects dualistic tendencies that proscribed matter as evil; such tendencies were current even before the time of Christ and the apostles (e.g., among the Essenes [and Gnostics])."

Protestant commentator Donald Guthrie writes, "The false teaching comprised two prohibitions: marriage and the eating of certain foods. There is no doubt that these point to an incipient Gnosticism with its dualistic view of matter, which found its climax in the heretical teachers of the early second century. The apostle's strong opposition to these practices is due to their dangerous implications. He argues that prohibitions such as these are in conflict with the divine ordinance. Here he strikes at the roots of dualistic gnosticism, which denied that God created matter" (*Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Pastoral Epistles*).

Many of the dualists, such as the Essenes and the Gnostics taught that marriage itself was evil and they therefore forbid the sacrament of marriage to *everyone*. Does Mr. Bayack really equate this with the teaching of the Catholic Church? Come on! What does the Catholic Church teach on marriage? Read paragraph 1601 in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament."

And what does the Catholic Church teach about virginity and celibacy? "People should cultivate [chastity] in the way that is suited to their state of life. Some profess virginity or consecrated celibacy which enables them to give themselves to God alone with an undivided heart in a remarkable manner. Others live in the way prescribed for all by the moral law, whether they are married or single. Married people are called to live conjugal chastity; others practice chastity in continence" (CCC 2349).

And finally, it is *not* true that the norm for bishops and elders in the early Church was marriage. A short study will show that the majority of Church leaders in the early Church

remained single, as St. Paul did, in order to fully serve the Lord and His Church.

It is too bad that Mr. Bayack, who claims to be an ex-Catholic and should know these things, sees fit to mislead his readers, not only regarding my book but also regarding the meaning of the biblical passage and the teaching of the Church.

“But regarding the supposed authority of tradition, why then did Paul urge the early church to hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you in 1 Corinthians 11:3 and related passages?”

The related passages are significant. Look for example at this verse I discuss at some length in my book: 2 Thessalonians 2:15 “So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the *traditions* which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.” Look also at 2 Thessalonians 3:6 “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the *tradition* which you received from us.”

These are no insignificant biblical passages. St. Paul holds tradition in high regard and considers it objective and clear enough to require the believers in Thessalonica to hold fast to his tradition. Was this “human tradition” since it came from a man St. Paul? Of course not. See my study on [Sola Scriptura and the Bereans](#).

“Apostolic tradition was necessary in the very early church because Scripture had not yet been completed. However, apostolic tradition would never contradict Scripture. And neither are the traditions of the apostles to be confused with the traditions of man.

“Apostolic tradition ended with the completion of Scripture.

This is a bold faced, unbiblical assumption. It is a doctrine of men without any Scriptural warrant. It is contrived to conform to Fundamentalist persuasion and is accepted by Fundamentalists as a tenet of the faith without a *shred* of biblical evidence; in fact, it flies in the face of Scripture.

“The fact that the New Testament was not assembled for three more centuries is irrelevant. Because all Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16) “

To make a side note here, Mr. Bayack uses 2 Timothy quite freely here though I hope that he realizes that at the time of Paul’s statement, the phrase “All Scripture” was referring to the Old Testament since there was no New Testament yet. If Mr. Bayack wants to use this as a proof of *sola Scriptura* it proves too much since it leaves the New Testament out of the proof. We understand now, by extrapolation and the definition of the Church, that 2 Timothy 3:16 applies to the New Testament as well as the Old Testament, but the readers at the time would have understood this to apply exclusively to the Old Testament. By the time of the writing of 2 Peter some of the apostolic writings were being recognized as being on par with Old Testament scripture, but they are not

listed, and no corpus of work is mentioned as a new collection of books to stand alongside the Old Testament. This happened only later as the Catholic Church identified and closed the canon.

“ the Holy Spirit was just as able to work through an inspired letter informally circulating through the early church as He was a formal collection. Thus when the New Testament was completed, apostolic tradition yielded to Scripture. Human depravity cannot be trusted to keep tradition consistent and in the post-apostolic era the traditions of man evolved which supplanted the word of God. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for this in Matthew 15:1-9 and the same condemnation remains true today. ”

Ah, and now we see Mr. Bayack's tradition come to the front loud and clear. His tradition that nullifies the word of God. Where does Mr. Bayack find it in the Bible that Apostolic Tradition will end with the completion of the New Testament canon? For that matter, where does Mr. Bayack find anything in the Bible stating that there *will be* a New Testament canon? And the real problem is where does Mr. Bayack find in the Bible what books will be in the New Testament canon? Check my web page for the list of [“Questions for Bible Christians”](#). Many Fundamentalists also claim that all the gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased with the finalized canon of Scripture. Does anyone find a “retirement clause” in this matter either? How can he dismiss tradition tradition which St. Paul requires without one verse that says, “All Apostolic tradition and oral teaching will be dismantled and dismissed as soon as the Catholic Church determines the books of the New Testament?” There is *no* retirement clause in the New Testament to even hint that the Apostolic oral tradition would be ignored after the book was published.

Mr. Bayack writes,

“Apostolic tradition ended with the completion of Scripture.”

Can you show us chapter and verse for this statement Mr. Bayack? Of course not. It is simply a statement developed out of his Fundamentalist tradition a tradition that nullifies St. Paul's words and commands, and thus nullifying the very written and inspired word of God. Boy, am I glad I am now a Catholic! Paul taught the churches many things: how to celebrate the Eucharist, how to baptize, how to ordain priests, what to think about Jesus, etc. When did Paul's tradition the truth, practices, and instructions he passed on to the believers cease to be God's word? When the vibrations of his voice fell upon the ears of the listeners? The next day? A year after the canon was formalized? When did Paul's tradition, when did the Apostolic Tradition from God cease to be true and the norm? Where does the Bible say it would become void?

Again he writes,

“Thus when the New Testament was completed, apostolic tradition yielded to Scripture.”

This is another bold faced assumption based on thin air and the wishes of Fundamentalists to do away with Catholic teaching. Mr. Bayack pulls this “doctrine” out of thin air and certainly not from the Bible for there is not a shred of biblical evidence to support such an unfounded assumption. And again, since we are dealing with a “Bible-only” Christian, I ask for chapter and verse! And one last comment. Jesus did not condemn the Pharisees for “tradition” per se; He condemned them for the “traditions of men” that nullified the word of God. That the Catholic Church certainly does not do, but it appears that Fundamentalist tradition certainly does.

Mr. Bayack has tried to criticize over fifty pages in my book with a few paragraphs of Fundamentalist tripe. I used to say the same kind of silly things and I know exactly where he is coming from.

“II. Stephen Ray Selectively Interprets Scripture As It Fits His Conclusions

“Stephen Ray forces interpretations on a text as it supports his positions. He often criticizes Evangelicals for supposedly ignoring literal interpretation, however, he himself uses extensive allegory, especially from the Old Testament, to support his views about baptism and the eucharist. And he often appeals to some of the most difficult passages in the New Testament for backup which violates a basic rule of Bible interpretation that difficult passages are to be interpreted in light of clear ones.”

