

**Pastor Bayack Strikes Again**  
**(Parts I and II: The “Personal and the Petty”)**  
Steve Responds to Pastor Bayack’s Second Critique

(Editors Note: I contacted Mr. Bayack after he staggered from this second response. I offered to remove my articles responding to Mr. Bayack if he would remove his as well. So far he has not agreed to do so. He wanted to radically edit both of our sets of critiques and responses. I have suggested the following position options: 1) removing them all, or 2) leaving them all as they are and finishing up the next response which I am currently working on. Stay tuned! By the way, Mr. Bayack and I have had very cordial and friendly e-mail conversations. I’ve asked if I can visit him and his congregation sometime in the future. He didn’t refuse me.)

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“ ‘When I was quite a young boy,’ said Uriah Heep, ‘I got to know what humbleness did, and I took to it. I ate Humble pie with an appetite. I stopped at the humble point of my learning, and says I, “Hold hard!” When you offered to teach me Latin, I knew better. “People like to be above you,” says father, “keep yourself down.” I am very humble to the present moment, Master Copperfield, but I’ve got a little power!’

*David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens  
Chris Bayack or Uriah Heep? Hum!

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Unhappily, I am again put in the position of correcting a man whom I would rather be friends with. Standing at odds with a fellow believer is certainly not my favorite way to spend a Saturday morning. When truth is at stake and confusion and pride have been blown my way, it seems wise to clear the air once again and blow the smoke out of everyone’s eyes. Plus, with all sincerity it should be noted that *I* did not initiate this increasingly hostile exchange; Mr. Bayack must take the credit for that with his initial and, as I still maintain, “weak and feeble” critique of my book. Plus, he must now take the credit for turning up the temperature! He claims *I* responded with personal attacks, but my goodness, what does he call his first unprovoked salvo and this his second which has blasted from *his* computer, not mine!

I have nothing personal against Mr. Bayack personally; in fact, when he visits my website and when we’ve corresponded in the past by e-mail I have always been cordial and welcoming. I rather like him. On his website he has a kindly face and a nice family-kind of like the guy you’d like living next door (as long as he doesn’t have dogs that bark all night). However, responding to the whack on the back I received today on [www.pro-gospel.org](http://www.pro-gospel.org) is quite another thing. I don’t much mind people criticizing me; I’m usually tougher on myself than Mr. Bayack will ever be, but when someone slanders my books it is like kicking one of my kids and I usually don’t stand by “gentle and unassuming” when someone is pounding on my children.

Why respond to this second weak and nasty criticism? I have a day or two to relax before our next outing and project in California so I will begin a series of responses, not so much for Mr. Bayack's sake, for he's in pretty deep and unlikely to extricate himself (though hundreds and thousands of Protestant pastors *are* doing just that; check out the *Coming Home Network* which now exceeds 9,000 members at <http://www.chnetwork.org>). But I will write mainly for the sake of the many observers to this conversation who may have someone like Mr. Bayack in their lives and who will learn more about the faith from reading such a correspondence. Plus, I will certainly take a homerun swing if Mr. Bayack wants to toss me such a home run pitch, as he has here.

The words of our Lord Jesus prove true again. He said, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned" (Lk 6:37). Here again Mr. Bayack finds himself under the microscope because he decided to pick up his pen and judge me, to condemn me. I never wrote to him or poked at him; I didn't even know of him until he set up his throne and decided to become my judge. Now he finds himself embroiled in a mess. "Judge not and ye shall not be judged"; the opposite is also true, set yourself up as a judge and you become the victim of your own words and standards. The less than sympathetic spotlight then swings in your direction.

We seem to be dealing here with a very 'umble man. We will notice how truly 'umble Mr. Bayack is as we move through this piece. He reminded me of Uriah Heep in Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*. It shouldn't surprise "Uriah Heep Bayack" that I am responding again to correct his sarcastic article and false 'umbleness, but I think it is the right thing to do. He *obviously* took great umbrage at my response to his *first* salvo and now he rears up and has again written a long-winded and self-congratulating article praising himself for being ever so 'umble, criticizing me and my sincere faith in Christ and love of his Catholic Church—all because it differs from Mr. Bayack's private interpretation of Scripture. But, let's look at what he has to say.

*In my review of Stephen Ray's book *Crossing the Tiber*, I stated that his writing style was typically gentle, unassuming, and without the pejoratives so often found on both sides of Catholic/Protestant debates. Unfortunately, I cannot say the same about his critique of my review posted at <http://www.catholic-convert.com/Portals/57ad7180-c5e7-49f5-b282-c6475cdb7ee7/Documents/Bayack1.doc>, which is Mr. Ray's personal website. In this critique, he finds it necessary to resort to numerous ad hominem attacks, calling into question not only my analytical ability but also my personal veracity and morality.*

Nor can I say the same about this surprisingly personal outburst by a man who has struck me as being sedate and reserved. And is Mr. Bayack's opinion that I got too personal, justification for him picking up his gun and shooting both barrels? Let the nonpartisan reader analyze this latest blast of his and see if he doesn't far excel at personal attacks, *ad hominem*-beyond *anything* I said. Sounds to me like a wounded, cornered dog. He shot first and is offended that I put up a defensive shield by responding at the time with my honest thoughts. Then this quiet, self-effacing and 'umble Bible pastor, full of

professional credentials ducks behind the anti-Catholic website and fires off another salvo, both barrels.

