

[Discovering Majesty](#)

I created [this site](#) to explain to my family, friends, and fellow church members to logically follow some major shifts in my Christian thinking over the past several months. To make a very long story short, after nearly 30 years, I have returned to the Catholic Church.

I have basically copied almost everything from my blog site to this document to make it easier to distribute. It's still best go to the blog site so that all of the links and such work correctly. It is not intended to be exhaustive, although I expect it will become more apologetic as time goes on. I have no desire to get into arguments. I highly doubt that any non-Catholic could present an argument to me that I have not many times used myself. The Kent County Landfill now has one more copy of Lorainne Boettner's, *Roman Catholicism*, and Dave Hunt's, *A Woman Rides the Beast*. They were once my textbooks.

Often I will use the terms Baptist and Fundamentalist interchangeably. This is only because the Baptist churches that I have been a member of are both Fundamental churches. My experiences may just be reflective of my community rather than Baptists or Fundamentalists as a whole.

I may come back and edit the blog posts from time to time to correct grammar and typos. However I plan to keep the present tense of many of the posts even though I may no longer believe this way. I want to preserve the fact that I wrote these over a long period of time, and you can see the evolution of my faith better that way.

Also note that as I recall things that happened to me in my youth have to be read through the memory filter of a child. I often find that my recollection of events and the truth are two different things. My memory often leaves a lot to be desired.

The Past

My testimony and short bio

I was raised Roman Catholic, but not very strict. I have always believed in God, even as a small child. I remember that I just loved going through our old family Bible and looking at the artwork. There were a lot of classical paintings in it. Although I strongly believed in God, I didn't really understand fully what that meant, or what I should do with that knowledge.

When I was in Junior High, I went through a period where I became very interested various cultic practices. I was mostly interested in ESP, and witchcraft. I think I read every book on the subjects that I could find on them in my school and city libraries.

At the same time I began to be very interested in a particular girl at school. I ended up with a giant crush on her, but I was too afraid to say anything. I remain friends with her to this day (from a distance only) because I credit her with beginning my turn back to the Lord. She was a very staunch Christian who didn't have a problem with telling me that the things I was involved in were of the Devil. I wanted to try to impress her, and God, I thought, was just the way to do it.

This was in 1973 when the Jesus Movement starting coming around in Michigan. I remember someone coming around the house with free New Testaments from a place called "Key '73." I began reading the Bible more and began to realize that because of the things I was involved in, I *was* probably headed for Hell (I still hadn't heard—or at least, understood the Gospel yet).

I began carrying my Bible to school and read it quite a lot, but pretty much just for the stories and histories. I didn't understand most of the epistles. They were just too deep for me. It was obvious that nothing was going to happen between me and the girl I mentioned before, so the Bible reading went by the wayside also.

I started going to a friend's local Baptist church. I liked the activities, but so many of the people that I knew from my school that went there were complete hypocrites (including *me*), it just became a place to meet girls. Eventually I stopped going altogether.

Later in my senior year, I met Mary, the girl who would later become my wife. We became friends quickly, but didn't begin getting close until after we graduated in 1977. She was raised in a much stricter Catholic home. Knowing she was very religious (not saved yet either) it rekindled my interest in the Bible.

Mary really loved and looked up to her older brother. She was very surprised to learn that he was attending a home Bible study. He invited her to come, and after a few weeks, she invited me. We were going through the book of Ephesians. I had heard all my life that Jesus died for my sins, but I never really understood what that meant.

Mary and I both suffered from a similar problem. We both wanted to turn our lives around but it seemed that we could never get over the guilt aspect. It seemed that we could do whatever we wanted to try to get closer to him, but if we sinned too much—too bad! We weren't good enough. We could never be good enough.

That was when we first heard from God's Word that salvation was free. God wants us to do good works because he is good and wants us to be of the same mind. However, the whole reason Jesus died on the cross was because without him we are completely and utterly lost.

Within a short time, Mary and I came to realize this, dedicated ourselves to him, and have never looked back. Over the next three years we became engaged. During our engagement, we began questioning many of the teachings of the Catholic Church. For a

time I especially wanted to get married in the Church so I tried to force myself to believe in the very doctrines that I had trouble believing.

We were married at St. James Catholic Church in Grand Rapids, MI in 1980. Shortly after this though, I got my wits about me and I just couldn't force myself to believe in what I was increasingly convinced was anti-Christian doctrine.

We began attending Homestead Bible Chapel in Kentwood, MI, an assembly of Plymouth Brethren believers. It was a wonderful church that preached God's Word accurately and the people were so friendly, that we knew we had found our new home. It was here that Mary and I both received believer's baptism by immersion.

A couple of years later, I began to be very disillusioned in my job. Mary became pregnant, and I felt like I was now stuck in a job I hated. I decided to go into the Army to try to make a career change, and get some money for school. So when Mike was two months old, I went into basic training. Other than basic training and AIT, I spent the whole four year term of service at Fort Hood, TX.