First of all, the passages I use, that Mr. Bayack says are difficult are only difficult for him because they don’t fit comfortably into his Fundamentalist Protestant tradition. I go into some detail in my book, especially on the way James McCarthy deals with 1 Peter 3:21. I don’t want to go into a lot of detail here, but suffice it to say that Mr. Bayack finds certain passages “difficult” because he is trying to fit a square biblical passage into his round Fundamentalist hole. Tough job. One of the nice things about being a Catholic is that there are no longer any verses that don’t fit or make sense, such as 1 Peter 3:31, John 20:23, Colossians 1:24, John 3:5, etc. Just recently a Fundamentalist friend admitted that she had to put verses “on the shelf” because they don’t fit her theology. Sad!

In my book *Crossing the Tiber*, I have often used Old Testament passages in the same “patristic” manner as the earliest Church Fathers, including St. Paul. In fact, whenever I refer to the Old Testament passages relating to Baptism and the Eucharist, I almost always show that the Fathers of the Church understood the passages in the same way as the Catholic Church does today.

Allegory? If you mean by allegory that I interpret them patristically, I plead guilty. If you mean that I do injustice to the Scripture, then I plead innocent. I am interpreting the Bible in light of historical Christianity. Never do I deny the literal sense of a passage when understanding it allegorically. This is an art Evangelicals have lost. Yes, I can understand Mr. Bayack’s discomfort. I can relate, but now I have abandoned the Fundamentalist tradition and no longer view Scripture within Fundamentalisms narrow and simplistic framework.

However, I do not employ “allegory” with the New Testament passages, as Mr. Bayack seems to imply. In fact, most of my exegesis of the New Testament passages is based on Protestant scholars and commentators. I did that on purpose to show that the Catholic position of the sacraments can be supported not only by Catholic scholars, but also by Luther, Calvin, and other Protestant commentators.

And finally, Mr. Bayack should notice how St. Paul uses the Old Testament allegorically, especially in Galatians 4:21-31. Maybe he could counsel St. Paul and the other New Testament writers on how to interpret the Old Testament properly. Who is St. Paul to use an allegorical method of understanding the Old Testament? Come on St. Paul, let’s get with the Fundamentalist Protestant way of doing things.

“For example, he uses 1 Peter 3:18-21, admittedly one of the hardest passages in the New Testament, as proof for baptismal regeneration.”

This passage is hard for Fundamentalist Protestants to interpret because they don’t like what it says and they have to twist it to fit their own man-made tradition. It is quite sad when one has to twist Scripture to fit one’s preconceived ideas. James McCarthy has a tough time with this verse in his book *The Gospel according to Rome*. I discuss this passage at some length in my book. I wonder how Mr. Bayack would have preferred that St. Peter reword this passage to better fit his Fundamentalist tradition.

What Peter says is this: “And corresponding to that [Noah’s ark], baptism now saves you” (1 Peter 3:21). What about these words does Mr. Bayack find difficult? They seem pretty straightforward to a Catholic and to all Christians before the Fundamentalist movement came into being. We as Catholics don’t have to do mental gymnastics to “get around” this verse. It sounds a lot like the very first Gospel message ever preached. St. Peter preached the first gospel message in Jerusalem. It is recorded in the inspired word of God. Let’s all open our Bibles to Acts 2:38 and allow God to instruct us. “And Peter said to them, Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. “

Enough said. My book goes into much more detail on the issue of Baptism in the Bible and in the early Church. I question whether Mr. Bayack really read the whole thing or just used the “hunt and peck” method to look for objections. In any case, he certainly uses “selective scholarship.”

“Yet in over ninety pages about baptism, not once does he ever mention clear passages like 1 Corinthians 1:17, For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel (italics added).”

I really don’t see what the above verse has to do with anything unless Mr. Bayack is trying to imply that Paul had a low regard for baptism or considered it an unnecessary appendage to belief in Christ. I remember as a Fundamentalist making my daughter write a report on the unnecessary nature of baptism a symbol only before I would allow her to

be baptized. How far off I was.

Paul's converts were all baptized immediately upon belief in Christ (e.g., Acts 16:31) as was he himself (Acts 9:17-18). Philip also showed the importance of baptism and baptized the Ethiopian eunuch immediately (Acts 8:36ff.). St. Paul himself recognizes that baptism was the means of his own cleansing and regeneration (e.g., Acts 22:16; Titus 3:5). The very fact that St. Paul makes this observation at this point in the argument demonstrates the importance and deep significance Baptism held in the apostolic Church. Had it been unnecessary or unimportant, he would not have even mentioned it in this context. What Mr. Bayack assumes about this passage actually proves the opposite.

Jerome's Biblical Commentary observes, "No special mission was needed to baptize, and Paul usually left the administration of baptism to others. This does not imply any disdain for it; Rom 6:3-12 and 1 Cor 6:11 indicate Paul's high regard for the sacrament of incorporation into Christ."

Matthew Henry, in his ever popular Protestant commentary on the Bible, is also instructive in this matter. "Was it not a part of the apostolical commission to baptize all nations? And could Paul give thanks to God for his own neglect of duty? He is not to be understood in such a sense as if he were thankful for not having baptized at all, but for not having done it in present circumstances, lest it should have had this very bad construction put upon it that he had baptized in his own name, made disciples for himself, or set himself up as the head of a sect. He left it to other ministers to baptize, while he set himself to more useful work, and filled up his time with preaching the gospel. This, he thought, was more his business, because the more important business of the two. He had assistants that could baptize, when none could discharge the other part of his office so well as himself. In this sense he says, *Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel* not so much to baptize as to preach" (*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*).

Paul, like Jesus, delegated baptizing to his disciples and ministers. The Catholic Church has *never* taught that baptisms must be done by an apostle or priest. The Church has acknowledged that any person can do baptisms, if done in the correct manner. Jesus thought baptism was important since he told Nicodemus he couldn't see heaven without it (John 3:5). If Mr. Bayack denies that John 3:5 refers to Baptism he really shows that he is out of continuity with the Bible and the early Church and again his Fundamentalist Protestant tradition is shown to nullify the inspired word of God.

Jesus also, like Paul, did not baptize His followers but delegated the task to his disciples (cp. John 4:1-2).

"He ignores Paul's definition of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, which makes no mention of baptism or communion, that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." Likewise, because he seeks to prove the necessity of the sacraments, he never addresses verses declaring salvation as a free gift such

as Romans 6:23 and Ephesians 2:8-9.”

I do not ignore 1 Corinthians 15:1 4 but since it does not directly refer to the topic at hand Baptism it was not necessary to bring it up. What would happen if I brought up every verse in the Bible?