So, here I sit with buckshot flying around my head. What to do? Let's continue...

My words are normal text and in black, *Chris' words are in blue italics and intended.*

*I have neither the time nor need to address each point he makes. My intention is to comment representatively on his article, just as I did on his book, and to do so I will focus on the personal attacks leveled against me, the petty issues that he raises, and the pertinent issues of substance. I list the page numbers of his critique in parentheses as they printed out on my computer.*

I am going to follow his interesting format of “p” words: Personal, Petty and Pertinent. My first “chapter” will deal with the first two, the Pertinent chapters will deal with 1) Tradition, 2) The Ever-Virginity of the Blessed Virgin, and 3) The Bible and the Catholic Church. Since this is certainly not a priority of mine the last few sections will be added as time permits. So, let's begin. Oh by the way, don't pay too much attention to spelling and grammar here since they are not my gifts (as I will comment on later) and my editors are off today (smile), but at least I got Mr. Bayack's name right.

### **The Personal**

*Stephen Ray's opinion of my review is reflected in his sub-title, “A Simple Response to an Anti-Catholic Review of my book”, as well as his opening paragraph where he calls it “feeble and naïve”. Apparently he is only responding in kind to that which my review merits, simple as it is.*

I continue to recognize his article as “feeble and naïve”. No apologies for saying what seems obvious to me. Chris's merits, I am sure, far exceed my description of his “feeble and naïve” review of my book, and that is why his article disappointed me. I give him more credit. Hopefully he will do better here.

*This is the first of many things that he raises about me and it is one that I prefer he had left alone for now I am compelled to admit a somewhat embarrassing truth which is all too obvious to him—yes, I am among the simple-minded.*

No comment.

*Mr. Ray treats me as if I single-handedly took the “mental” out of “Fundamental” and as I read his writings, I must humbly concede that he is a man whose earthly, natural, worldly wisdom will always eclipse mine.*

Now do we detect a bit of fleshly pride, self-preservation and sarcasm here? He criticizes me for *ad hominem* comments and here he spews them with willful abandon. Huh? Is this a case of noticing the splinter in his brother's eye while ignoring the beam in his own?

Interesting how, when one sets themselves up as judge (as he does here and as he initially did with my book), that the fire comes right back in their face. Unfortunate, ironic, but true. He does what he criticizes me for doing and you have only seen the tip of the iceberg.

I would not say Mr. Bayack took “mental” out of Fundamentalist single-handedly. My study of the last century seems to indicate he had a lot of help. He certainly continues the tradition though, if this is the best he has to offer.

As to my earthly wisdom, am I to conclude this is something contrary to the life of Christ? Is earthly wisdom bad? Jesus criticized Nicodemus because he *didn't* understand earthly things-he didn't have earthly wisdom. Seems Jesus says that “If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? (Jn 3:12). Seems certainly earthly knowledge precedes spiritual knowledge. I have to learn the earthly, worldly skill of reading before I can digest the *Gospel of John* for myself from the written word. I have to learn the earthly, worldly wisdom of arithmetic if I am to calculate my tithe for Mr. Bayack's offering plate each Sunday.

Jesus told his listeners at Tabga on the shore of Galilee that they were to look at the earth and earthly things and learn. Look at the lilies, the birds, the grass-learn from these things. Earthly knowledge is not wrong in and of itself; in fact, that is why we all learn arithmetic, science, and why we take driving lessons. I assume it is why Mr. Bayack teaches his kids how to balance a checkbook and that he may contribute to the American Bible Society to translate the Bible into earthly languages. I think he is a little confused here about earthly wisdom.

But, is my writing full of “worldly wisdom” in the sense of sinful, godless prose? Anyone who has read them knows better. Worldly knowledge, if such is the implications of Mr. Bayack, is that which denies God and puts the world first with its wealth, sin and pleasures. 1 John 2 defines the world and its wisdom thusly, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.” I have had very few summarize my books or life with those words. Only Mr. Bayack who doesn't personally know me feels qualified to make such a judgment.

Such worldly things find no place in my books. Sorry Mr. Bayack, false humility and unjust judgments will get you nowhere.

*His comments “the brightest minds in Christendom have always been Catholic” (4), “As Protestants are exposed to history and to the Bible, the brightest ones are joining the Catholic Church” (25) and “The flood of new Protestant converts into the Catholic Church represents the best and brightest of Evangelicals and Fundamentalists” (26) only expose how dim I am, especially since I left the Catholic Church. Stephen Ray may boast of being among the best and brightest, but it is humbling indeed to realize that I am not.*

Not necessarily dim, maybe just misled. Bright people can be misled. But, let's get this "best and brightest" thing taken care of first. Again, had Mr. Bayack read the context as it seems he often fails to do, he would have seen that I was *not* referring to myself, but to many others with credentials much more impressive than mine (I on the other hand have graduated from the School of Hard Knocks and my only degrees are the one's I get with a fever). I did not claim to be the best of the brightest. I only claim to have joined those who are men and women better and brighter than myself. You may want to apologize for putting words in my mouth.

