

Follow up after a meeting with Baptists Jerry and Veronica

By Steve Ray

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Dear Jerry:

Janet and I, along with Rob Corzine, want to let you know we enjoyed your visit Tuesday night. This is not said facetiously, I mean it since I have always relished discussion where truth is taken seriously. I was prepared to dislike Veronica and was pleasantly surprised—I was very fond of her. She is an honest person and I'll comment on that more later in the letter. We want you to know that we accept you both, and love you, as a brother and sister in the Lord Jesus.

I hope you will indulge me as I relay a few observations after reflecting on our evening together. I did not get to tell *my* story but that's probably not a bad thing. Had I done so, it may have struck a few sparks, especially with your friend Don. I would not have been as gracious as Rob was, jumping through all Don's Fundamentalist hoops. We'd probably have kept going until three in the morning.

As you read this letter you will notice I speak freely and do not hesitate to use literary devices at my disposal. Sarcasm and humor are employed and should not be construed as hostility. I am simply trying to be honest and effective in my argument. My hopes are that you will read it in the spirit of good will in which it is offered.

Now to a few comments on your friend Don, the Baptist minister you brought to back you up. He reminded me a bit of old caricature of a used car salesman. I was a little surprised by the condescending and arrogant attitude Don¹ displayed. I don't doubt he is a very loyal friend of yours and a brother in Christ, and so I do not want to disparage him as a person. I will however, use him as an example as I go along and simply comment on some of his statements, approaches and assumptions. But first let me say that I recognize Don as a brother in Christ and do not question his salvation or love of the Lord Jesus. I will go further to say that if Don and I were standing in the coliseum for our Christian Faith and the starving beasts were released and charging toward us, I would never doubt Don's resolve, nor would I hesitate for a moment to link arms in Christian unity as we both fell beneath their open jaws. He is a brother and as such I love him in the Lord Jesus, however, I am not by that love constrained from making some objective observations on his manner of conversation and conduct, and of his Fundamentalist presuppositions. So, please take the following in the spirit of love and truth in which it is intended.

Don't you think Don was a little rude, condescending and obnoxious in the way he treated Rob as he told his story? His whole mannerism displayed a very deliberate, if

¹ I am sorry I have forgotten his last name. When someone makes a real impression on me I usually remember their name. The opposite is also true.

unconscious, spiritual pride. He was sitting in the judge's seat. What was the point of asking Rob how many verses he had memorized? how much he read the Bible? what were his favorite verses? Was this the Fundamentalist *Shibboleth*² to test Rob's loyalty to Don's Fundamentalist priorities? This whole litany of questions was a little strange. You asked me later why I was showing you the Bible that I had carried since 1971 in high school³, and the markings I made as a result of Greek word studies. You asked what I was trying to prove. Was it not obvious why I was showing you? Was it not obvious, based on your friend's line of questioning? You were approaching us as though we were not Christians. You had your own little litmus tests (*shibboleths*), making decisions that only God can make, that is, who is really a Christian.⁴ We were attempting to show you, by using your own criteria, that we are most assuredly born again Christians.

Now you may have noticed that we did not repeatedly interrupt Don as he gave *his* "testimony", asking him to repeat *shibboleths* of *our* own making. I was very tempted to, but prudence and respect, not to mention love and acceptance, dictated I keep silent and let him tell his story. His "testimony" incidentally seemed short on story and long on preaching. I was anxiously awaiting the altar call. He seemed to base his personal judgement of a person's salvation on how many Bible chapters one reads a day, and how many verses one has memorized. If one memorizes *Don's* favorite verses it will accrue special favor, to the point where Don would possibly reckon it us as righteousness.

Don't fool yourself into thinking we are deficient in the realm of Biblical reading, study and knowledge. It is the book I love and I have spent much of my life immersed in its riches. In fact, I am willing to go up against you, or just about anyone else for that matter, in a test of biblical knowledge, but wisdom requires discretion and boasting is not always appropriate.

When Jesus challenged someone's true faith did he ask them the questions Don asked Rob Corzine? Can you recall Jesus quizzing anyone on how many verses he had read, how many chapters he had memorized, how much time he had spent in "the word"?⁵ Can you find

² Judges 12:4-6 "Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites *are* fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, *and* among the Manassites. And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was *so*, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, *Art* thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; Then said they unto him, Say now **Shibboleth**: and he said **Sibboleth**: for he could not frame to pronounce *it* right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand." (KJV)

³ During my last years in Plymouth High School (1972 and 1973) we led over 100 kids to the Lord. The commons area was full of kids sitting around the tables with Bibles discussing their new salvation. We had a mini-revival.