Does Mr. Bayack imply that Baptism is not a free gift? How much more gratuitous can God be than to offer us a sacrament of faith as simple and as wonderful a gift as baptism? Ephesians 2:8 9 and Romans 6:23 do not contradict the Church’s teaching on Baptism, rather they support it. Does Mr. Bayack forget that the first verses of Romans 6 directly mention Baptism and its necessity for the placement of the believer into Christ? In fact, in Romans 6, Paul says that baptism is quite essential. Listen to what he says, “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also *in the likeness* of His resurrection” (Romans 6:3 5). According to St. Paul, it is through Baptism that we are placed into Christ!

Is Mr. Bayack again being selective (practicing “selective scholarship”) by using a proof text allegedly against baptism from Romans 6 but ignoring the fact that Romans 6 begins by teaching us that it is through Baptism that we are placed into Christ? He ignores the whole context but pulls his proof text out of context to support his Fundamentalist tradition.

I also deal with this passage to some degree in *Crossing the Tiber*, and find it frustrating that Mr. Bayack appears not to have read what I wrote, but still somehow feels competent to review and critique my book. I feel that I am spending far too much time rewriting things for him that he should have understood if he really read the book.

“And he goes even further. For example, he states that Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem (meaning house of bread) was symbolic of the eucharist. Is it a coincidence that the Lord Jesus, the Bread of Life, the Manna come down from heaven, was born in the “City of Bread”?” (p. 195). And on page 189 he states, The context of John 6:60-71 links Judas’ betrayal with his disbelief in the Eucharist. The context of this passage says nothing of the sort.”

My book makes the connection quite clear for anyone who wants to read it objectively and honestly. I know it is difficult for a Fundamentalist Protestant to understand. I don’t feel I need to comment on these points any further.

“The connection between Judas and those who departed was that false believers existed not only amongst the multitudes but in Jesus’ own midst.”

We are all very appreciative of Mr. Bayack’s “papal pronouncement” on the true meaning of this biblical text. A short perusal of Catholic and Protestant commentaries

show there is a lot going on in this passage and cannot be reduced to the simply explanation of Mr. Bayack.

Many of the followers of Jesus turned away from him at the teaching on the Eucharist in John 6. Most commentators, even Protestants will acknowledge this. My point included the observation that when it is observed that Satan “entered” Judas it is always in the Eucharistic context, which ties the two together. The book is clear on the matter and I m surprised Mr. Bayack somehow missed it.

I will include here a footnote from *Crossing the Tiber* to afford the reader a fuller context. “Jn 6:70, 71 The context of a passage is always important for its interpretation. While reading the Bible, one should ask questions such as: Why did the author place this anecdote in this location instead of somewhere else? or What conclusion did the author expect us draw by placing this incident here? In our current passages, it seems contextually significant that John mentions Judas betrayal at this point in his narrative. Where else in the gospels do we find this event mentioned? In each of the Gospels the mention of Satan entering Judas is in the context of the Last Supper. Each account begins by noting that it was the Passover and ends with Satan entering Judas so it is with John 6. *John frames his Eucharistic discourse in chapter 6 so that the reader will see the clear parallel with the Synoptic accounts of the Lord’s Supper.* This anecdote about Judas seems to be out of place unless understood within this Eucharistic framework of the whole chapter.”

“But the eisegesis does not end there. At times Ray grasps for the absurd if it will help. On pages 243-44 he gives this quote from the fourth century church father Hilary of Poitiers: “ Give us this day our daily bread ; for what does God desire so much as that Christ, who is the bread of life , and the bread from heaven , may dwell daily in us?” Ray then adds his own comments: “It is quite correct to connect this phrase in the Our Father with the Holy Eucharist, since Jesus declares himself to be the Bread come down from heaven (Jn 6:41), and Paul tells us that the Eucharist is prefigured in the spiritual food that came down from heaven in the form of manna, which was the daily bread of the Israelites (1 Cor 10:1-4). This is a clear recommendation that Christians attend daily Mass.” (parentheses in original)

“And immediately following this, Ray indirectly states that those who deny transubstantiation are of the spirit of antichrist (cf. 1 John 4:1-3). He again quotes Hilary: “As to the reality of His Flesh and Blood, there is no room left for doubt, because now, both by the declaration of the Lord Himself and by our own faith, it is truly Flesh and it is truly Blood. . . . Let those who deny that Jesus Christ is true God be free to find these things untrue.” Ray then makes this comment: “St. Hilary chides heretics: If you don’t believe Jesus is God in the flesh, you can deny the Real Presence in the Eucharist. Conversely, if you deny the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, you deny that Jesus came in the flesh.”

The earliest Christians, the Fathers of the Church did not seem to share Mr. Bayack's skepticism and biblical illiteracy on this point. I must ask, why should I accept his interpretation over that of the first Christians? Is he so much wiser than they are? Of course, "Give us this day our daily bread," means our daily sustenance and nourishment, our daily needs. But, do we suppose that Jesus did not mean for us to understand this in a deeper sense as well? Didn't He call himself the "Bread of Life" comparing himself to the daily manna in the wilderness? And didn't He say His flesh was given as bread for the life of the world and then a few verses later didn't He say that as the Bread of the Life we must eat His Flesh. I understand that Mr. Bayack's tradition finds no place for such thinking. That is *his* problem, not the problem of the Catholic who stands in continuity with the historical Church which has understood this passage to refer to the Eucharist as well as to daily sustenance for body *and* soul. My book goes into more detail and therefore I will not do so here.

"Anybody interpreting the Bible in context can see that such views are utterly ridiculous."

Really? Many Protestant commentators see the connection as well as the early Fathers of the Church. Ridiculous? A Fundamentalist's opinion.

"The phrase Give us this day our daily bread appears in Matthew 6:11 in the Sermon on the Mount. The average person listening to Jesus would quite naturally have understood this as literal, not allegorical, bread."

Do you think a Jew, with the constant Scriptural reminder of the manna as the daily bread miraculously provided by God, would not have seen Jesus' words as an allusion to the manna of the Old Testament, and thus the Eucharist of the New Testament? Remember that Jesus was speaking to Jews, and Matthew is writing his gospel to Jewish Christians already partaking of the Eucharist and understanding it as the Bread of Life, the Medicine of Immortality (see Ignatius of Antioch). But all this was in my book so I am surprised at Mr. Bayack's selective memory.

"And the context of Matthew 6 supports this as basic human needs. In verse 8, Jesus said, For your Father knows what you need (italics added). And in verses 25-33, He comforts believers because their heavenly Father will take care of their needs for food and clothing."

"Ray does not quote 1 John 4:1-3 in reference to those who presumably deny that Jesus in the flesh because they deny transubstantiation, but it must certainly be what he has in mind. The context of 1 John says nothing about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, but instead discusses the literal human flesh-and-blood body of Jesus as evidenced by the very first verse in the book: What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life " For all of Stephen Ray's condemnation of Protestants supposedly ignoring literal interpretation, he himself is often guilty of egregious misinterpretation."