I was simply referring to a fact of our current times. Evangelical writer Kim Riddlebarger informs his fellow Evangelicals that "While evangelicalism is growing numerically, apparently there are not as many notable Roman Catholics becoming evangelicals as vice-versa" (*Roman Catholicism*, ed. John Armstrong [Chicago: Moody Press, 1994], 240). Men like Mr. Bayack realize this, or should, and are frustrated with the bleeding since so many of the brightest, excuse me, "notable" Evangelical Protestants are jumping ship and joining the Catholic Church. I was just paraphrasing one of Mr. Bayack's Evangelical compatriots and sharing my own experience. I apologize for not providing the full quote and citation. Now you have it.

*God did not save me because of anything praiseworthy within myself. He did not save me because I possess great wisdom, intellect or talent nor for any other reason in which men may boast. He is not fortunate to have me on His side. He did not save me because I am strong; on the contrary, the more I grow in Christ, the more obvious it becomes that God saved me as the weakest of vessels through whom He could manifest His strength. It is sobering to realize that I offer Him nothing and He offers me everything yet I also glory in the fact that God has chosen me as one of the "foolish things of the world to shame the wise" (1 Corinthians 1:27). My boast is all of Him and none of me!*

Amen brother! This is good Catholic teaching and my testimony as well and I couldn't have said it better myself. Eloquence did not abandon you here. Seems like we are in full agreement on this.

*The Lord knew what I needed to deal with my innate dullness and I was privileged to attend excellent secular and religious schools. As an undergraduate I attended the U. S. Naval Academy and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering. For the ministry I studied at The Master's Seminary ([www.tms.edu](http://www.tms.edu)) and graduated with a Master of Divinity. And my education continues to improve as I study in the only infallible classroom there is, the Word of God.*

Congratulations to our critic. I'm sure Uriah Heep couldn't have said it better himself. Such public self-adulation under the guise of humility is very moving. I on the other hand had no such educational privileges and spent my teenage years studying the Bible and evangelizing which nearly caused me fail high school. After that I started [Distinctive Maintenance](#), my company. I also failed to serve in the military. We are quite different

here Mr. Bayack, but fortunately we both learned to read and write—such acquisition of earthly wisdom is good. It enables us to write back and forth to one another. And it seems from his first and second shotgun-blast-criticisms, that his military training taught him well to shoot first. It seems he learned how to shoot at your enemies better than I did.

*Since Stephen Ray raises several other personal issues about me, I probably ought to begin with my heritage, especially since he implies that I am lying about my Catholic background when he states, “Mr. Bayack, who claims to be an ex-Catholic” (9), “an alleged ex-Catholic like Mr. Bayack” (16), and “if indeed you were a Catholic” (24). (By the way, where did I ever question his background? On the contrary, I took his testimony at face value and even affirmed that he was no stranger to conservative Evangelicalism.)*

I would suggest that Mr. Bayack took my testimony at face value because it was an adult conversion detailed by an adult in a book, not a story of myself emerging from adolescence. I did not know Mr. Bayack when I wrote my first response to him. He did not write a book nor did he introduce himself to me before barraging me with his less than charitable first criticism. I have many, many people who write and say they were solid, well-trained Catholics, *even altar boys*, who left the Church which they allegedly fully understood and knew. A few choice questions usually put the lie to their claim. I have learned to take such “testimonies” with a grain of salt—as I did our critic’s.

I have yet to meet an “ex-Catholic” who left the Church fully aware and informed of her teachings. I am told there are such folks, though I suspect many left for moral not theological reasons, but I have yet to meet them. I have learned (later in the current webpage by Mr. Bayack) that Mr. Bayack was only 17 when he left the Church. I didn’t even start to think rationally until about seventeen yet we are to believe that by that time Mr. Bayack had a thorough working knowledge and intellectual grasp of the Faith, Church history, the Bible and earthly wisdom. If so, he was an unusual teenager. I will not doubt that possibility. But, when I first responded to Mr. Bayack I had no idea what he knew as a child or his testimony so I played cautious and said “alleged”—quite reasonable in my opinion. How many people think they are experts on Catholicism simply because they used to be an altar boy?

Though I appreciate finally learning a bit about Mr. Bayack’s past as a child Catholic who left the Church, I am not going to provide his whole testimony here. You can read it at the Proclaiming the Gospel site. It is not relevant to the discussion other than to prove he was raised Catholic and left probably too early to really know the faith in all its beauty and fullness. I was raised Evangelical and know what a seventeen year old knows about the faith. Out of five kids in our family, three left Christianity altogether because of abuses and problems in our local Bible churches. My older brother was solicited in the church restroom by the Baptist deacon and ran away never to come back. He tells his “testimony” but from the other side: “I was a faithful Baptist, accepted Christ as my savior but realized early on that this could not be the true church because of my unfortunate experience and flawed instructions.” So much for Mr. Bayack’s story, though I find it interesting and somewhat irrelevant here. He then goes on to preach a short

Gospel message which I will also pass over since you can see that on his site.