When we moved to Texas, there were no Plymouth Brethren assemblies in the area. I wanted to go to a non-denominational church, but all of them in the area were Pentecostal or similar. All of the Baptist churches were Southern Baptist, and I didn't want to go there. We met some people who had just begun a new Regular Baptist church in their home, and we began attending there. Mary and I had another son, Matthew, during this time. We stayed with Grace Baptist Church for the whole time we were in Texas, where I eventually was elected a deacon.

When I got out of the Army and went back to Michigan, we moved in with my parents for few months and then moved into the duplex across the street from them. We went back to Homestead, but so many people had left, that the spirit there had changed.

We started going to Grandville Baptist Church at this time and have been attending there since 1987.

My life as a Roman Catholic: 1959-1980

I was raised in a traditional American Roman Catholic (RC) family, though not very strict. My Dad's family is all Catholic. My Mom converted from Southern Baptist to Catholicism when she married my Dad. We didn't go to Mass very often, except on holidays, although Catechism was a weekly affair through 8th grade. My folks have been attending Mass much more often in the past few years. They have always been devout, but because of personal reasons which I cannot share in a public forum, they did not go very often while we (my sisters, brother, and I) were growing up.

I have been interested in religion since I was a kid. At least when I was very young, I liked memorizing prayers, taking my first communion, saying the Rosary, my confirmation, going to Mass on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

I went through an extremely rebellious time during my teens, and finally came to the Lord when I was 17 at a Bible study with the girl who later became my wife.

During the next three years, my wife and I both were having trouble reconciling the things that we were discovering from the Bible, with what we had learned in the RC faith. The biggest is that of justification by faith (*sola fide*), “not of works, lest anyone should boast.” I know that RCs will say that they believe this too, but if you look at the full ramifications of their other beliefs, they deny it in just about everything else they do—or so I believed at the time.

My wife and I were married while we were still in the Church. Mary really didn't want to, but she capitulated to my wishes. I had my doubts about the Church, but I was confident that as long as I was going to the particular parish that we were attending, I could force myself to accept the faith, and just not focus on the things that I didn't agree with.

It didn't work. Within about a month or two after getting married those things that I didn't agree with, became increasingly troubling to me. That was when we decided to break from the RC and start looking at other churches.

The man that was leading the Bible study that we were attending was a student at the Grand Rapids School of the Bible and Music (no longer exists). He attended a Plymouth Brethren church (chapel) on the Northeast side of Grand Rapids. We visited his church a few times, but it was too far for us to drive. We found another PB church, Homestead Bible Chapel that was a closer drive for us and began checking it out.

My life in a Plymouth Brethren assembly: 1980-1982

My wife and I started attending Homestead Bible Chapel (no longer exists), a Plymouth Brethren assembly, in 1980; not too long after we were married at St. James in Grand Rapids, MI, a Roman Catholic church.

The first time we went there, we knew that we had found a home. It was a very small church. It had room to seat only about a hundred or so people. When we walked in the door, we were greeted by Abraham Lincoln! His real name was Randy Cooper, but you would swear this was old Abe reincarnated. Before the service even started, we had been invited over to his house for lunch. I don't remember if we did—I don't think so. We were kind of taken aback by the friendliness of the people. It was a good thing. We liked it, but it was so different than the aloofness of the laity that we were used to in many Catholic churches.

HBC was an open PB Church. To understand what that means, I have couple of things to tell you about PB “distinctives”. I won't go into a huge amount of detail here, but here are some basic tenants of the PB.

First is that they are very mainstream Protestant, Fundamental, Evangelical, and Baptist. For those who may not have heard of them before, they are not a cult as Christians *usually* define the word, although it is one if you look it up in the dictionary. So is Christianity as a whole for that matter. Some of the more famous people who have been PB are Harry Ironside, former pastor of Moody Bible Church; and WE Vine, author of “Vines Expository Dictionary.” Famous *former* PB are Garrison Keillor of “Prairie Home Companion” fame; and Brian MacLaren, now associated with the Emergent Church movement.

Two other PB are of note. John Nelson Darby was one of the original PB in Plymouth, England (not Massachusetts) in 1827. Darby is the man to whom the Holy Spirit revealed the concept of the Rapture as we know it today. He also was instrumental in the development of Dispensationalism.

PBs reject the name “Plymouth Brethren.” This is not a name that they use to distinguish themselves, it is a name that others have put upon them to differentiate them from other denominations. They do not call themselves a church, but an assembly. The Greek word for *church* is (ἐκκλησία), or assembly. They believe (correctly) and stress that the church is an invisible organism made up of all believers, alive and dead. They do not use it for a local assembly of believers, or for the building, which they usually call a chapel.