⁴ 2 Timothy 2:19

⁵ In fact Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their pompous display of spiritual disciplines. He berated them for their boastings of prayers, fastings, "Bible readings", and the like. We are all now well

any passage where Jesus placed such an emphasis, an inordinate emphasis, on “getting into the word” (another vocabulary word used in the language of Baptists)⁶. Or does Jesus rather question whether one obeys his commands, loves his neighbor, whether one prays, fasts and gives alms?⁷

If you read the First Epistle of St. John with this in mind, ask yourself how *John* determined, through the Holy Spirit, whether one was in the true faith. What is John’s criteria? I don’t recall anything about “getting into the word” or reading four pages a day. I see instead a much richer, fuller, Catholic criteria. Do you love your brother, do you walk in the light, do you obey His commandments⁸, do you *do* the truth, do you love your neighbor, etc. etc. And read this:

“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso

aware of Don’s superiority in these matters.

⁶ It amazes me that while Fundamentalists will accuse Catholics of creating a nomenclature of “unbiblical words”, they betray themselves with phrases like “personal relationship with Christ”, “accepting Christ as Savior”, “asking Jesus into your heart”, “enthroning the Bible in your heart” (a classic in the Halley’s Bible Handbook), “age of accountability”, and “eternal security”, “denominations”, the “invisible Church”, etc. etc. One of the reasons Fundamentalists have very little success in speaking to the culture around them is because they have their own “in-house” language, Christianese, and the world has no idea what you are talking about. Paul learned to speak in such a way that the listeners in his pagan culture understood him. You may want to read Francis Schaeffer’s books since they shed a lot of light in this area.

⁷ Matthew 6:16,17; Acts 13:2,3 (isn’t it interesting that it does not record here that they “got into the word?”); 1 Cor. 7:5 (Don would make “getting into the word the only indicator; why doesn’t Paul?); 2 Cor. 6:4ff (my goodness, Bible reading doesn’t even show up on Paul’s *Top 10* of things he does in approving himself. Does this make you wonder where *your* emphasis is? If you notice in this list the phrase “in the word of truth” don’t jump to the conclusion that Paul is referring to the Bible. Even Charles Hodge admits this means *preaching* the word of truth, not *reading* it). To cut this footnote short I will give you another list St. Paul rattles off. Please find for me the mention of how many times he had read the Bible from cover to cover, or where he boasts of his hours spent “*in the word*” to prove himself a true believer and minister of Christ. Look at this list in 2 Corinthians 11:22-30

“Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.” (KJV)

⁸ Interestingly the word *command*, or *commandment* is used **ten times** in the short epistle of 1 John.

keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” (KJV)⁹

Wow, sounds awful Catholic to me. The Catholic Church also believes, with all of her heart, the verses preceding, which explain Christ as the propitiation for sin.¹⁰ This truth is at the heart of the Catholic Church. I will add here, as a footnote, a few paragraphs concerning 1 John 5:13 and what John was *trying* to say regarding assurance of salvation. I am amazed at how cavalier Fundamentalists are with their handling of this verse.¹¹ They pull it out of the historical, textual, theological and biblical context. Ah, but it doesn't really matter, because the Holy Spirit can make it to mean whatever we *want* it to mean, right? Even if it's *not* what the Apostle John had in mind. Being a Fundamentalist is so easy, we can be our own teaching authority, we can interpret the verses the way we want, in context or out of context. The Holy Spirit can do amazing things with His word.

⁹ 1 John 2:3-6

¹⁰ Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraph 602, “*Man’s sins, following on original sin, are punishable by death. By sending his own Son in the form of a slave, in the form of fallen humanity, on account of sin, God ‘made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God’, and in paragraph 457, “The Word became flesh for us in order to save us by reconciling us with God, who ‘loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins’: ‘the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world,’ and ‘he was revealed to take away sins.’”*

¹¹ I want to raise a question in regards to the great proof text 1 John 5:13 where John begins the Epilogue to his first epistle. It is often used as a verification that one “knows” for sure they have eternal life. It is often asked of Catholics, “Do you know you are going to heaven, are you positive of eternal life?” To which the Catholic usually stumbles around and looks foolish as the great proof text is clearly read. I would make two points: first, 1 John 5:13 begins the epilogue to the epistle and the intent of John’s letter was primarily to defend the true Faith against the heresies of the Gnostics who said one needed special knowledge (implying a knowledge the Christians did not have) to have eternal life. John is refuting the Gnostics and comforting the Christians that they did have the true knowledge and the true knowledge was the true and only way to eternal life. *It was not meant as a proof text between those who hold eternal security and those who deny it. It had a higher purpose which had little to do with the question of eternal security or absolute knowledge and confidence of eternal life.*

This is born out in the second point I would like to make and that is the verse, as the epilogue, may very well be a summary of the preceding document. It should be noted that the conditional word “*if*” is used 21 times in the preceding text and could very well be saying, “If you understand and abide by the conditions of this letter, if you love one another, if you avoid sin, if you believe in the Son, etc. etc. you may know that you have eternal life. It is probably meant to be a Moral Certainty of which the preceding pages gives you a yardstick to measure yourself by. Evangelical Protestant commentator John Stott says in his commentary The Epistles of John, “*They (the recipients of John’s letter) had been unsettled by the false teachers and become unsure of their spiritual state. Throughout the epistle John has been giving them criteria (doctrinal, moral, social) by which to test themselves and others. His purpose was to establish their assurance.*”

But at the same time, could they securely “rest in their absolute assurance of salvation if their lives were not living up to the “criteria” John gave them? One can have a moral certainty of eternal life, but if you are stretching John’s words beyond this you are doing an injustice to his epistle, to your own soul and to those you teach. This is no light matter. One should be cautious in reading too much into a text without understanding its context, and the rest of Christian teaching.