But I *will* comment on one aspect of his testimony: He states:

*I remember crying myself to sleep as a seven-year old because I feared that I had committed a mortal sin by breaking the one-hour communion fasting rule and was too ashamed to confess it to a priest, being convinced that I was going to hell. I remember leaving the confessional on one occasion and somewhat hoping that I might get hit by a car before I could possibly commit a mortal sin. I remember keeping my spiritual fingers crossed in the hope that whenever I died I would be in the state of Sanctifying Grace.*

It was too bad someone didn't give him the fundamental teaching on mortal sin. It would have eased his anxiety had he known the three essential elements of a mortal sin (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 1857). Shame on his catechists. His comments about leaving the confessional and desiring to get hit by a car to avoid sins demonstrates how poorly catechized Little Chris actually was. Martin Luther had a similar spiritual disease called *scrupulosity*, which often plagues those with emotional problems, uninformed consciences, and poor catechesis, not understanding the teaching of the church and the Gospel of grace.

Such conditions require patient pastoral assistance, proper instruction or even counseling. To accept a truncated Gospel is not the answer. Too bad his poor catechesis caused him to throw the baby out with the bathwater-too bad my brother did too. Interestingly I knew people like this in my Fundamentalist church. My siblings jettisoned the Christian faith when hurt and misled by our family's Fundamentalist Bible Church from the 1950's through the 1970's. Would Mr. Bayack consider it correct for my siblings to throw over a "gospel" like he holds simply because they were offended and poorly catechized? Such reasoning is frivolous and I would have expected better of him. Truth is at stake here not what adolescent kids think or don't think about truth.

He says he was overcome by worldliness (at 16?) and did not get victory until he found the true Gospel at seventeen years old. Countless of us converts to the Catholic faith from the truncated gospel of Mr. Bayack, have had more victory over temptation, sin, the world, and the devil since becoming Catholics and availing ourselves of the Sacraments than we ever experienced as fervent Protestants. Is there spiritual life and reality in the Church and the Sacraments? Thousands of us who lived our first decades without them and now discovered them will testify with a resounding "Yes".

For those who take the time to read his testimony, you will notice his misunderstanding of Catholic teaching on salvation and righteousness. He refers to salvation as not being a righteousness of his own, which any catechized Catholic knows is not the means of initial justification. We have nothing we can bring to God which obligates him to save us. We are all in sin and without hope. It is by grace alone that we acquire the merits of Christ which are fully sufficient for our salvation. But we also know that our *actual* holiness and righteousness, not just forgiveness of sins, is quite vital as the writer of Hebrews (12:14)

says, “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.” Such sanctification is usually taught as optional-forgiveness of sins is all that counts. That is why a Pentecostal friend of mine was convinced that Baptists and “Bible Christians” were going to hell—they didn’t understand the need to become inwardly holy.

Interestingly enough, I and many hundreds of converts from Evangelicalism to Catholicism say the same kind of things as Mr. Bayack does about his finding of Fundamentalism. Finding the fullness of the faith, the sacraments, etc. was so emotional, so fulfilling, so spiritual, with a full confirmation of the Spirit of God witnessing with our spirit that it has been an overwhelmingly profound biblical and spiritual experience. It was like knowing Jesus and then being invited home to meet his family. I was as excited to find the Church (the Body of Christ on earth), as I had been earlier to find Jesus the Person. My book conversion story ([Crossing the Tiber](#)), and the stories of other converts (especially [Surprised by Truth](#)), relay our reasons and the leading of God in our lives, and the intent *here* is not to have “dueling testimonies” but to demonstrate that the situation is much broader than Mr. Bayack is used to experiencing.

After the rest of his testimony we continue

*. . . Such is a candid and truthful testimony of my journey from Catholicism to salvation. However, my heritage is not the only issue where Stephen Ray suggests that I am a liar. Numerous times he questions whether or not I read his book with statements like, “If Mr. Bayack had read the Preface” (3), “Sometimes I wonder if people don’t just skim the book looking for proof texts to argue against” (4), “I question whether Mr. Bayack really read the whole thing or just used the ‘hunt and peck’ method to look for objections” (12), “Mr. Bayack appears not to have read what I wrote” (14), “if he really read the book” (14), and “if he really read the whole book” (23).*

It appears from his first sentence above that Mr. Bayack thinks that “Catholicism” and “salvation” are mutually exclusive. Again we wonder if Mr. Bayack thinks that no one was “saved” from the time of the Fathers until the emergence of Martin Luther over a thousand years later. Geisler, Stott, McGrath and others understand that the gospel as understood by Mr. Bayack is a theological *novum* and that it was a development not emerging until the time of the Reformation. Interesting historical point.

If Mr. Bayack did not read my book prior to reviewing it he would not be the first. His feeble critique lended itself to my opinion he had not read it. I cannot be criticized for doubting that he read the whole thing. If he did as he claims, I apologize for questioning him on the matter.