PB are very Baptist in their beliefs. See my next chapter for an explanation of Baptist distinctives. There are two major differences between them and Baptists:

- They do not believe in a local church membership. PB see no Biblical or practical reason for local church membership. Nowhere in Scripture is there any indication that any local assembly of believers had any kind of membership roll. Baptists not only maintain such a list, but you usually must sign an agreement about your beliefs, and that you agree with the church Constitution. Most importantly, members must first be baptized by immersion. PB do not agree with any of these. They do believe in baptism by immersion, just not as a condition for membership.
- Baptists believe in two offices: pastor and deacon. PB believe that these two offices are one and the same, and they prefer to use the term “elder.” There is no clergy or laity. There are only those who have chosen to fellowship with one another. There must be more than one elder in the assembly, and they are not elected to office.

PB assemblies are completely independent from one another. One may differ greatly from any other one out there. The Worship service at Homestead was what my wife and I still call the closest thing to true worship that we have ever experienced in a Protestant church. There was no set message. There was no designated speaker. You simply walked in, sat down, and began to pray silently. If you felt like praying aloud, you prayed aloud. If you felt like reading Scripture, you stood up and read Scripture. If you wanted to share a testimony, you did so. Usually after about a half-hour, one of the elders would stand and share a 10 or 15-minute mini-sermon. After that, the offering basket would be passed

very quietly, then we would share in the Lord's Supper. Communion is a weekly observance in most PB assemblies.

We loved Homestead greatly. In 1981, we both felt the need to be baptized biblically, by immersion. We had both been baptized as infants by sprinkling in our respective Catholic churches, St. John Vianney for me, and St. Isidore for Mary.

In 1982, I was getting to the point where I dreaded my job.

I was working at Guardsman Chemicals in Grand Rapids. It was a dirty, scummy, union job. At his time, I hated unions but in order to work there, I had to join. My father was the foreman of receiving when I first started there. Dad was having physical problems at the time and had missed a lot of work. When the supervisor in the Drum plant (where I worked) retired, they moved my Dad into this position. A few months later, for unexplained reasons (probably because of his health) he was fired.

I hated this job anyway and had already decided to go into the Army, partly to see if I might like it as a new career, and partly to get some money for college, something my folks and I could never afford. The way my Dad was treated at Guardsman just confirmed to me that I was doing the right thing. My wife was pregnant with our first son, so I waited until after he was born so I could be at the delivery and share in the first couple of months after his birth. So when Mike was two months old, I left for basic at Fort Dix, NJ and AIT at Fort Sam Houston, TX while my wife and he lived with my parents in Grandville, MI.

After Fort Sam, I left for my permanent assignment at Fort Hood, TX. I went straight there after AIT so I could find an apartment. I found one almost right away and went home to get my family.

Homestead gave us a wonderful send-off. There were a lot of tears. Randy Cooper tried to convince me that it definitely was *NOT* God's will for me to go into the Army. This was Randy's personal thing, not a PB thing. So it was off to Texas for a new chapter in my life.

My life as a Baptist: 1983—2007

After Mary and I moved to Killeen, TX we had some trouble finding a church. There were no PB churches anywhere nearby. We ended up settling for a new Baptist church that was meeting at a person's home. We went to this church for the rest of the time that we stayed in Texas.

After returning to Michigan in 1986, we found that a lot of people from Homestead had moved away, some were divorced, and the spirit there was just not the same. I still don't really know if it was the church itself, or if it was I that had changed. During the next couple of years some very important people in the congregation had died, including Randy, and by 1991 they disbanded and sold the property. After some searching, we

decided to attend Grandville Baptist Church (GBC), which was a very short distance from our home and only about ½ mile from where I grew up.

Although Mary and I had been attending Baptist churches for the past three years, at heart we still felt like we were PB. We were able to reconcile this in our minds (at least I did—Mary, I'm not so sure) by forcing ourselves to accept certain beliefs by reinterpreting them. To understand what I mean I need to show the Baptist distinctives and why we had a problem with some of them.

Baptists use an acrostic to identify their beliefs, however they are not all truly distinctive, as many denominations hold these as truth as well, to varying degrees. But the Baptists never met an acrostic they didn't like:

Bible - the sole authority for faith and practice (*sola scriptura*)

Autonomy or independence of the local church

Priesthood of all believers

Two offices:

- Pastor
- Deacon

Individual soul liberty and responsibility

Saved, baptized church membership

Two ordinances:

- Believer's Baptism
- Lord's Supper

Separation of Church & State

There were only two that I had problems with. The first was that I still believed that the offices of pastor and deacon were both the same office. I have since come to realize that they are indeed distinct, but at the time I believed that the important thing was that there was a plurality of leadership in the church. It didn't matter that much to me what titles they held.

The other is membership. I still do not believe that this is taught in the Bible. Every New Testament verse that a Baptist will use to convince you of the existence of local church membership are actually verses about being members of the universal (catholic) church. However—it may not be specifically stated, but in order to maintain church discipline and to hold orderly meetings and elections, a membership roll is very useful. So I accepted it on practical grounds rather than biblical.