So, what is the New Testament's criteria for knowing whether one is in the Truth? Is it the enthroning of the Bible in one's heart? If you'd like to investigate the point further you might want to turn to Luther's "epistle of straw", the NT book of James? Here is an interesting "thought experiment" to try with prayer: put yourself in the shoes of a first century Christian in Antioch who has not yet received a hand copied manuscript of Paul's writings. Ask yourself how James would strike you as you read it. Would you have read it differently than you do today?¹² Why?

Just a few comments on the tract that your friend Don left, knowing of course that you are not personally responsible for the tract and that it was simply a production of the Gideons (who are doing a very noble work). But, I comment on the tract because it is so representative of the genre of material put out by Fundamentalists. Yes, it does effect a person here and there, just as scribbling on a wall may inspire an artist, but the question really is, is this the best we can do and is it biblical?

First, it is unfortunate that its author thought he had to pull verses out of their context and paste them into a patchwork quilt in an attempt to explain the Gospel, one, two, three. . . It is obvious that the compiler of this tract had very little knowledge of the book of Romans or Paul's argument. You would have thought that Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, would have thought ahead and given us the four spiritual laws in a handy condensed version, maybe as a twenty-eighth book of the NT, or at least as an introduction to Romans. If the Bible is our only source of truth about the gospel¹³ then shouldn't we expect it to give us such a simple gospel, so easily laid out? It doesn't though. Why?

Second, in a society that has no concept of a personal, infinite and holy God, this tract kind of starts in the "middle of the story". In a neo-pagan society such as ours, much worse than pagan society of the Roman world¹⁴, one needs to establish the fact that God is personal, infinite and holy. The word g-o-d means nothing today. As soon as a word can mean *everything*, it ceases to mean *anything*. Pantheists use the word g-o-d, Mormons use the word, modernists use the word, New Agers use the word; it is a word that in our modern world can mean just about anything. (The word c-h-u-r-c-h is much the same way) It is incumbent on the Christian in a relativistic society to define their terms and philosophy and not just enter the arena with one more set of proof texts to back up one more set of "truths".

¹² It is well established that James was the first of the NT writings that was written. The Epistle of James was written up to a decade before Paul wrote his epistles of Galatians and Romans. Galatians is dated from AD 48 - 57 depending on which theory you accept (see Galatians: The Charter of Christian Liberty by Merrill C. Tenney, Dean at Wheaton College, Eerdmans, 1971 Tenney discusses the South and North Galatian theories).

¹³ Of course you know I believe it *is* the source of God's inspired written revelation, infallible and inerrant, concerning the Gospel. I am here only challenging the manner in which many today try to present the Gospel.

¹⁴ A side note: The true pre-Christian pagans at least understood sin. they knew they needed a savior. Post-Christian neo-paganism treats God and sin as irrelevant. The language of objective Truth means nothing to them.

Continuing in the same line of thought, another necessary aspect in presenting the Gospel is the fact that Man was originally created to have fellowship with God, in love and obedience (the first immaculate conceptions). Instead, man sinned and broke the friendship, lost the grace, incurred death, and became separated from his source of eternal life and joy. Without this prolegomena to the Gospel, the whole story kind of hangs in mid air. This is one of the problems of presenting the truncated sort of Gospel represented by this tract.

Also, some of the verses seem a little suspect as they are used in this tract. For example “*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*” (Revelation 20:15) Yes, those not in the Book of Life are condemned to eternal damnation. However, it is the means of judgement that is misrepresented. The preceding verses inform us that it is not our faith that will be judged, it will be our works (*erga autwn*). This criteria for judgement is mentioned *twice* so we won’t miss it.¹⁵ The judgement does not appear to be based on the type or amount of faith we have. Do I say that we can come to God on the basis of our works *alone* for justification? You know I do not. Catholics don’t make unnecessary “either-or” dichotomies. It is all by the grace of God through faith (Eph. 2:8), **but this faith must work itself out in love**. This parallels Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 5:9,10

“Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” (KJV)

And what could Jesus have possibly meant in John 5:28-29,

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” (KJV)

How could Jesus have reworded this statement to make it a little more consistent with Protestant theology? I pray we will not be found to have presented our sons and daughters, both natural and spiritual, with a partial Gospel, a Reader’s Digest, cheap-grace, condensed version, *that will not do our loved ones justice in the great day of judgement*.