Unfortunately, this paragraph makes little or no sense in the context of this discussion. I must say I m not quite sure what Mr. Bayack is trying to say. Why would John, by referring to the physical body of Christ that had been flesh, negate the Real Presence in the Eucharist? The Catholic Church does not say that Jesus came *either* in the flesh *or* in the Eucharist, but that He has given Himself to us in *both* in the physical body *and* in the Eucharist. I m not quite sure what Mr. Bayack is trying to say here since it is quite unclear, so I will leave this and go on to his next point.

“What is also interesting is that Ray does not include a Scripture index in the back of his book. Such an omission obscures the reader’s ability to easily examine his treatment of all Scripture, especially verses like John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8-9, etc., and is highly unusual for scholarship of this magnitude.”

First, I appreciate the kind words about “*scholarship of this magnitude*”. This was generous of Mr. Bayack and I appreciate it. Since “Mr. Ray,”—that is myself—had no control over what indexes were included in his book, I think we will pass on this criticism. I gave Ignatius Press the basic manuscript and they did the rest. I didn’t even have any input on the cover or design. I would have *loved* to have had a Scriptural index included, but that was not within my powers. However, wait for my next book on Peter and the Papacy! If Mr. Bayack had been a published author, he may have understood some of the in’s and out’s of getting a book into print.

“III. Stephen Ray Treats the Church Fathers As Though They Were Infallible

“Stephen Ray quotes the church fathers as though they were infallible which is not surprising since Catholicism holds tradition to be equal with Scripture.”

“Church Fathers” should be capitalized. Again, I am amazed at what an alleged ex-Catholic like Mr. Bayack never took the time to learn about his faith. No one, especially not the Catholic Church, teaches or refers to the Fathers as though they are inspired or infallible. This is clear in my book and I m surprised our critic missed it. I have a study on my web page on the [“Unanimous Consent of the Fathers”](#) which may help clarify this for the ex-Catholics who left the Church because they never took the time to understand what She taught. The Apostolic and Church Fathers are authentic witnesses to the Apostolic teaching and that is very different from claiming that they are infallible. I never assume they are infallible, nor to I treat them as infallible. To say I so is to be disingenuous.

“Nowhere does he consider that they may contradict Scripture.”

With all due respect the above comment is nothing but stupid. Come on Mr. Bayack, of course some of the Fathers contradict Scripture some of the time. Do I have to attach a disclaimer for each citation? When you quote a commentator or theologian, as you will do shortly in this review, are we to assume that you consider them unable to contradict

Scripture unless you make the explicit disclaimer. Had you understood the teaching of the Church you would never had made such and uninformed and stupid comment. Do you put this disclaimer in your critique for yourself? You write as though you are infallible and I don't see anywhere where you consider the possibility that you might not be infallible and might at times contradict Scripture. You shouldn't practice such a double standard.

“However, when referencing the fathers one must be very careful. You can support almost any position by selectively quoting them.”

As you can do as well, quoting the Scripture according to your own tradition and private judgment. The fact that we have almost 30,000 denominations (and non-denominational denominations, such as yours) shows that you do the same thing with the Bible! The Church has always been careful in this regard, as am I.

“Also, the fathers were not at all of one mind in everything they taught. Chrysostom's literal interpretation of Scripture clashed sharply with Origen's allegorical method.”

So whose interpretation of the Bible *should* we accept, yours? These two men were both great biblical scholars and contributed a great deal, with their different methods, to the understanding of Scripture. Are they infallible? No. Again, I would suggest reading the study on the “Unanimous Consent of the Fathers” on my webpage.

“Which do you choose? In order for tradition to be authoritative, it must be unanimous, which it is not.”

Mr. Bayack comes to the same erroneous conclusion that William Webster arrives at in his book *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*. Read my article on this on the web page. Again, Mr. Bayack is confused and misrepresenting the Catholic Church's teaching. Anti-Catholics tend to do this in order to score points at the expense of their cheering section who seldom take the time to research these matters for themselves.

“The fathers, while at times helpful, are not infallible.”

This is Catholic teaching. So, what is Mr. Bayack's point?

“But Ray teaches the traditional Catholic position that because the fathers were in the direct succession of the apostles, and thus closer to their teachings, they understand most accurately the apostles teaching. However, this does not consider the apostasy that occurred during the time of the apostles! Remember what Paul told the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:29-30, “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.” The churches of Corinth and Galatia both received direct teaching from Paul yet were vulnerable to those who preached “a different

gospel” (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:4, Galatians 1:6-9).

“This is not to pass judgment on any of the fathers but to show that if those who had the direct teaching of the apostles were vulnerable to heresy, then those who followed must be fallible also. And false prophets who came later would surely try to make some connection to the apostles for credibility’s sake.”

First I would like to correct one small technicality here. The Fathers (again Mr. Bayack, “Fathers” is capitalized) are not the successors of the Apostles—that honor is reserved to the bishops of the Church. Some of the Fathers were bishops, but not all of them were successors of the Apostles.

There were many early heretics who did teach false doctrine, but the Fathers are the Fathers because they were the ones who stayed faithful to the Apostolic Tradition and were faithful witnesses to that teaching. I suggest you read them more often. And yes, the Judaizers and the Gnostics brought in false Gospels and heresies. It is quite clear that they are the ones that St. Paul is addressing in that century. Are you intimating that the Fathers were Judaizers and/or Gnostics? And further, why should I trust your interpretation of Scripture over theirs? They were closer to the source, spoke the language, understood the culture, were certainly no innovators, etc. and you are a product of a novel tradition 2,000 years later. Why trust you over the Fathers? What a ridiculous choice!

As to false teachers, one must wonder about all the Protestant groups who debate the very essentials of salvation among themselves. On my shelf I have books by two Baptist pastors and theologians. One claims that eternal security is unconditional and a believer can never lose their salvation. The other is at the other end and claims that salvation can be lost unless one lives a holy life and perseveres in the faith. Other disagreements abound regarding Baptism, Infant Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, spiritual gifts, divorce and remarriage, etc. Even as early as the “Reformation” the “reformers could not agree on the meaning of Scripture. In Marburg Germany I visited the site where the major reformers assembled in an attempt to formulate a consistent teaching among themselves. It ended as an utter failure and as a demonstration of the failure of *sola Scriptura* and the Protestant teaching on private judgment. Luther said that now that everyone was their own interpreter apart from any tradition, there were as many different doctrines as there were heads.

I am thankful to be part of the Church that has consistently taught the true Gospel from the very beginning. She has gone neither to the right nor to the left but stayed the course so that two thousand years later the Gospel is still proclaimed with truth and accuracy.

“This brings us to another interesting point does it matter whether or not a group can trace its lineage back to the apostles? The Jewish priests of Jesus day could boast of their succession from Aaron. The priests, scribes, and Pharisees could claim descent from Abraham. Yet Jesus called them sons of the devil in John 8:44 and said in Matthew 23:13, But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men; for you do not enter in

yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Thus apostolic succession means nothing if it does not lead men to heaven.”

It is obvious that Mr. Bayack doesn't think Apostolic Succession is important but he is way out of line with the continuity of historic Christianity on this matter. I have included a footnote from my book regarding St. Irenaeus who wrote in 180 AD.