In about 1987 I began to work in the church library. I found it a great way to minister at the church without requiring a huge time commitment. Also, I am not really good with children. This was a way that I could still be involved with them at the church in a limited

way. By 2003, the other people who worked in the library retired and that left me as what you might call a “Head Librarian”, although the church has no title for this position. I only include it here to help you understand my duties.

I am currently in the process of training someone to take my place in the library. After more than 20 years, I am getting very tired of it. I will elaborate more in the next chapter.

My time at GBC has been fruitful. Each of my sons went through their respective crises of faith, one worse than the other, but I will just leave that there. Those are their stories, not mine. They each found their Savior, have dedicated their lives to him, and are seeking his will for their future.

Mike, the elder of the two, is still living at home and at the time of this writing is working at Pine Ridge Bible Camp for the third summer in a row. He is hoping to still make it to Bible college someday and become a pastor.

Matthew is married to Amy, a wonderful Christian woman who Mary and I have grown to love as if she were our own daughter. They complement each other very well. They have been married for over two years, and by the looks of it, you would think that they are still dating.

Questioning Fundamentalism: Most of 2006

There are several things that have been leading me to question my Baptist, and “Fundamentalist” (not fundamental) customs.

Point 1

The whole time that I have been a Baptist; I have missed the active, physical part of worship. At GBC it is difficult to know if you can raise your hands in prayer, say “Amen” during the sermon, or applaud a good musical performance without calling attention to yourself.

Is this all there is—just sitting in a pew, singing some songs that are no more than camp songs with pabulum lyrics, and listening to a sermon on a subject that I have heard a thousand times? The fellowship is great. I have made some very good friends. And what would a Sunday School picnic be without John Wood’s BBQ chicken?! I love going to Sunday School and getting into the depths of the Bible.

Homestead did not have a physical form of worship, but it was an atmosphere of worship that was quite profound—something that I had not experienced since I stopped attending Catholic Mass.

Point 2

All of my life I have never been able to accept evolution as possible. Science is squarely against it, as is the Bible. However during the last few years I have not been too sure about the age of the universe. I have done much study in this area from sources like the

[Institute for Creation Research](#), [Answers in Genesis](#), [Kent Hovind Ministries](#), and [Reasons to Believe](#).

I will not go into all the details here but I know that it is impossible for Scripture and science to directly contradict each other. If science absolutely proves that the age of the universe is 14.5 billion years old, and Scripture says that it is only about 10,000 years old—tops; then one or the other is wrong. We know that provable science cannot be wrong (it may be incomplete), and we know that Scripture cannot be wrong. Therefore what is wrong is the interpretation of one or the other (or both).

The age of the universe is unquestionably just what it looks like, 14.5 billion years old. (This does not necessarily mean that evolution took place). Therefore it must be the way that Scripture is translated or interpreted that is incorrect. The six days of creation must be long ages of time. Perhaps I will go into more detail on this in a separate chapter later, but it would just confuse the issue if I went into much more detail here. A very good book on the subject is *A Matter of Days*, by Hugh Ross. You can purchase it [here](#).

This is very much like the church persecuting Galileo for saying that the sun, not the earth, is the center of the universe because it was against the Bible. As scripture was being misinterpreted before, so it likely is now.

Point 3

This study has brought me to another point. I still believe that Scripture is inspired and inerrant, don't get me wrong. But what else may we be misinterpreting?

In the last several years the *Left Behind* books by Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye have been very popular. I read most of these books myself and was very entertained. I have to admit that part of the reason I was attracted to the books is that Jenkins is a close, personal friend of a former pastor of mine at GBC.

Ever since my conversion I have pretty much held these same traditional Fundamentalist, dispensationalist views. And for the most part, I still do. However, before Jesus came, the Jews severely misinterpreted the signs and prophecies concerning their own Messiah. Could we be just as wrong regarding his return? Is Pretribulationism really biblical or was it created to assuage the fear that we may have to go through the tribulation? I really don't know. I don't think we can know until the prophecies begin to take place. Is the rapture itself misinterpreted? Only a very small minority of Protestants believe it, and only for about the last 150 years. Have we completely missed the boat on what Revelation is really about?

Point 4

Although Baptists will say that you do not have to be Baptist to be saved; many of them believe it without knowing it. I have heard on many occasions where a Baptist missionary candidate is on deputation trying to get support. He will very often say that they are going to such-and-such city in such-and-such country and that they will be the only missionary within say, 600 miles. A simple internet search may show that they may be the only

But are they? Do we really know what the early church was like? The New Testament doesn't really say what the early church was like other than a couple of glimpses in its early days. Acts mentions a few things but mostly takes it for granted that the reader, who was contemporary, knew what was going on. After chapter 9, it mainly concerns Paul's activities rather than the Church's, or most of the Apostles for that matter.