The Catholic Church says, *“The followers of Christ, called by God not in virtue of their works but by His design and grace, and justified in the Lord Jesus, have been made sons of God*

¹⁵ Granted there is some discussion on this passage of Revelation as to the objects of the judgement. Some commentators say this passage, and therefore this judgement, is only applicable to the unsaved, those condemned in their sins to eternal perdition (e.g. Harry Ironside and Lehman Strauss). The majority of conservative scholars however see here a judgement of both unbelievers *and* believers, saved and unsaved. Kittel is a prime example. And how are they to be judged? *On the basis of their works*. Is this inconsistent with the rest of Scripture? Take a look at a few other verses randomly chosen. For example look at Matthew 25 (the whole chapter); 16:27; 18:22-35; John 5:28,29; Romans 2:5-10; 1 Cor. 9:27; 2 Cor. 5:8-10; Hebrews 10:26,27; 2 Peter 2:20,21. Maybe our Fundamentalist theology is not as tightly sewn as we were taught to believe!?

in baptism, the sacrament of faith, and partakers of the divine nature, and so are truly sanctified. They must therefore hold on to and perfect in their lives that sanctification which they have received from God."¹⁶ This is a very biblical and historical perspective and is at the heart of the Catholic Church. Does she preach the Gospel? Of course she does and has for 2,000 years.

In the last paragraph I used the word *historical*. Why is that? In your eyes us Catholics seem so interested in history, almost to the point that Protestants think we de-emphasize the Bible. This is untrue of course, but the reason we emphasize history is because history is an Ancient Teacher and because this little tract, and your fundamentalist Protestant teaching, are the "new kids on the block". History refutes you. This truncated gospel has not been heard of before, even in the generation succeeding the apostles. Why has it only recently shown its face? You will come up blank when you search the history of our Christian heritage for such a salvation presentation. It was created by Luther to satisfy his scrupulosity, and even he asked, *Am I the only one in the history of the church to understand this?* Supposedly the Holy Spirit had shown him a new doctrine, hitherto unrevealed by God to His Church in the 1,600 years of His working in his people.¹⁷

Why is history important? *Because God works in history.* Some have said that history is His-story. The Bible is, on its most basic level, a book of history. Our God created time and therefore of necessity, history. Though God lives and dwells in eternity, outside of the sequential ticking of the clock, He has placed us *inside* the bubble of time. To demonstrate His love and concern for our situation, and for history, He Himself entered the bubble of time at a point in history. This was the incarnation. He then escaped the bubble and the corruption of death through the resurrection and ascension. We too, who believe in Him (with all the implications of the biblical word *believe*) will also escape the vicious cycle of history - birth, short life and death - by our union in Christ, and enjoy the ability to live outside of time, with God in the incomprehensible eternity. Actually, eternal life has already begun for the Christian, it is something we are to be experiencing already, in the present tense of the Greek word. His Church is a sacramental continuation of His incarnation, His body on earth, to be seen by the world.

Thus history is important, even crucial, for our understanding of God and his work in the world and in His Church. As we said earlier, the Bible, at its basic level, is the history of God working His plan of salvation and consummation through the sequential steps of history. God's work of salvation in history did not stop in His Church as soon as Luke's ink dried at the end of

¹⁶ Lumen Gentium 40 Documents of Vatican II

¹⁷ In a roundabout way J. I. Packer admits that Luther's views were new and not part of the view of the Early Church. He says, in his chapter contained in a book of collected works entitled God's Inerrant Word that ". . . apart from Augustine none of them (the fathers) seemed to be quite clear enough on the principle of salvation by grace and not even Augustine had fully grasped imputed righteousness. Then in an endnote he says, "Misled by the meaning of 'justificare' in Latin, he understood justification as God's work of making sinners subjectively righteous by pardoning their sins and infusing into them the grace of love") It surprises me that none of those who knew and succeeded the Apostles understood the means of salvation, all of them were misled and theologically unsound, and now, thanks to the great Reformation, that which was never understood is now suddenly understood. This stretches credulity. This caused me to think long and hard.

Acts chapter 28. God's work and history continues in an unbroken time line. It continues, and the Catholic Church is correct in considering it important.

Did our founding fathers¹⁸ of the faith understand the Gospel the way it is presented in the little tract left by Don entitled **2+2=?**. No. Paul never left us with such an abridged Gospel. Don seemed so concerned that we understand the Gospel the way the Holy Spirit (or was it Billy Graham?) had revealed it to *him*. In fact, *you* repeated *your* testimony again and again, with great emphasis on how the Holy Spirit (or was it Campus Crusade?) revealed great truths to you personally, as you read the Bible yourself.¹⁹ How is it that we don't respect and take seriously what the Holy Spirit has "shown" those in the past, our brothers and sisters in history, the bishops, the Fathers, the martyrs? Charles Spurgeon said, "*It seems odd that certain men who talk so much of what the Holy Spirit reveals to them should think so little of what He has revealed to others.*" God's saints of the past have a great deal to say to us today, if only we will listen. They can provide a check and balance on what the Holy Spirit is supposedly saying to our hearts today.

Christianity is not a religion that requires us to unscrew and remove our heads when we consider the Gospel. It does not require us to stand in a vacuum and believe in Christ according to our own private interpretations of Scripture (of which Protestants have every flavor available) and ignore the teachings of the Church and the Apostolic Tradition. Have you read the book I gave you: The History of the Church by Eusebius. Your friend Don would consider it unimportant; "all we need to read is the Word." He is wrong, dead wrong! Of *course* we need to read God's inspired revelation, but we do not need to set up false and harmful either/or dichotomies.