“Irenaeus, an authentic witness to the apostolic teaching, reveals that in the early Church the basis for orthodox theology and knowledge of Christ was not the New Testament but by the apostolic tradition preserved and passed down through the apostolic succession of bishops. Irenaeus writes, Having founded and built the Church, the blessed apostles entrusted the episcopal office to Linus, who is mentioned by Paul in the Epistles to Timothy; Linus was succeeded by Anacletus; after him, in the third place from the apostles, the bishopric fell to Clement, who had seen the blessed apostles and conversed with them, and still had their preaching ringing in his ears and their authentic tradition before his eyes. And he was not the only one; there were still many people alive who had been taught by the apostles. . . . In the same order and the same succession the authentic tradition received from the apostles and passed down by the Church, and the preaching of the truth, have been handed on to us. (*Against Heresies*, 3, 3, 2f.). The primitive Church appealed to the tradition and apostolic succession as their basis for truth and their weapon against the heretics. This was the universal teaching of the Church. Even if one doesn't accept apostolic tradition, one *must* accept the fact that Irenaeus and the early Church used succession and tradition as their authority. They firmly believed that the apostolic teaching would be sustained through apostolic succession in the churches.”

When Mr. Bayack dismisses tradition, even referring to Matthew 23, it seems he misses the first few verses: “Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them.” This passage seems instructive in that Jesus accepts Jewish tradition and the leaders here, even though the “seat of Moses” is nowhere mentioned in the Old Testament. He tells his disciples that when the scribes and Pharisees sit in the “seat of Moses” they are to be obeyed, even though the teachers don't practice what they preach. Mr. Bayack might want to reconsider his ideas of tradition and get a more biblical and historical perspective.

So again, I wonder why I should listen to Baptist pastor today who is out of step with the Apostles and the earliest Christians, the Christians who faithfully laid their lives down as martyrs and who turned the Roman Empire upside down for Jesus Christ and the Gospel. I will throw my lot in with the early Christians and the Catholic Church who take their teaching and faithful loyalty to Jesus seriously. It was these very men, the bishops of the Catholic Church, who determined which books belonged in the New Testament. The Fundamentalist Protestants accept the determination made in the fourth century regarding the canon of the New Testament, but they want to reject everything else that the Church taught simultaneously that doesn't fit their Fundamentalist Protestant tradition.

*“And what about the great flaws of those supposedly in the line of Peter? If Paul commanded that an elder of a local church be above reproach (cf. 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6), then how much more should be the supposed vicar of Christ? What, then, about the abject corruption of many popes? Even the New Catholic Encyclopedia is forced to acknowledge that Alexander VI (1492-1503), admittedly the most corrupt pope, lived a dissipated life, had children, and assumed the papacy through simony. He actually had six children by other men’s wives, two of which were born during his papacy, and his son Cesare was a model for Niccolò Machiavelli’s infamous book *The Prince*, which instructs political leaders how to maintain power through corruption and deviousness.”*

This last tirade is certainly out of the scope of my book *Crossing the Tiber*. But, let us remember that Mr. Bayack reads, as inspired Scripture, the writings of a man known to have denied Christ, to have been called “Satan”, to have cut off a man’s ear, and to have acted as a hypocrite in regards to the Gentiles. Yes, the man is St. Peter and although he had so many faults, sins, and shortcomings, Mr. Bayack treats Peter’s writings as infallible words of God. Amazing isn’t it? Yet, just because a Pope, a successor of the less than perfect St. Peter, fails to live up the highest moral standards (I wonder if Mr. Bayack is morally perfect) God can still use him, just like he can use Mr. Bayack.

No pope has claimed impeccability. Impeccability and infallibility are worlds apart as Mr. Bayack should be aware. Again we find an ex-Catholic (probably an altar boy at one time which offers proof that he is an expert) who left the Church before he ever really learned what the Church taught. The Pope’s infallibility is limited to very narrow confines. The instances when the Pope is infallible are clearly laid out and easy for anyone to read and understand anyone that is who has the least wish to be objective, fair, and a desire to avoid bearing false witness against brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Pope is not infallible when he discusses with friends who may win the Super Bowl. He is not infallible when he takes a trigonometry exam. His infallibility is limited and carefully defined something Mr. Bayack seems to have forgotten or ignored. The Pope goes to confession every week. Why? Because he’s perfect? Of course not, it is because he realizes he is a sinner like everyone else. But, just like the charism of God was upon the fallible apostles when they wrote infallible Scripture, so the charism of God is upon the Apostles successors when they interpret the Scriptures. There is no fundamental difference. If God can protect the writing, God can protect the interpretive teaching through the same Holy Spirit in order to maintain and protect the visible unity of the Church and orthodox teaching.

The Catholic Church maintains the visible unity of faith and spirit that prevailed in the early Church. Irenaeus is instructive on this point and he certainly exposes the weaknesses of Protestantism. He writes in 180 AD, “As I have already observed, the Church, having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it. She also believes these points of doctrine just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if

she possessed only one mouth. For, although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the import of the tradition is one and the same. For the churches in Germany do not believe or hand down anything different, not do those in Spain, not those in Gaul, not those in the East, nor those in Egypt, nor those in Libya, nor those which have been established in the central regions [Palestine] of the world” (*Against Heresies*, 1, 10, 2).

“And what about papal infallibility? Several times the popes have contradicted one another, such as Hadrian II (867-872), who declared civil marriages to be valid, and Pius VII (1800-1823), who declared them invalid. And Honorius I (625-638) was posthumously condemned as a heretic by Leo II (681-683) in 682 for promoting the related heresies monophysitism, which taught that Christ had only one nature, and monothelitism, which taught that Christ had only one will. The result of each heresy would in effect deny either His humanity or deity. Stephen Ray, as expected, cites none of these damaging embarrassments.”

First of all, none of these issues were within the scope of my book and I am not sure why Mr. Bayack is going off on a tangent here with things that have nothing to do with the text of my book or the issues involved in my conversion. My guess is that he has a burr under his saddle as he rides his favorite hobby horses. I am afraid these silly and often-responded-to objections have more to do with the chip on Mr. Bayack’s shoulder than with the text of my book. However, I will wait to deal with these issues until my *new* book comes out on the Primacy of Peter and the See of Rome. Suffice it to say at this point, these issues have been answered over and over again by the Catholic Church and it seems that the Fundamentalist Protestants are never able to hear or don’t want to hear the truth. It’s kind of like saying, “I have my mind made up, don’t confuse me with the facts.” With 263 Popes since Jesus, the clarity and consistency of their doctrine can only be a result of divine protection. Baptists can’t achieve that kind of unity and consistency for even a decade. I know, I have been a part of more than one church split.

The sins of Popes does nothing to invalidate the office of the Papacy. Peter was the first Pope and in many ways the weakest link of the two thousand year chain. Sins of Popes no more invalidates the Papacy than sins of Baptist pastors invalidate the pastorate. It is too bad that Protestants tend to judge Catholic practice based upon Protestant principle. It would be a good exercise for Protestants to judge their own practice based on Catholic principle.