I decided to look into this further. My hope was to find justification for my Baptist theology. I could not have been more wrong.

Back to the beginning: late 2006 - Aug 2007

During the last few months, I have really begun to miss liturgical worship. I began to explore the primary Christian liturgical churches. These are Anglican, Lutheran, Orthodoxy, and Roman Catholicism.

As most of you are aware, Protestantism (Lutheranism) split off from Catholicism in 1517 when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Church at Wittenberg, Germany. There are two main pillars on which Protestantism rests. The first is *sola scriptura*, the belief that the Bible itself is the sole authority for all doctrine. Anything and everything that can be known about God comes directly from Scripture alone. All interpretation is individual interpretation as God has set up no Church hierarchy. The second is *sola fide*—we are justified by faith alone. Luther said that *sola fide* is so important, that Protestantism would fall without it.

Anglicanism split from Catholicism for one reason only. King Henry VIII wanted to divorce his wife and the Pope wouldn't let him do it. So he created his own church with himself as head. With such self-centered origins, there is no way I could ever consider this church as being Christ's ideal.

Orthodoxy and Catholicism both claim to be the original Church that was instituted by Christ himself. From the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine to the year 1054, the catholic (small "c") church had been divided into an eastern and western half. After the fall of the Roman Empire the western half of the empire waned until the rise of Charlemagne who was crowned Holy Roman Emperor by the Pope. Before this time, the eastern half became known as the Byzantine Empire and was closely associated with the Patriarchs of the Eastern Church.

It was the preference of the Charlemagne by the West, and the preference of Constantinople by the East which led to the Schism of 1054. Separation of Church and State was not a common belief back then and the Eastern Church viewed the Pope's crowning of Charlemagne as a political and ecclesiastical revolution. The Eastern Patriarchs excommunicated Pope Leo IX, and he returned the favor.

My natural inclination was to prefer the Orthodox position, because of my Anti-Catholic beliefs. At one time my firm belief was that every single Catholic on the face of the Earth was either ignorant of what the teaching of the Church was and the full ramifications of

that belief, or they were being disobedient by not pulling out of an apostate church. Whenever I would attend a Catholic Mass, whether a funeral, a wedding, or a relative's First Communion, I would grit my teeth through the service and think, "this is sheer *Paganism!*"

When looking at Orthodoxy it appeared to be almost exactly like the Catholic faith. There really were only a couple of big differences between the two that I could see. The first is the existence of, and the role of the Pope. Orthodoxy claims that all of the bishops had equal authority and that the Pope usurped them by proclaiming that he alone was the head of the church. The Pope claimed that the eastern bishops rebelled against the chosen of Christ. The second is that Orthodoxy is extremely ethnic-oriented. So much so that I don't see how they can call themselves a truly catholic (universal) church. This was the main reason that I gave up on Orthodoxy. That and the fact that have very long services, and they stand for them. There is no way that I could physically stand for a 3-hour service. Even a half-hour is a bit much for me.

Then I got to thinking about my Catholic past and what led me to come to the conclusion that it was unbiblical and apostate. As I said before, mine was not a very strict Catholic household. My sisters, brother, and I all attended Catechism (CDD) classes as kids. I stopped going during 9th grade. If you read my bio you will see that during this time, my religion had become something I was using in order to impress a certain girl at school.

I don't know if it was because of poor teaching, because I wasn't paying attention, or maybe the teachers weren't getting in to Catholic "distinctives" until later in high school, but it became apparent that I had not received very good instructions into what a Catholic actually believes. Shortly after high school, I had been attending a Protestant Bible study and was beginning to look at everything through a very Protestant lens. I was having trouble squaring what I was learning in Bible study with what I thought the Catholic Church was teaching me. I went to my Parish priest about some of my concerns and the only real answer I got from him was basically, "you have to believe it, or you're not a Catholic." I could only take this for so long and I finally left the Church for a Plymouth Brethren assembly.

I was now firmly in the Protestant camp. A couple of years after this, I went into the Army and for the next four years had virtually no contact at all with anyone who was Catholic. From that time until just recently I have never given a serious thought to ACTUAL Catholic belief. The only thing I read about Catholics from this point on was firmly anti-Catholic material written by people who in order to make their point often lie about and exaggerate the Catholic position.

This pretty much left me with only two choices: Catholicism, and Lutheranism. My true goal was to discover how the early church was structured. It seems logical that the way the church was run during the first century, while the Apostles were still alive and could direct it, must be the way that Christ intended his Church to be. This is what most Protestant denominations say they are striving for anyway, a return to the early Church.

So at this point, I decided that I really needed to bite my tongue and more fully explore Catholic teachings.