*I feel a bit chagrined to have to defend myself against these implications. I graduated from an institution well-known for its Honor Code and those who know me know that I am anything but a liar. Once again, Mr. Ray, I am telling the truth. I read your book—holding my nose with every page—and have several pages of notes to prove it. How else would I know things like your involvement in*



*the Plymouth Brethren assemblies? I made that conclusion because I read the footnote on page 75 which states that your fellowship had been influenced by men like William MacDonald and the one on page 62 that you were married in a "New Testament Assembly". If my review is so easy to refute, then why is it necessary to make these insinuations?*

Holding your nose Mr. Bayack? Now are these kind words? Would you consider this an objective comment, sticking with the issues or a kick below the belt, an *ad hominem* comment which you seem to feel are out of order. If you judge others for such pettiness, shouldn't you avoid it yourself? Yet I find your whole response here replete with insulting and condescending statements. Remember, judge not lest you be judged. *Holding your nose!* I can just see it now (I imagine it with a clothes pin; am I right?) and for one who has claimed to hold the high ground morally in this ongoing discussion, this makes me chuckle.

Now, if you tell me you honestly read my book, I will believe you. But, on the same hand, knowing a few items from footnotes does not *prove* you read it. It could just as well mean you skimmed it for "pertinent passages". But I will trust you if you say you read it. I trust you are an honest man, but I'm not sure I really believe that you were reading it fairly and honestly-objectively. Holding your nose is something I can believe since you were educated in an institution with a high Honor Code.

And one more question as long as we are talking about holding your nose. You comment "I read your book—holding my nose with every page". Mr. Bayack, are you admitting here that you started my book with a severe bias and didn't read it objectively or fairly? I could understand if you got halfway through and disagreed so strongly that you started putting that clothes pin on your nose, but if you started doing so with the first page, your claim to having read it honestly and fairly seems to be a lie. Well Mr. Bayack, what's the truth here? Oh, just a figure of speech you say! But it still belies your agenda from the first page. I understand, it hit a nerve with you like it has a lot of others.

*These are not the only times where Stephen Ray calls into question my character.*

Mr. Bayack, it seems you called your *own* character into question, and you're doing it again here. Wake up!

*In my comments about Pope Alexander VI being the most morally corrupt pope in history, Mr. Ray remarks, "I wonder if Mr. Bayack is morally perfect" (19). Well once again, I've been cornered. He has exposed another embarrassing area of my life and I must confess, I am not. Stephen Ray knows very well that Scripture teaches there is only One who is perfect and sinless, only One who is "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26). However, since Mr. Ray found it necessary to question my morality, I have no choice but to testify of the power of God in my life.*

My point exactly Mr. Bayack. Again, you left the Church as a youngerster before

understanding the teaching of infallibility, which was what the topic here was in context. I was not questioning your morality but making a simple point, one's moral failings do not mean they cannot speak or teach what is true. Paul, John, Peter, James and the others were sinners yet God superintended to insure the infallibility of their writings. Your comment about Pope Alexander VI or any other pope and their moral shortcomings only proves that they are sinful humans. So, what was your point? So a pope is a sinner, what does that have to do with Catholic teaching or the doctrine of infallibility? Your assertion here proves again that you left the Church before you ever understood the teaching of the Church, especially on infallibility, and don't understand it still. The doctrine of infallibility is not a guarantee of impeccability and sinlessness-our current Pope goes to confession every week. I have seen some pretty lousy and sinful Baptist pastors; in fact, one in our area was caught and arrested for having video cameras set up in the women's restroom of the church. Are we to assume then that their sinfulness invalidates your Baptist theology?

*I came to know Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior when I was seventeen. In the sovereignty of God, I did not get married until I was less than a month away from turning thirty-three. My single years involved a lot of struggle, especially considering that I spent nearly a decade in the Navy. However, the keeping power of God kept me a virgin until I married and also gave me the self-control to give my wife our first kiss on our wedding day. I still remain completely dependent on that same grace and keeping power every day. I do not say this to condemn anyone nor to boast at all in myself but only to say that my rigid Catholic morality would never have been able to withstand the onslaught of the flesh had I not been saved in my youth. I have truly been able to see that "The things impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27).*

I commend Mr. Bayack for his virginity. It is a great thing. He is to be commended and our Lord praised. I have nothing but admiration. However, it was conversion into the Catholic faith has enabled me and many of my fellow converts to have victory over temptation and sin. The sacraments have been marvelous and effective means of God's grace. We are elated! Never did I suggest though, that "rigid Catholic morality" is in and of itself sufficient without again understanding the grace of God and the work of the Spirit. Again, shame on Mr. Bayack's catechists and shame on him *now* for not representing the Catholic doctrine accurately. We will see this especially in the next installments of our response.

*As if this is not enough, Stephen Ray sees fit to denigrate my present calling as the pastor of an independent Bible Church. He refuses to call me "Pastor" or "Reverend" since I am supposedly a layman and have "no claim to apostolic succession or true ordination other than the vote of a group of people within his non-denominational denomination" (2). Throughout his critique, he refers to me either by my given name or simply "Mr. Bayack".*

I didn't denigrate your present calling Mr. Bayack. Denigrate is a strong word. You are not *my* pastor so I don't call you "Pastor". If you had a legitimate Ph.D. after your name,

I would not hesitate to call you “Doctor” but a vote of a small congregation to hire you as their “shepherd” does not obligate me to address you as “pastor” any more than the appointment of a Mormon “bishop” in their Mormon Temple obligates me to call him “bishop”. But, if you recall, I did refer to you as “pastor” on several occasions when you visited my website and when we corresponded privately through e-mail, to show respect and kindness, so you may want to correct your statement. I am the president of my company, but I don’t find you referring to me as President Ray. Calling you “pastor” is the prerogative of your flock, just as calling me “president” is the prerogative of my employees. I actually think your objection here is a little petty. This might fit better later on in the “petty section”. What do you think? By the way, you *are* correct about the Apostolic Succession.