How did our fellow Christians, those who defined our essential doctrines (or did *you* extract the doctrine of the Trinity *yourself* as you read from the New Testament) — believed so intensely by you and I today — how did our brothers, who were willing to be tortured for their faith, how did *they* understand these matters? Did they fight the heretics on every side, suffering bodily mutilation and deprivation, did they watch lions eat their family members, torn into bloody shreds by beasts, without flinching and wavering, and all this without an understanding of the Gospel? We are so pompous today. Could they be saved without understanding your Protestant truncated gospel? Your friend Don pontificates with bold arrogance on what the Holy Spirit has "shown him", but gives little regard to what the Holy Spirit has been showing and

¹⁸ I used to love it when Catholics referred to someone in the Church or in history as *Father*. I would immediately resurrect the age old argument, easily explained, that we should call "no man father." This is based on Jesus' words in Matthew 23:9. However, I would make two points. First, other biblical writers including Paul use the word father for earthly fathers and spiritual fathers (Mt. 4:21; Lu. 16:24; Acts 7:2, 4,11,15; Rom. 4:1,12; 1 Cor. 4:15 etc. etc.). Next Jesus says call no man teacher or instructor, yet we do that everyday. We must not be simple minded on these matters but try to understand in the context what Jesus is dealing with, especially the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

¹⁹ It was good to hear the truth this time, that it was not just you alone, in solitude with the Bible, reading John 3:16, but it was actually through the intermediate agency of Campus Crusade, while you were at their magic show at Hill Auditorium. You are not a product of solitary revelation, you are a product of a well defined and specific tradition of Protestant Fundamentalism.

doing in God's people for two thousand years. He claims to be a student of Church History, yet he doesn't seem to have learned the simplest lessons it has to teach, including the virtue of humility.

Did the men who knew the apostles and were fiercely loyal to their teachings and writings, who suffered by their side and for their doctrine, *not understand the Gospel*? They sure didn't understand it in the 19th century "cheap- grace" version. It would behoove you to look into things a bit more deeply. Read the writings of the Apostle's disciples and the early Fathers. Have you read Polycarp, the disciple of John? Clement of Rome, a student of Peter and Paul? Hermas, the disciple of apostles? Ignatius of Antioch, a friend of Polycarp? Irenaeus, a student of Polycarp and loyal student of the Apostolic teachings from those who had the words of the Apostle "still ringing in their ears"? I ask this out of concern for your soul, out of love for you as a brother. I was *you*, I was in your camp, which you cannot deny without being blatantly obtuse.

I cannot believe I was never taught my own history as I was nurtured within the Protestant camp. The small portions I *was* taught, were taught with unbelievable disrespect for the facts. You say the Catholic Church did not teach you well, did not explain the Gospel. Yes, many within the Catholic Church do not do well in this area. But do we throw out our constitutional form of government in the United States, or move to Mexico, because we had a bad civics teacher in high school? Think about it. The Protestant Fundamentalist camp deprived me of *my* essential heritage and the fullness of the Gospel. They did not tell me the truth of the revolt, how they had jumped ship and divorced the Church, the very Church that had loved and maintained the Bible and the essential Christian doctrines for sixteen centuries. They downplayed the truth of my ancestors, what the Holy Spirit had shown and worked in them. Why? Because it threatened their position, or maybe because they too were ignorant, having never been taught.

The Fathers have much to say to you in the 20th century. To this day you are dependent on the Fathers more than you realize. The Scriptures you hold in your hand, that you treasure, it is they who delivered it to you. The truth of the Trinity - it is *they* who defined it and defended it against impossible odds so *you* could be orthodox today. The deity of Christ, the central doctrine of our faith, was defended by these *very* men and defined carefully against a thousand attacks. These men travelled back and forth on foot and by ship across the known world, facing every known adversity to develop these doctrines so you could be an orthodox Christian in the 20th century and not an Arian, a Marcionite, a Manichee, a Gnostic, a Nestorian, a Docetist, a Donatist, a Montanist, a Sabellianist, an Apollinarian, a Monophysite, a Palagian, etc. etc. Do you know and respect these men of God? Do you know what they taught about salvation? In their theology and practice they were Catholics!

Jerry, let me ask you: What is the pillar and foundation of the Truth? The Bible, right? No, that is not right. That's what the Protestant Fundamentalist assert *in blatant opposition to the very Bible itself!* The pillar and foundation of the truth is the household of God! Listen to Paul: "*I am writing these things to you . . . so that you may know how one ought to conduct*

himself in the household of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and support (foundation, ground) of the truth.” (1 Timothy 3:15)²⁰ Wow, sounds awful Catholic to me!