Rome Sweet Home: Aug 15, 2007 - Forever

To make a long story a little longer, I have finally decided that I am going back to the Catholic Church. After much study I cannot believe that I thought that it was a pagan church. So much of it is biblical and so logical, that it really is the only “denomination” that makes sense. I will try to explain why although I can’t go into a *huge* amount of detail on this. There are a lot of good Catholic websites and books out there that can better explain my position. I chose the above title for this section as this is also the title of an excellent book by Scott Hahn. It is written in a very logical and easy-to-read and understand style. If you live in the Grand Rapids, MI area, you can get the book from the [Kent County Library](#). Or you may purchase it from [Dr. Hahn’s website](#).

There were a lot of things that I had objections to at the beginning. Some were minor issues in my mind like Purgatory and Confession. Baptists rail against both, but they actually do believe them to a certain degree. The Bema Seat, or the Judgment seat of Christ, is just a Baptist euphemism for Purgatory, and Confession is what many Evangelical churches now call Accountability sessions.

However there were five main issues that have always caused me problems: *sola scriptura* (the “B” in the Baptists acrostic), *sola fide*, the Catholic position on Mary, the Pope, and the Catholic position on the Eucharist. I will deal with each of these in the next five chapters.

sola scriptura, the canon of Scripture, and Sacred Tradition

Sola scriptura is one of the most important doctrines taught by virtually all Protestant denominations. It states that the Bible is the final authority in all matters of belief and practice because the Bible is inspired by God and bears the absolute authority of God Himself. Whatever the Bible affirms, Baptists accept as true. No human opinion or decree of any church group can override the Bible. Even creeds and confessions of faith, which attempt to articulate the theology of Scripture, do not carry Scripture’s inherent authority.

The main problem with this belief is that it is **NEVER** taught in the Bible itself. These verses are the main ones that Baptists use as “proof” of Biblical authority:

Matt: 5:18 “For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”

Matt 24:35 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

John 16:12-13 “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak

on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”

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

2 Timothy 3:15-17 “and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”

2 Peter 1:20, 21 “knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is of someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

Each of the above verses is 100% true and inspired by God. However, not one single one of them indicates, let alone claims that the Scripture is the one and only authority. In fact, no book in the entire Bible, with the exception of Revelation, even claims to be inspired.

I have come to the realization that it is absolutely *impossible* for *anyone* to truly believe in *sola scriptura*. Belief in it is a Catch-22. If the Bible does not claim sole authority for itself, there is only one place that it can come from—Tradition. It is Tradition handed down from the Reformation that Protestants cling to in claiming *sola scriptura*.

Even if the Bible did claim sole authority someplace, it would still be Tradition that determines whether or not that passage or that book is inspired. Therefore Sacred Tradition and Scripture are at least equal. For this to be true there must be an earthly authority that dispenses Tradition and Scriptural interpretation to the Church. Otherwise, you end up with individuals claiming that they can interpret freely independent of others.

And this is what we have. Instead of “one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph. 4:5), we have over 33,000 Protestant denominations, all claiming to have the absolute truth as regards interpretation.

This also goes for the canon of Scripture. No book of the Bible tells us which books should be included. It is Tradition that tells us which books to include. Again even if the books of the canon were stated within the text of accepted Scripture, it would still be Tradition that would decide whether or not that book itself was inspired.

In his Easter letter of 367, Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, gave a list of exactly the same books as what would become the New Testament canon. This means that until at least this date, Christians *had* to rely on tradition, because they didn’t know which books constituted Scripture. From the time of the close of the Old Testament until the writing of the first book of the New Testament (probably the Gospel according to St. Mark), there

were no New Testament Scriptures at all, and Tradition is all the Church had. And to top it all off, the canon of the New Testament, which ALL Protestants accept as Scripture, not only comes from Tradition, but from *CATHOLIC* Tradition.

Protestants often use Mark 7:5-9 as “proof” that Jesus himself was against Tradition. However, this passage does not say that Tradition is wrong, just traditions that contradict revealed truth in the Holy Scripture. In fact, the Bible actually equates Sacred Tradition and Scripture in 2 Thess. 2:15 “So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the *traditions* that you were taught by us, either by our *spoken word* or by our *letter*.”

Catholics do not believe in *sola scriptura*, but in *solo verbo Dei*, the Word of God alone. The Word of God is broader than the Bible. It includes Sacred Tradition, and certain pronouncements from the Pope, as the source for all is God Himself.

sola fide

Another doctrine of importance to Protestants is *sola fide*, or justification by faith alone. This doctrine is so important to Protestantism that Martin Luther once said that without it Protestantism didn’t have a leg to stand on.

Well, it doesn’t. Nowhere in the Bible is this taught. In fact the only place in the entire Bible where the words “faith alone” appear together are in James 2:24-”You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.”