“IV. Stephen Ray Selectively Quotes Evangelicals

“Stephen Ray selectively quotes many Evangelical scholars when they might seem to support his positions, especially regarding baptism. However, even though they may agree with him in limited ways, he ignores their other clear statements which reject salvation through the sacraments.”

I am surprised that Mr. Bayack says that I selectively quote Evangelicals who “might seem to support” my positions. I intentionally used Protestant commentators for several reasons. *First*, I have a whole library in my home (10,000 volumes), most of which are

Evangelical Protestant books. *Second*, Protestants have much good to say. *Third*, Protestant commentators support much of the Catholic teaching and I use them to prove that point. Evangelicals try to give the impression that they all believe the same thing, but it just isn't so. Evangelicals Francis Schaeffer and R.C. Sproul believe in Infant Baptism while my guess is that Mr. Bayack would consider that a pagan inclusion or a human tradition. So, which of the Evangelicals are right? Is theological truth relative? Of course Mr. Bayack will say, "Trust me! I have the true interpretation of the Bible!" Sproul would just smile and walk away from him. Schaeffer would be kind at first but then grow quickly impatient with the unhistorical and unbiblical "Baptist" *novum* and then grow irritated. I know that also, having spent a year in Switzerland studying at L Abri.

"For example, on page 109 he quotes The Bible Knowledge Commentary (ed. John F. Walvoord [Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1985]), under Zechariah 13:1 in support of baptism being pictured in the Old Testament. However, he ignores the same commentary's rejection of baptismal regeneration in 1 Corinthians 1:17."

The point of quoting Walvoord was to show that the passage in Zechariah alluded to Baptism. Period. I don't need to analyze and expound Walvoord's whole theology to show that he understands that Zechariah is alluding to Baptism. Maybe I'm missing something here, but I don't see the problem Mr. Bayack is trying to fabricate. Does he only quote authors that agree with him 100% time on 100% of the issues? And if he quotes an author who *doesn't* agree with him 100% of the time, does he add an appendix to explain each disparity? I think not.

"Another good example is how he quotes Reformed theologian Louis Berkhof's comments about the church fathers and baptismal regeneration on page 133: Baptism was foremost among the sacraments as the rite of initiation into the Church. Even in the Apostolic Fathers [those who lived during the lifetime of the apostles] we find the idea that it was instrumental in effecting the forgiveness of sins and in communicating the new life of regeneration. In a certain sense it may be said, therefore, that some of the early Fathers taught baptismal regeneration.

"But listen to Berkhof's own teaching which rejects the necessity of the sacraments for salvation: That they are not absolutely necessary unto salvation, follows: (1) from the free spiritual character of the gospel dispensation, in which God does not bind His grace to the use of certain external forms, John 4:21,23; Luke 18:14; (2) from the fact that Scripture mentions only faith as the instrumental condition of salvation, John 5:24; 6:29; 3:36; Acts 16:31; (3) from the fact that the sacraments do not originate faith but presuppose it, and are administered where faith is assumed, Acts 2:41; 16:14,15,30,33; 1 Cor. 11:23-32; and (4) from the fact that many were actually saved without the use of the sacraments." (Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1939], p. 618-19). Stephen Ray obviously does not wish to include this complete perspective of Berkhof's theology, just as he does not with every other Evangelical he quotes. (For a more detailed discussion of how "regeneration" did not stand for a sharply defined concept in the early church, as well as the

ambiguity between regeneration and justification , which can affect how one understands the church fathers, see Berkhof's Systematic Theology, p. 465-66.)”

Wait a minute Mr. Bayack. I was not relaying or presenting Mr. Berkhof's personal teaching on baptism. I was relating Mr. Berkhof's honest historical perspective of what the *primitive Church* taught. Remember that the book I was quoting was entitled *Early Christian Doctrine*, not “the doctrine of Berkhof.” I am quoting from *Early Christian Doctrine* which is Berkhof's study of the doctrinal teaching and development of doctrine in the first centuries. Mr. Bayack is quoting from Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*. I would appreciate it if you didn't mislead your readers to infer some nefarious intent on my part. Mr. Berkhof is at least honest with history and acknowledges that the early Church taught baptismal regeneration. That is all I said. If you and he want to reject the scriptural teaching and the consistent teaching of the Church from the very beginning and start a new theology of baptism, that is up to you. All I was doing was quoting Berkhof's historical statement about the belief and practice of the early Church. If you have an argument on this matter, take it up with him, not me.

Is Mr. Bayack aware, as he quotes Berkhof to support *his* views, that Berkhof disagrees with *him* on a major baptismal issue Infant Baptism? On page 632 of his *Dogmatic Theology*, which Mr. Bayack has just quoted from, Berkhof writes, “It is on the point of infant baptism that the most important difference is found between us and the Baptists.” As a “Bible church” pastor, Mr. Bayack fits the same category of Baptist on this point.

Isn't this interesting? Mr. Bayack just criticized me for quoting a source that did not agree with me on every point of theology and then he turns around and quotes Berkhof to support his perspective on Baptism and, lo and behold, he doesn't inform *his* readers that Berkhof contradicts him quite adamantly on Infant Baptism. Mr. Bayack quotes Berkhof even though he is adamantly in disagreement with him on an essential teaching on Baptism. Not only is this humorous, but I think this is instructive and not much more needs to be said on this point.

“And certainly one of the most blatant example of selective quoting “

Mr. Bayack's double standard is noticed and duly recorded.

“ is how he refers to A. Skevington Wood's comments about baptism in Ephesians 5:26. On page 126 he writes, Does this passage refer to baptism? Evangelical commentator A. Skevington Wood writes, “There seems to be little or no doubt that the reference is to baptism. The washing with water is equivalent to the washing of rebirth in Titus 3:5” (The Expositor's Biblical Commentary, ed. Frank Gaebelein [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1978], 11:77). Skevington then goes on to the disclaimer that this does not automatically a sacrament make, that no mere application of water can bring about new birth, to which the Catholic heartily agrees.

“But notice what Wood actually says: There seems to be little or no doubt that

the reference is to baptism. The “washing with water” here is equivalent to “the washing of rebirth” in Titus 3:5. There is, however, no hint of any mechanical view of the sacrament, as if the mere application of water could in itself bring about the purification it symbolizes. Nowhere does the NT countenance baptismal regeneration in an ex opere operato sense. (Expositor’s Biblical Commentary, 11:77, italics in original).”

I see no problem here. I was simply making the point that Skevington Wood agreed on the point that *Ephesians* and *Titus* referred to Baptism. Period. He and I may disagree with what the baptism does, but the point was that it refers to Baptism. You seem to be looking for a ghost where none exists and in the absence of a ghost you try to conjure one up.