We do the Bible a great injustice by forcing it to fill a role it was never intended to fill. The early Christians, under the teaching of the Apostles, understood the Church to be the pillar and foundation of the truth, to be the bank vault of the sacred Apostolic Tradition. The Church guarded her sacred deposit of revelation (in the inspired writings and Apostolic Tradition) with great care and vigilance. Scripture and Apostolic Tradition “*cannot be sundered anymore than hydrogen and oxygen can be sundered if you want water. To drive a wedge between the two and raise the slogan sola Scriptura like a banner is to do violence to the Scripture by making it what it itself never claimed to be.*”²¹ But the Protest-ants overthrew the Church’s authority, they cried *sola Scriptura!* and sundered the two. The result is a deformity and now you try to force the Bible alone to fill the void. How pompous of Fundamentalists to trust our own reading of the Scriptures, with a total disregard for Christ’s one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. How ignorant for ignoring those who have gone before, the Church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the Truth.

You are supposedly lead by private and infallible (?) interpretations of the Holy Spirit who is supposedly “leading” thousands of other groups down different and contradictory paths. You think you are so clever, so enlightened, so sure of yourself. What was the consistent and unified teaching of the Apostles and their disciples? Do you know more than them? What did the believers who knew the Apostles believe and teach? Could they possibly have understood more then, than you do today? Would they ask you who has bewitched you with a different gospel? This should cause you not a little concern.

Don says he has no time to read other books, but makes sure he reads his four pages from the Bible each night. It’s just him and the Holy Spirit. Very cozy. Is he correct in this platitude? No. Little does he know, and maybe because he *doesn’t* read and study broadly, that even in his intimate moments with his Bible and the Holy Spirit he is utterly dependent on the *Church*. Deny it though he may, it stands irrefutable.

Let’s take a look at what he is actually reading and how it happened to be in his hand, under which it was gently caressed. Is it the inspired and infallible word of God? God spoke through men. Paul said the words he spoke were not the words of men, but the words of God.²²

²⁰ Another item to be noticed in this verse: does it lead one to believe it is an invisible Church is being mentioned? or rather a visible Church wherein we conduct ourselves in the real visible reality? Is this referring to a local, independent sect? By no means, and *never* did the early Christians even propose this modern view of the verse.

²¹ From Lead, Kindly Light by Thomas Howard

²² 1 Thessalonians 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. (KJV) More times than not, when the NT speaks of “the word of God” or “the word of the Lord” it is not referring to the written Scriptures, but the spoken word. However, as Protestants, you automatically assume it is referring to the Bible. Your tradition guides you, or should I say mis-guides you.

Were these written or spoken words? Does the Bible contain all the “word of God” or only the written portion? Is it the fullness of what God gave the Church or only the written portion? What did the first century Christians think about this?

How do we know which 27 books comprise the NT? You depend on the Catholic Church and her councils. The eminent Evangelical theologian, R. C. Sproul, says the best that the Protestant can hope for is a “fallible list of infallible books”. Since he believes the Bible is the only inspired and infallible word we have from God, how does he tell you which books should make up your NT? In this sense the NT canon itself is definitely extra-biblical. How does one prove *sola Scriptura* from sola Scriptura?²³ These questions posed no problems to the early Church nor to the Catholic Church today.

Many sincere Fundamentalist are becoming Catholics, and the flow will increase in the years to come, because the Protestant has no adequate answers to many of the pressing matters, especially the area of authority and the canon. Protestants divorced the Church and are living in much the same impoverished condition a divorced single parent faces today. The fullness is gone.

Back to your Fundamentalist friend Don and his reading of “the Word”. Is it just him and the Holy Spirit in his “*quiet time*”? Are there any other factors involved? What are the various elements that make up the equation? Without realizing it, the one element intimately involved, and absolutely crucial in the equation, is the *Church!* Between him and the Bible is the Church!. Why, how can that be?

If Don were given the *real* inspired writings, the original autographs of the letters composing the NT ²⁴, Don wouldn't have a clue as to what they said. The first problem would be that he'd be faced with hundreds of writings in a foreign language. He doesn't know minuscule Greek, he doesn't even understand the Hebrew because we are 20th century English speaking folks. Even if he does know Hebrew and Greek, it would not be the Holy Spirit who taught it to him. He would have to go and learn it from MAN. We are faced with writings in a foreign language from a foreign culture and we are totally and forever in debt to the Catholic Church when it comes to the sacred Apostolic deposit of truth.

Second, he would be faced with the problem of which of the hundreds of writings were from God, inspired, and which were only uninspired writings; which were true and which were in error.²⁵ Would Don, with all the leading he supposedly gets from the Holy Spirit, be adequate

²³ You claim you do not believe in *sola Scriptura*. Am I correct? Tell me then, what other sources of infallible revelation do you accept as binding on your soul and the souls of others? If you answer none, you believe in *sola Scriptura*.

²⁴ The original writings, the autographs, were in minuscule Greek, with no spaces between the words, no punctuation marks, no paragraph or sentence structure and certainly no chapters and verses.

²⁵ What basis do Protestants have for trusting the twenty-seven writings that make up the New Testament? The answer comes back that “they are inspired.” Yes, but how do we know they are inspired? There were many hundreds of writings passing from hand to hand, city to city, province to

to make these precise determinations, or would he again be dependant upon the Church and her bishops?