At first glance, the book of Romans chapters 2-4 and parts of 4,-6 and 13 all seem to teach faith alone. However, it is clear that the works of justification Paul is speaking of in Romans of are the works required by the Mosaic Law and whether or not the Gentiles had to perform them in order to be saved. The question asked in verse 29 confirms this interpretation. The Apostle Paul after stating “we account a man to be justified by faith, without the works of the Law” immediately follows this statement up with the questions “is he the God of the Jews only?” and “is he not also of the Gentiles?” This demonstrates that the distinction being made here is between Jews and Gentiles.

A very good article on this subject can be found [here](#).

Mary, the Mother of God

Mary.

This was a hard subject for me. Although it was hard for me to accept all that the Catholic Church says about her, in the back of my mind, I was kind of hoping that it was all true. Even from a Protestant perspective, Mary was a holy woman, deserving of the same respect that we would give Moses, Abraham, Isaiah, St. Paul, and so many others. I had always held the opinion that Catholics worship her, using “veneration” as a euphemism for “worship,” while Protestants do not hold her in high enough regard.

However, at least in my Protestant experience, Mary has been pretty much relegated to women's Bible studies. She was a good woman, but God could have chosen anyone with the right bloodline. In essence, she was just a womb to use.

I am convinced that the main reason for the Protestant position concerning Mary is to just go as far from the Catholic position as you can without demonizing her.

Protestants tend to do that. Catholics pray with their hands together with their fingers pointing to Heaven. Protestants pray with their hands folded or in their lap. Catholics kneel, Protestants sit. Catholics perform the Sign of the Cross when they pray, Protestants say "in Jesus' Name." Catholics use a crucifix, Protestants use an empty cross. Catholics honor and venerate Mary, Protestants show her little regard, and then claim that Catholics worship her. Sometimes it just seems like a game.

Protestants often are puzzled at how Catholics can come up with so much concerning Mary, when there is not much said about her in the Bible. It's true. Not much is said about her in the Bible, but there is more than most Protestants think, and what is said about her is paramount. The Revelation of Jesus to St. John is essential to understand Mary's role. Read Revelation 11:19-12:6. Try to read it ignoring the chapter break. The break should be before verse 19, not after.

"Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days."

It speaks of the Ark of the Covenant in Heaven. It then goes on to describe the Ark as a woman clothed with the sun, who gives birth to a son, Jesus. The woman in this passage is several things, she is the Ark of the (New) Covenant, she is Mary, she is the Church, she is Israel who gave birth to the Messiah, and she is physically located in Heaven.

This demands us to compare Mary with the Old Testament Ark of the Covenant. By themselves, some of the points in this chart would not mean a lot, but when taken as a whole, it speaks volumes. I found this basic chart on the internet, but I lost the source. I have added a couple and deleted a couple. If anyone knows the sources, let me know so that I can cite it:

Ark of the Old Covenant	Ark of the New Covenant
The Ark and the Holy Place had to be completely cleansed and consecrated to the Lord before His Shekinah glory could enter into it. It then became the dwelling place of God. Ex. 40:16-38	Mary was immaculately conceived through the power of God so that the vessel that contained the presence of God was pure.
When the sin of Israel became too great, God's glory left the tabernacle 2 Sam 4:21	The Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary, and her womb became the dwelling place of God. Luke 1:35
When Israel repented of her sin, and cleansed the temple, the Glory of God returned. 2 Chronicles 5	
The Ark contained the tablets of the Law, a portion of manna, and Aaron's staff which budded. Hebrews 9:4	Mary contained Jesus, the Word of God, the Bread of Life, the Branch who would one day after death, be raised to life
The Ark traveled to the hill country of Judah to dwell in the house of Obed-edom. 2 Sam. 6:10	Mary traveled to the hill country of Judah to the home of Elizabeth. Luke 1:39
King David danced and leapt for joy in the presence of the Ark. 2 Sam. 6:14	John the Baptist, in Elizabeth's womb, leaps for joy at the presence of the Lord inside Mary's womb. Luke 1:43
David shouted for joy in the presence of the Ark. 2 Sam. 6:15	Elizabeth cried with a loud cry of joy at the presence of the Lord inside Mary's womb. Luke 1:43
David asked, How can the ark of the LORD come to me?" 2 Sam. 6:9	Elizabeth asks, "And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Luke 1:43
The Ark remained in the home of Obed-edom for three months. 2 Sam 6:11	Mary remained with Elizabeth for three months. Luke 1:56
The house of Obed-edom was "blessed by the presence of the Ark. 2 Sam. 6:11	The word "blessed" is used three times concerning Mary at Elizabeth's house. Luke 1: 39-45
The Ark returned to Jerusalem, in the new Temple where the presence and glory of God is revealed. 2 Sam. 6:12, 1 Kings 8:9-11	Mary returns home and eventually comes to Jerusalem where she presents God the Son in the Temple. Luke 1:56, 2:21-22
God made Aaron's rod (which was kept in the Ark) return to life and budded to prove that he was the legitimate High Priest. Numbers 17:8	God resurrected his Son, who had become man in Mary's womb, to prove that He is the eternal High Priest. Hebrews 4:14

There is so much more that I could say on this subject, but it is better covered by [this article](#). In fact check out the whole site. It is one of the best sources anywhere that I have found.