*I am actually quite pleased that Stephen Ray refers to me this way since it is exactly how I asked the congregation at Copperfield Bible Church to address me ever since coming here in October 1994. At our church, I am not known as “Pastor Chris” or “Reverend Bayack”. The adults call me by my first name and the children address me as they would any other adult.*

*Jesus clearly condemned the use of religious titles in Matthew 23:8-9, especially the title “father”. The earthly priesthood has been fulfilled and all believers have direct access to God through the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ. Since all true believers enjoy an equal position before God, the only appropriate designation is “brother” as the key to understanding Jesus’ words is found in verse 8, “and you are all brothers”. I gladly forego all titles that I may emphasize the common standing I share with all brothers in Christ.*

Very egalitarian of you, Mr. Bayack. But it also demonstrates a very poor understanding of the priesthood and the nature of Christ’s position as High Priest. His position as High Priest no more negates a ministerial priesthood than Aaron’s High Priesthood negated the Levitical ministerial priesthood. In fact, many of the early Fathers referred to the priests as the “Levites” of the new covenant. Again we see Mr. Bayack leaving the faith of his childhood and the historic Christian Church while still a child, because he didn’t have a clue what it taught in its fullness. Should the reader want to understand the priesthood, you may want to get the debate series on the priesthood between James Akin and Anthony Pezzotta. You can acquire it from Catholic Answers at [www.catholic.com](http://www.catholic.com). We will also be discussing this further in the following chapters since Mr. Bayack brings it up in more detail later.

For anyone interested in the issue of Jesus’ words to “call no man father” (which by the way St. Paul and other biblical writers did in seeming “defiance” of Jesus’ command), you can access an excellent article at [http://www.catholic.com/library/Call\\_No\\_Man\\_Father.asp](http://www.catholic.com/library/Call_No_Man_Father.asp).

### **The Petty**

Maybe we should start this section with the petty issue of me not honoring Mr. Bayack to

his satisfaction by referring to him as “pastor” in my response, but I think we dealt with that petty issue enough in the “Personal section”. So now we move to his next petty section.

*Stephen Ray has a remarkable ability to make much ado about nothing as he goes above and beyond to dissect capital letters and misspelled words. So important are these that they headline his critique in the very first paragraph: “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.’”*

*It is common knowledge that the Tiber River flows through Rome and even someone as simple as me knew immediately what the title meant. Crossing the Timber was a minor typographical error by the Proclaiming the Gospel webmaster and if this is so vital to his argument that he has no choice but to make it his opening salvo, then he must do what he must do. I would hope that he was bigger than this.*

Excuse me, but it is NOT *common knowledge* that the Tiber runs through Rome as I have discovered over and over again. Our failed school system has made sure of that. Mr. Bayack’s superior education (thanks to Catholic schools) may make it “common” to him, but it is not common to the average person. Obviously it wasn’t “common knowledge” with his webmasters at the anti-Catholic site “Proclaiming the Gospel” since they called it the “Timber”. Mr. Bayack may count it petty but I will again inform him that not only was the name of my book wrong on the *first* critique but *now*, on the heading for the second posting he has my *name* wrong. Like I informed James White earlier this month, it is Stephen with a “ph” not Steven with a “v”. Petty? Maybe; but let’s be a bit careful so people will trust the rest of the article and if it is the webmaster’s repeated incompetence and not that of Mr. Bayack, maybe he ought to find a better forum for his articles. (It will probably be fixed before the reader gets a chance to see it.) We’ll deal more with spelling and grammar later, OK?

Commenting on “Timber” was not crucial, I agree. It was just an interesting observation of mine. It started my response because it was the first thing on the page. That seems simple enough. Isn’t it surprising someone else didn’t find it early on and change it before I chanced upon it somewhat later. If it is such a petty thing, isn’t it interesting that Mr. Bayack makes such a big deal about it himself? Wait until we see him criticize *my* spelling. Talk about petty-or maybe it is just vindictive.

*What is far bigger is what this reveals about Mr. Ray himself. I personally e-mailed him and posted messages on his bulletin board several times explaining that I knew what the title meant and that I had absolutely no control over the Proclaiming the Gospel website. He eventually acknowledged this to be the webmaster’s mistake, however, he still treats it as my hapless error as his statement “he couldn’t even get the title of the book right” and another similar one in the second paragraph remain on his critique.*

I have already e-mailed Mr. Bayack to let him know that I will add a note to my original article to let the readers know it was the webmaster and not Mr. Bayack who made the error. However, Mr. Bayack, I didn't read the article again after posting it and going back to "fix it" never entered my mind at the time. I apologize. I will make a note in the article by the time I post this. Now, are you going to change your comments later that I never concede to anything? We'll see what kind of man you are. Again Mr. Bayack, remember Jesus' words, "Judge not lest you be judged."