“ Ex opere operato is a Latin phrase which translates from the work done . It means that grace is effected to the individual through the sacrament itself and not one’s faith. This is clearly seen in infant baptism where faith cannot be exercised on the part of the infant. As truly, therefore, as the spiritual rebirth of a man is caused principally by the Holy Ghost, so is it caused instrumentally by water and consequently, the water of Baptism exercises a causal effect on justification. (Joseph Pohle, The Sacraments: A Dogmatic Treatise, ed. Arthur Preuss [St. Louis: B. Herder, 1942], vol. 1, p. 126). The declaration of the sacraments working ex opere operato was officially made at the Council of Trent.

“Even though A. Skevington Wood believes that Ephesians 5:26 refers to water baptism, he clearly rejects any concept of baptismal regeneration. Wood’s statement the mere application of water is a reference to baptism, a baptism which does work “ex opere operato” to effect Catholic salvation, which is Stephen Ray’s very point throughout this section. His intentional deletion of this last sentence only reinforces his lack of objectivity.”

If Mr. Bayack recalls, if he really read the whole book, I never claimed that Wood believed in baptismal regeneration. I was not using Wood as a supporter of regenerative baptism, only that he stated that the passages in question referred to Baptism. Mr. Bayack makes a lot of noise about nothing on this point. He says I lack objectivity and yet I informed my readers that Wood agreed it was referring to baptism but then I added this: “Skevington then goes on to the disclaimer that this does not automatically a sacrament make, that no mere application of water can bring about new birth, to which the Catholic heartily agrees.” Remember Mr. Bayack? I am completely honest with my sources and my readers. I do not try to make Wood say anything he does not say; in fact, I explicitly mention that Wood disagrees with me on the point of baptismal regeneration. You are the one who is making a big deal out of nothing, making a ghost where none exists and you should read more carefully.

Regarding *ex opere operato*, it is typical of those attacking the Catholic Church and Her teaching to put things in their worst possible light. If the opponent were really acting in good faith they would try to provide the whole picture and not only one side putting the

issue in a way to make it appear nefarious.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes the sacraments and their *ex opere operato* power, not as the power of man, a priest, or the recipient. The power is of God. “Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify. They are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work: it is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies. The Father always hears the prayer of his Son’s Church which, in the *epiclesis* of each sacrament, expresses her faith in the power of the Spirit. As fire transforms into itself everything it touches, so the Holy Spirit transforms into the divine life whatever is subjected to his power” (CCC 1227).

“This is the meaning of the Church’s affirmation that the sacraments act *ex opere operato* (literally: by the very fact of the action’s being performed), i.e., by virtue of the saving work of Christ, accomplished once for all. It follows that the sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient, but by the power of God. From the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister. Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them” (CCC 1128).

“One cannot read this book without concluding that Stephen Ray genuinely believes what he is saying. His is typically gentle and unassuming. And he writes without the pejorative style so often found on both sides of this debate.

If I may personally address Mr. Bayack for a moment. After writing this response Mr. Bayack, I hope you still feel that way. I have no animosity toward you and I love you as a brother in Christ. But I also believe in honesty, fair play, and truth. When I see a violation of these virtues I find it necessary to say so. However, I am basically a very gentle and unassuming person and if you and I ever met in person, which I hope we can do some day, I would greet you in the name of our Lord and treat you with the love of Christ.

“But this should not detract from his content. Stephen Ray has put a tremendous effort into this book. And he is no stranger to conservative Evangelicalism, having participated extensively in Baptist, Evangelical Presbyterian, and Plymouth Brethren circles. His omissions and/or misrepresentations of these important issues cannot be anything less than deliberate. Therefore we conclude that his scholarship is not only selective; it is also deceptive.”

I think *your* misleading statements and innuendoes can be nothing but deliberate. I do not deliberately leave out anything germane to my conversion story. I am surprised that you took so little time to understand your Catholic faith, if indeed you were a Catholic. It is also sad that you can misrepresent the Church and her teaching with such lack of truth and concern for unity within the body of Christ. Again, you must remember the scope of my book and the limitation of pages that a publisher enforces. A writer is not able, nor should it be expected, that he broach every possible objection within the pages of his

book. Maybe that can be done in this forum.

“It is beyond the scope of this review

So, Mr. Bayack admits that some things are beyond the scope of a particular writing. Again his double standard is duly noted and recorded.

“ to address other important, but lesser, issues or to make thorough rebuttals for each of Ray’s points and his use of every verse of Scripture. However, this does represent an accurate assessment of Stephen Ray’s premises and approach throughout the book. Crossing the Tiber will be another welcome link of chain for those desiring to remain bound to the shackles of Roman Catholicism. But it need not be a stumbling block to those seeking freedom through the gospel of grace, as long as they understand the infallibility and authority of Scripture alone.

I had only this one evening to respond to Mr. Bayack’s critique. I wish I could have taken more time to deal with it thoroughly, but as Chesterton said, “Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly.” It is better, I guess, to address this critique quickly and without the substance I d like have provided, than to let it sit out there unresponded to. My first reaction was to just ignore this tripe, but tonight I had a few hours so I responded quickly and without the “steam” I wish I could have put into it.

We teach our children at home, run a business of 500 employees, teach several Bible studies, write, etc. Time is not a commodity I have an excess of. I must use it well and keep my priorities straight since I will someday give an account before God.

“Stephen Ray himself provides the basis for a fitting conclusion to this review. On page 191 he quotes John Henry Cardinal Newman who said, To be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant. If to be deep in history is to cease being a Protestant, then to be deep in the word of God is to cease being a Catholic.”

Funny that Mr. Bayack says that. It was *precisely* my love of the Bible and the thousands of hours I spent reading, studying, and teaching it that brought me into the Catholic Church. Eight families in our old Baptist church alone have joined the Catholic Church. One of them, Dave Armstrong (you may enjoy his web page [Biblical Evidence for Catholicism](#)) is an able defender of the Catholic faith. Another is Al Kresta, both of whose stories are written in Patrick Madrid’s *Surprised by Truth*, the story of eleven Evangelical Protestants who recently converted to the Catholic Church. They are only the tip of a huge iceberg Praise God!

But back to my main point. As Protestants are exposed to history and to the Bible, the brightest ones are joining the Catholic Church. I have sponsored families into the Church every Easter since our conversion. My younger brother, who was in the Church of Christ, and his ex-Catholic wife are being received into the Catholic Church this Easter with their three children. We have several families a month convert *right in our living room!* To understand and love the Bible is to eventually become Catholic. To be deep in the

Bible is to understand the need for the visible unity of the Church, the meaning of the Eucharist and regenerative Baptism. To be deep in the Bible is to understand the Church is a kingdom and not a democracy, that it is a visible unity and not fragmented, competing denominations claiming an invisible unity as they tear at each other and steal the other's "sheep". To be deep in the Bible is to understand and to become Catholic.

"Stephen Ray and those of his persuasion would do well to heed the words of the one whom they regard as the first pope when he spoke infallibly in 2 Peter 3:16 about the writings of Paul, "in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction."