Next, how did that nice Bible get into his hands so he can enthrone it in his heart?²⁶ It got there through the agency of the Church! More precisely from Catholic monks. The Catholic Church preserved and protected the Bible, with Judaic scribal loyalty and dedication, so that it would make it through the persecutions and later assaults on culture and learning by the barbarian hordes from the north. How many of these Fathers and their flocks gave their lives to preserve the Bible so Don could read it today?

Also, he does not read the Bible objectively. He reads it through the lens of a manmade tradition. This is proved simply by the doctrinal bias evident in every translation. Whether anyone likes it or not, no one goes to the Bible with an innocence of heart and unbiasedness of mind. We are influenced by the grid of our own connotations or “taught” the word of God from someone with a “tradition” which they either caught like the measles from their surrounding culture or from a Bible School, or from the books they read. You were first taught the Bible and the “simple gospel” by Campus Crusade. Bill Bright and his para-church organization also had a great effect on me. But they have a certain doctrinal bias. It is not objective and neither are you.

province. There was the *Gospel of Thomas*, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, *The Didache*, *The Epistle of Clement*, *Acts of Peter*, *Acts of John*, *The Gospel of the Hebrews*, *The Secret Gospel of Mark*, *The Protoevangelium of James*, etc. etc. Who decided which were inspired and which were not? To say it was the Holy Spirit who chose the twenty-seven writings is to side-step the question — and is not an honest answer. How did the Holy Spirit do it in real history: Who were His chosen vessels bringing the inspired, and *only* the inspired, Scriptures to the world sometimes at the cost of suffering and dying

From a “*sola scriptura*” point of view, we would expect to find a list contained somewhere within Scripture to let us know which books were canonical, but no such list exists. In fact the New Testament gives us no help at all within its pages. Others like Luther say that if you find Christ preached in a writing it is inspired, but this falls quickly and hard since the spurious writings speak of Christ, and certain portions in the New Testament seem sparse in this area.

Many of the Reformers, when faced with the obvious problem, reduced it to a claim of an “internal witness” which confirmed that the twenty seven writings were inspired, and therefore canonical. Others feel a writing is inspired based on its inspiring content. But, how inspiring is Leviticus or Philemon and many things written today are very inspiring. Another criteria is apostolicity, in other words, it is inspired *if* it was written by an apostle. However, we have in our New Testament the book of Hebrews whose authorship is unsure and disputed to this day, and the Gospels of Mark and Luke written by men who were not apostles. How do we know Matthew was written by Matthew? Jude implies he is not one of the twelve apostles. There is no good answer from a Protestant perspective; it is a major problem, one that goes to the very core. John Calvin finally accepted the criteria of an internal witness, the same method used by Mormons to authenticate the Book of Mormon.

²⁶ Halley's's Bible Handbook, a standard Evangelical work and into it's eightieth-something printing has a page called THE MOST IMPORTANT PAGE IN THIS BOOK where the author proceeds to say the most important thing a pastor can do it “enthroned the Bible in the hearts of his congregation.” Does this sound like idolatry to you, or is that only my imagination? If a Catholic used a phrase like that, what would be the general response?

So, Don sits down to read his Bible and thinks it is only he and the Holy Spirit, but there is much more involved and it would behoove people to get real and understand that things are not always as simplistic and superficial as they would like to believe. He has translators and traditions on his right and on his left. Does he really think it is *he*, and the *Lord* and the *Bible*? The less he knows of history, the original languages, the culture of the biblical times, the traditions of the Jews, the teaching of the Fathers, the formulations of the creeds and councils, the more vulnerable he is to misunderstanding, deception, over simplification, unnecessary complication and heresy.

The Bible deals with history and Truth, it is God's revelation to His people, and he doesn't view his people only simply as individuals, on their own, ready to face the world. He sees them as His Church, His body, a continuing incarnation through which He can lead and teach them. He did not want 100,000 Dons running around reading the Bible *only* and reading it only on their own with their own private, simplistic interpretations. The world sees the fractured, dismembered body, and either snickers or groans. Jesus desired a unified, visible, organic Church, not divisions of denominations on every street corner.

God gave the sacred deposit of faith to His Church. The Bible, being the written and inspired portion of that deposit, was entrusted to the repository of His Church and it is His Church, that through the Holy Spirit, wrote it, compiled it, canonized it, preserved it and interprets it.²⁷ Did the New Testament give birth to the Church, or did the Church give birth to the New Testament? The Scriptures didn't just drop into Dickson's Bible and Book store

Where was Don when the early Church labored in childbirth to bring forth the written New Testament? Where was Don when the Church called her bishops from around the Roman Empire to define the doctrines taught in the Bible and defend them? Where was Don when the minuscule Greek parchments were being translated and copied by hand with the light of dim candles? Where was Don when the linguistics decisions were being made? Where was Don when the Church determined which of the hundreds of extant books actually belonged in the canon? Where was Don when the Book was attacked and burned along with those who owned one? Is it *really* Don + the Bible + the Holy Spirit + nothing? No, it is not and never could be. The separated brethren need to inform themselves a bit more than they have and begin to respect the Church, their benefactor and the pillar and foundation of the truth, and quit trying to be silly little Lone Rangers riding on their silly little hobby horses. Not only for their own sakes but for the lost and confused millions who honestly answer our "thus saith the Lord" with "thus says you".