*What does it say about a man who continues to deliberately misrepresent these things? What does it say about his integrity when he also writes in the same paragraph, "I would hope that, for the sake of integrity, he would post my response on the web site alongside his review" when he knows that I have no control over those decisions? One thing that it says for sure is that Stephen Ray is rash with the allegations and questionable at best with the facts.*

Rash? Petty, petty Mr. Bayack. We will see if Mr. Bayack goes back and corrects all the places where he was petty or misrepresented me in both of his articles. Then we will know what kind of man Mr. Bayack is as well. Remember, "Judge not and you will not be judged." I really think this matter he brings up is a bit petty as well and I agree with him that it certainly fits in the "Petty section" of the article. If Mr. Bayack has no control over what is posted on the Proclaiming the Gospel relating to *his* article he should not post it there. Simple as that. He couldn't get them to post a response if he paid them because it is a mean-spirited and disingenuous web site. They are intimidated and scared of vocal Catholics and in response they won't let any knowledgeable Catholics on their site. Mr. Bayack should be ashamed of associating with such a site, especially since he has no control over his own article. I noticed that his sarcastic article is not on his *own* Copperfield Bible Church website. Maybe he doesn't want his people to know how "nasty" he can really get. He may want to keep them thinking he is the sweet and soft-spoken pastor that they know.

*But there is nothing questionable about Mr. Ray's distortion of things elsewhere in his critique. This is no "petty" issue but having raised it at this point I will deal with it here. For example, Mr. Ray is blatantly disingenuousness with his quoting of Evangelical commentator A. Skevington Wood's comments about Ephesians 5:26 both in his book and his critique.*

Ah, I'm glad Mr. Bayack brings this up here. I am also glad he calls me "blatantly disingenuous" because now we see that he is wallowing in the same mud he claims I am in-resorting to personal attacks and *ad hominem* statements. He could have said I made mistake or misspoke, but no, he levels a personal attack on my honesty and integrity. He has sadly fallen from the high ground and is now in the cesspool he claims I occupy. Isn't it interesting to watch one judge and then become subject to his own judgments?

Mr. Bayack now embarks on an issue already addressed and put to bed. He wants to raise it again so I have added *Appendix A* from an earlier correspondence to remind people that

this was already addressed. In fact, we find Mr. Bayack again, while judging me, to have fallen into the very trap in which he wanted to catch me. Ironic justice.

*Even though Mr. Wood believes that this verse refers to baptism, his commentary includes a clear rejection of baptismal regeneration: “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” (The Expositor’s Biblical Commentary, ed. Frank Gaebelien [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1978], 11:77, italics in original).*

Not to take away from my *Appendix A*, I will simply comment that to quote from an author to substantiate a certain point is certainly a valid use of sources. Had Mr. Bayack written anything more than a criticism of Catholics on a website he might have known this (Have you published anything else Mr. Bayack? Let me know if I have spoken too hastily). Had he read his Bible he might have known this too. A source does not have to agree with an author about everything in order for an author to validly quote him. Paul quotes pagan philosophers (Acts 17) without the readers suspecting or being deceived for one moment into thinking the pagan authors agreed with Paul about the true nature of the Jewish and Christian God. One can quote selectively from a writer to verify certain agreements without assuming that the readers are so stupid as to think that *by* quoting such a source that the source must then agree with 100% with all the conclusions drawn by the author.

I don’t know why Mr. Bayack brings this up again. It seems rather simplistic to me.

*However, notice again how Stephen Ray summarizes this statement on page 126 of his book, “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.” Thus he appears to be in agreement with Mr. Wood, however, he conveniently ignores Mr. Wood’s last sentence. I then went on to comment in my review that “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 his section on baptism.”*

*I stand by this statement. Mr. Wood’s commentary listed above is intended to refute baptismal regeneration and over ninety pages of Stephen Ray’s book are dedicated to proving it. However, Mr. Ray is not above speaking out of both sides of his mouth depending on which argument he embraces. On one hand he has the gall to feign agreement with Mr. Wood in *Crossing the Tiber*. Yet on the other he says, “I explicitly mention that Wood disagrees with me on the point of baptismal regeneration” (23).*

*You do, Mr. Ray? I quoted the entirety of your comments about Mr. Wood verbatim in my review and nowhere do you give any hint of this. Which are we to*

*believe—your ninety-plus pages in support of baptismal regeneration or your “hearty agreement” with Mr. Wood to the contrary? You cannot have it both ways.*

I do not quote the whole of Mr. Wood’s book and I *notify* my readers he does not agree with the issue as far as the Catholic does. Yes I do Mr. Bayack. If you weren’t being so petty here you would understand what I meant by the following: “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.” I let the reader know that Wood does not believe that water can bring about new birth, which is what baptismal regeneration means. Right? Are you being dense here or just stubborn? Or maybe you didn’t read things carefully. I use Wood’s work quite appropriately to show *one thing*, which I was very clear on: *an Evangelical commentator agrees that the passage in Ephesians refers to baptism*. Period!