I stand in the line of two thousand years of historical Christianity. I am a member of the Church that discerned, collected, and canonized the New Testament, the Church that defined the Trinity and deity of Christ. I am overwhelmingly proud and happy to be a Catholic. I have seen the fruit of mercy, joy, holiness, and love abound in my own life and the life of my family and friends as a result of our conversion. Even my longtime Baptist father has admitted that he knows I am right.

Mr. Bayack, if even one of the apostles of Jesus says that some of Paul's writings are hard to understand, what makes you think that you are a competent interpreter? Even Luther was dismayed at the end of his life with the confusion that was caused by *sola Scriptura* spiritual anarchy. I find it sad to see people like you trying to figure things out for themselves and ending up in a quagmire of confusion, factions, and arrogance. I appreciate Jeffrey Russell's quote in his book *Dissent and Order in the Middle Ages*. He writes, "The radicals [Protestants] were also split by the incoherence of their own teaching that proclaimed individual reading of the Scriptures as the highest authority, and at the same time imposed their view as correct."

Mr. Bayack promotes the right of the individual believer to interpret the Bible for himself, yet when I come up with a valid interpretation, one that is held by over one billion people and has been consistently held for over two thousand years, you effectively reject *my* freedom of interpretation by telling me I am wrong that only you are right!

I stand in the line of continuity with the Apostles, the Apostolic Fathers, the Church Fathers, the Saints, the Confessors, the Martyrs, and all the faithful of the Catholic Church. I am a Roman Catholic and an ex-Evangelical. I gave up nothing to be a Catholic but had my Evangelicalism enhanced by the riches of the Catholic heritage. The flood of new Protestant converts into the Catholic Church represents the best and brightest of Evangelicals and Fundamentalists. I invite you, in the love of Christ, to join us.

I will close with two quotations from my book *Crossing the Tiber*, "I am not the first to cross the Tiber, I won't be the last I am in good company." The second is a quote from my daughter who is now at the Franciscan University of Steubenville in Austria working on her Master's degree in Philosophy and her Bachelors in Theology. "Dad", she said, "joining the Catholic Church was the best thing our family has ever done." Thank you

Lord Jesus, we are truly and humbly grateful.”

Endnotes:

1. “The Reformers had sought to disengage the Bible from traditional authorities. As philological and historical study gained momentum in the succeeding centuries, this legacy of the Reformation was to have unintended consequences. In their appeal to Scripture over and against tradition, the Reformers had not, of course, dispensed with tradition. The very claim, however, that only Scripture was authoritative (Latin *sola Scriptura*) fostered the idea that the Bible could be interpreted solely in relation to itself “Scripture interprets Scripture.” In time the Bible lost its context within Christian tradition and came to be viewed, paradoxically, as alien to the very tradition that had cherished it” (*Harper’s Bible Dictionary*).

Questions for “Bible Christians”

Where did Jesus give instructions that the Christian faith should be based exclusively on a book?

Where did Jesus tell His apostles to write anything down?

Where in the New Testament do the apostles tell future generations that the Christian faith will be based on a book?

Protestants claim that Jesus categorically condemned all oral tradition (Matt 15:3, 6; Mark 7:8-13). If so, why does He bind His listeners to oral tradition by telling them to obey the scribes and Pharisees when they “sit on Moses’ seat” (Matt 23:2)?

Protestants claim that St. Paul categorically condemned all oral tradition (Col 2:8). If so, why does he tell the Thessalonians to “stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter” (2 Thes 2:15) and praises the Corinthians because they “hold firmly to the traditions” (1 Cor 11:2)?

If the authors of the New Testament believed in sola Scriptura, why did they draw on oral Tradition as authoritative and as God’s Word (Matt 2:23; 23:2; 1 Cor 10:4; 1 Pet 3:19; Jude 9, 14 15)?

Where in the Bible is God’s Word restricted only to what is written down?

How do we know who wrote the books that we call Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Hebrews, and 1, 2, and 3 John?

On what authority, or on what principle, would we accept as Scripture books that we know were not written by one of the twelve apostles?

Where in the Bible do we find an inspired and infallible list of books that should belong in the Bible?

How do we know, from the Bible alone, that the individual books of the New Testament are inspired, even when they make no claim to be inspired?

How do we know, from the Bible alone, that the letters of St. Paul, who wrote to first-century congregations and individuals, are meant to be read by us 2000 years later as Scripture?

Where does the Bible claim to be the sole authority for Christians in matters of faith and morals?

Most of the books of the New Testament were written to address very specific problems in the early Church, and none of them are a systematic presentation of Christian faith and theology. On what biblical basis do Protestants think that everything that the apostles taught is captured in the New Testament writings?

If the books of the New Testament are “self-authenticating”, then why was there confusion in the early Church over which books were inspired, with some books being rejected by the majority?

If the meaning of the Bible is so clear, and easy to interpret, and if the Holy Spirit leads every Christian to interpret it rightly, then why are there over 23,000 Protestant denominations, and millions of individual Protestants interpreting the Bible differently?

Who may authoritatively arbitrate between Christians who claim to be led by the Holy Spirit into mutually contradictory interpretations of the Bible?

Since each Protestant must admit that his or her interpretation is fallible, how can any Protestant in good conscience call anything heresy or bind another Christian to a particular belief?

Protestants usually claim that they all agree “on the important things.” Who is able to decide authoritatively what is important in the Christian faith and what is not?

How did the early Church evangelize and overthrow the Roman Empire, survive and prosper almost 350 years, without knowing for sure which books belong in the canon of Scripture?

Who in the Church had the authority to determine which books belonged in the New Testament canon and to make this decision binding on all Christians? If nobody has this authority, then can I remove or add books to the canon on my own authority?

Why do Protestant scholars recognize the early Church councils at Hippo and Carthage as the first instances in which the New Testament canon was officially ratified, but ignore

the fact that those same councils ratified the Old Testament canon used by the Catholic Church today but abandoned by Protestants at the Reformation?

Why do Protestants follow post-apostolic Jewish decisions on the boundaries of the Old Testament canon, rather than the decision of the Church founded by Jesus Christ?

How were the bishops at Hippo and Carthage able to determine the correct canon of Scripture, in spite of the fact that they believed all the distinctively Catholic doctrines such as the apostolic succession of bishops, the sacrifice of the Mass, Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist, baptismal regeneration, etc?

If Christianity is a "book religion," how did it flourish during the first 1500 years of Church history when the vast majority of people were illiterate?

How could the Apostle Thomas establish the church in India that survives to this day (and is now in communion with the Catholic Church) without leaving them with one word of New Testament Scripture?

If *sola Scriptura* is so solid and biblically based, why has there never been a full treatise written in its defense since the phrase was coined in the Reformation?

If Jesus intended for Christianity to be exclusively a "religion of the book," why did He wait 1400 years before showing somebody how to build a printing press?

If the early Church believed in *sola Scriptura*, why do the creeds of the early Church always say "we believe in the Holy Catholic Church," and not "we believe in the "Bible alone"?"

Did Jesus intend to leave us a living Church (1 Tim 3:15) or simply a library?