It is a little difficult knowing exactly how to handle our ongoing discussion. I know I have been sarcastic at times in this letter, it is not meant to be hurtful, it is only to make a point. I am not sure whether to continue on with a gentle and quiet-type love, or, with a tough and

²⁷ Do we find it too awfully unthinkable that God could use fallible men in His Church to give an infallible interpretation of His Scriptures? Well, do we also then find it too awfully unthinkable that God could use fallible men in His Church to give us an infallible book to begin with? The logic that denies infallibility as possible for men who by nature are only too fallible puts limits on the power of God and destroys the case for infallible scriptures which were also given to us by God through fallible men.

persistent-type love. Based on several second hand conversations, it appears you were not honest with us from the beginning, and that *my* original assumptions concerning your motives were accurate. Please correct me if I assume too much. You told us dogmatically, and with God in heaven as a witness, that you only wanted to ask a few questions. You wanted to know why someone who once understood and believed in a Fundamentalist framework, would abandon that framework and become a Catholic Christian. I *now* hear from independent sources, that you and Veronica, have betrayed your alleged position. I have heard that you may not want to pursue the conversations further because “*you are not going to change*” and “*we (Janet and I) are not going to change.*” This may be true, but it belies your real intent. It also denies the power of the Spirit to change hearts. You met with us, *not* to ask a few questions. It appears to me that you’ve been somewhat disingenuous from the beginning. It was not a “few questions” you had in mind, in order to learn; it was an evangelistic pursuit. That is probably why you brought your friend Don. I’m sorry if he embarrassed you. I imagine you know he did more to hurt than to help your cause; in fact, if I were a betting man, I would bet that you now regret bringing him. You viewed us a mission field, as three unfortunate souls to “win back to Christ”. I hope that you now know differently, at least as regards our salvation.

However, I see it as a noble cause, and the cause and the motive I do not in the least deprecate. In fact, I respect you for your pursuit. It is not the motive that bothers me. It is the apparent *dishonesty* that bothers me. It was more than dishonesty, it was a lie. We are told in Scripture *not* to lie to one another, but speak the truth in love. And again, we are forbidden to do evil that good may come.²⁸ The ends do not justify the means. Pure motives do not condone deception. At least Don was up front with his motives; but you Jerry, have been deceitful from the beginning. Why don’t you just come out with it? Why not look me in the eye and tell me what you really think? I have been bluntly honest with you. If you hate the Catholic Church, just *say so* and then defend your position. Why can’t you face the music and be honest with me?²⁹

Veronica stated in our phone conversation her opinion that there could be only two explanations for my joining the Catholic Church: first, that I fell into sin, leaving the Lord and therefore fell prey to the Catholic Church, or second, that I never knew the Lord to begin with. Even though she lost her composure over the phone, she was at least she honest about what she thought. I don’t hold the phone conversation against her; she admitted she was “out of character”. I like people who are passionately committed to truth, or what they perceive to be truth. It is dishonesty I disdain. I would rather speak with an angry person who is honest, than a calm person who is deceitful.

After pondering the situation and praying about the matter, we have decided that we have a moral obligation to continue our discussions. Since you have left the fullness of the Catholic

²⁸ Romans 3:8

²⁹ According to [An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words](#) by W. E. Vines the word **hypocrite** means an actor thus metaphorically for a dissembler. Kittel says an actor or stage player, a pretender. In other words a person who presents themselves in one way but really are something quite different. Did you falsely present yourself?

Church, for recently devised traditions, based on private interpretation of Scripture, we feel it is our responsibility to ask *you* a few questions. Our purpose will not be done under pretense. You need to open your eyes to the problems that exist, especially with the Protestant views of salvation, Scripture and history, and the Church. If you are so sure of your position, if you are sure that God is on your side, you will not hesitate to defend it.

You see Jerry, I want to be completely honest with you, I am concerned for your soul. You have left the Church and may be guilty of the sin of schism. A person born into a sect or entering a sect with no fault of their own, is probably not guilty in God's eyes, but someone who was once a part of the Church and then willfully leaves and condones division, should be concerned for their standing before God, especially regarding the sin of schism in the body of Christ. On top of this you have been dishonest and used ends to justify the means. These do not appear to the works of Christ or the fruits of the Spirit. I am concerned for your salvation and relationship with the Lord.

We would like to meet with you both again, either at our home or yours. Rob would like to again be included in on the discussions. We can mutually agree on a topic - preferably the question of authority - and then move on the to biblical doctrine of justification, and then the Church. I have just discovered a verse you may find extremely interesting. I know of no one who has brought this verse into the discussion to date. It seems to change the whole ground of certain controverted points in the *sola fide* debate. Let us know when you are available for another meeting.

May the grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord be with you.

In the Blood of the Lamb,

Steve Ray