I was not asking if Wood agreed with everything Catholic, nor was I implying “disingenuously” that he believed in baptismal regeneration as you falsely charge (and I hope you are man enough to correct this in your latest critique). My footnote is *very clear* as to what I was verifying with Wood’s quote. My footnote started: “*Does this passage refer to baptism?*” Then I quote Wood as a witness that the passage *does indeed* refer to baptism. PERIOD! What’s the big deal Mr. Bayack? You are certainly being petty here—majoring on the minors—and if you have achieved your Masters degree which you humbly boast of earlier, please don’t make a high school graduate correct you on this simple literary matter. You are better than this Mr. Bayack—I am sure of this. I just think you got flustered with my response to you and you have stewed on it for several years. I know that because you have commented on it several times if I recall correctly. And why not comment on your own *faux pas* (which is French for “a social blunder”) as exposed in my earlier response regarding Berkhof? If you criticize others you better be ready to take the heat yourself.

Then, Mr. Bayack, after showing that Wood understands the passage referred to baptism in conjunction with Titus 3:5, I was quite honest to inform my readers that Wood does not take it any further than that—he does not believe that water alone brings about new birth, which is of course regeneration. I would have expected you to know that and not throw up an unnecessary and silly red herring. To make such a big deal about this Mr. Bayack certainly does fit in the “Petty Section” of your latest weak and naïve response—actually it could have fit in another section called “persistent” where you persist in protesting even though it is clear there is nothing to protest!

A nonpartisan reader, familiar with methods of research and citations would understand completely what I said in my book and why. If this is the worst you can dredge up from my book, I must have really hit the mark. There was no deception involved except in your head inspired by your Fundamentalist blinders. You may want to contact the other anti-Catholics out there who are quoting the Church Fathers out of context (which I did not do with Wood) and let them know that they should *not* use any quotes from the Fathers unless they are certain that the Father agrees with them in all their other conclusions.

Something you failed to do with Berkhof, remember?

Also, in *Appendix A* below I provide again the incident in which Mr. Bayack is judging me and falling into the very thing he accuses me of by using Berkhof when Berkhof later drastically disagrees with Mr. Bayack's theology, yet Bayack has not hesitation to quote him to prove his own point. Look at *Appendix A* for the actual text. It is rather humorous and I notice that Mr. Bayack did not comment on it in his latest barrage. Interesting. Remember, judge not . . .

*Let us now return to Mr. Ray's critique. So far he has questioned my veracity, morality, and integrity and lest he now question my fairness, I think it only proper that he be examined with the same scrutiny that he afforded me. In the very report in which he ridicules my grammatical and technical "errors", Mr. Ray distinguishes himself with an embarrassing number of his own.*

*For example, while speaking of the freedom that Eastern-rite clergy have to marry, Mr. Ray states, "and many of the **Easter** rites have married clergy" (8). As he criticizes my comments about Judas' betrayal of Jesus supposedly being associated with the Eucharist in John 6, he writes, "[this] cannot be reduced to the **simply** explanation of Mr. Bayack" (14). When he describes the bliss of Catholicism's infallible interpretation of Scripture he says, "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**" (11, he means 3:21 as there is no verse 31). And as he talks about his visits to Reformation sites he states, "In Marburg Germany I visited the site where the major reformers **assembles** in an attempt to formulate a consistent teaching among themselves" (18, all emphases added). Hopefully from now on he will take the typographical log out of his own eye first before removing the specks of others.*

Petty, petty. Again, as Mr. Bayack has said, all this certainly belongs in his "Petty Section". He is proving himself much pettier that he is even accusing me of. If this is the best you can do to criticize me, I must have hit a nerve! Maybe that is why hundreds are converting to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church after reading my book. It has certainly hit a nerve.

First, I did not pick at the general misspelled words in your critique, only the title, remember? We've gone over this before.

Now, there is a very simple answer for our critic regarding my few spelling blunders. First, I have not graduated from prestigious institutions of higher learning as he has so carefully informed us. Nor was I fortunate enough to attend the far superior Catholic schools (I am the victim of public education). Second, I am just a common man. I sit outside the gates, apart from the intelligentsia, with the ignorant and unlearned men ("Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" Acts 4:13). Spelling is not my specialty and I admit dependence on



the spell checker and good editors. But I try at least to get the title and author's name correct.

As I responded to James White earlier this month, who also spelled my name wrong, "When a man, who assumes such scholarship and precision of thought and word for himself, as does our critic, fails on such a fundamental level as getting the author's name correct [you've seen the site up for some time now Mr. Bayack, so don't pass the buck to the webmaster], it makes one question his analytical and writing abilities. I am *not* saying a writer has to be a great speller or grammarian to be effective-the Lord knows these are not my gifts (that's why I have good editors), but getting something like the name of the critiqued author right seems pretty basic and important to me. Failing to get the name right immediately causes one to doubt how careful our critic actually is in other matters."

'Nuff said on that. We certainly don't want to be petty. Thankfully we are now finished with Mr. Bayack's tiresome pettiness in these first two sections. I hope he shows himself wiser in the "Pertinent Section".

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Stayed tuned for Part II entitled "**Pastor Bayack Strikes Again: "The Pertinent"**" in which Mr. Bayack proves once again that he didn't understand the teachings of the Catholic Church when he left at 17 years old, and still doesn't. We will notice that he is peering at the world and the Bible through a pair of darkly Fundamentalist glasses. Stay tuned.

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### **Appendix A: Quoting Evangelical Writers:**

Mr. Bayack Alleges that Stephen Ray Selectively Quotes Evangelicals . I Respond, "Oh really"?

*"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).