Peter and the Papacy

Was Peter a Pope? If he was, and Popes are infallible then why did Paul “call him out on the carpet” for treating Gentiles differently when the Jews were present in Galatians 2? Why, when Peter is present, does James appear to lead the Church in Acts 15?

Let me just deal with these two first, and then I will deal with Peter’s authority.

The Church does not teach that a Pope is infallible in all things. I can say that Jupiter is the smallest planet and be wrong, and at the same time speak infallibly that $2+2=4$. That does not make the equation untrue, and it does not speak about *me* being infallible at all. Likewise, the Pope can pronounce that the canon of the New Testament is the 27 books that we are all familiar with, but still err in other things in his life. Peter preached the infallible truth in Acts 15 that Gentile believers did not need to conform to Jewish ceremonial law, however he erred as a man in the way he treated the Gentiles as reported by Paul in Galatians.

In Acts, notice that James’ decision and instruction was derived solely by the statement of Peter. Peter was acting as the head of the Church, while James was directing his “bishopric” the Jerusalem council, under the authority of Peter.

Now as to Peter himself. The most important verses in the Bible on this are when Jesus asked Peter (then still named “Simon”), “Who do you say that I am?” and he answered back, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matt. 6:16, Mark 8:29, Luke 9:20). Jesus words back to him in Matt 6:18-19 is where the controversy comes in. “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Plain reading in *English* appears to support the Catholic position. Protestants will remind us that the New Testament was written in Greek, not English. If you look at the Greek words for Peter and rock they appear as follows in order: *πετρος* (*petros*), and *πετρα* (*petra*). *Petros* is a small stone, and *petra* is a huge boulder. *Petros* is masculine, and *petra* is feminine. For these reasons, Protestants say that Jesus could not have meant that he was building the Church on Peter (the small stone), but on himself (the large boulder), the Rock of our Salvation.

However you have to remember that although the gospel was written in Greek, Jesus was speaking in Aramaic! Therefore the Greek text of Scripture is itself translated. Jesus own words are what we should look to. There is only one word that Jesus would have used when talking to Peter. That word is *Kepha* (*large boulder*), used elsewhere by St. Paul in the New Testament as Cephias. That is how we know that Jesus actually used this word, not *Petros* for Peter’s new name. So what Jesus actually said was, “You are Cephias, and on this Cephias I build my Church.” Or in English, “You are Boulder, and on this Boulder I build my Church.” Matthew uses the Greek words that he does, because he needed to

the word *petra* to convey the size of the rock. He used *petros* for Peter's name because *petra* is feminine, and is inappropriate as a man's name. He would have regarded this as adequate as the early Church fully understood that Peter, Cephas, was the Rock on which the Church is built.

The Eucharist

This is one that even as a Baptist always gave me pause. I would say that the elements at Communion were symbols, because they *are* at least that. But does it go farther? I have to admit that I have always had trouble with John chapter 6 where Jesus says that he is the bread of life, and that in order to receive eternal life you must eat his flesh, and drink his blood. The Jews then are puzzled by this saying and began to leave. Jesus then says it again, with emphasis, and even many who previously had believed, turned away. Jesus asked the Twelve if they were going to leave him too. Peter then says, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

If Jesus had only meant that the bread and the wine at Communion were only symbols, then why didn't he tell these people? I understand that he may not have told the Jews for the same reason that he didn't explain most of his parables to them, "because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand" (Matt 13:13). But why doesn't he then explain it to his disciples who were turning away? After all only a couple of verses later in Matthew, He says that these are not hidden from his disciples—"But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

The answer is that it is NOT hidden. It is exactly what it says it is. That the bread and the wine are actually the body and blood of the Lord is the only interpretation that makes sense given the reaction by the crowd, Jesus, and the Twelve.

The thing is, no one—*NO ONE*—ever questioned the elements as being anything other than the actual body and blood of the Lord until the Reformation. All of the earliest Church Fathers, from the first century on up believed it was the body and blood of Jesus. Ignatius of Antioch, who had been a disciple of the apostle John and who wrote a letter to the Smyrnaeans about A.D. 110, said, "Judgment is prepared for" ... (those who) "abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in his goodness, raised up again" (6:2, 7:1).

More recent discoveries

Our Lady of Guadalupe

Often Protestants, in an effort to completely separate themselves from everything that even appears Catholic, overlook historical events that are the Providence of God made manifest. This is one of the reasons that Protestants are missing the fullness of God's revelation.

One of these is Mary, in the form of the Holy Virgin of Guadalupe. The story of Our Lady is a story of the largest conversion from paganism to Christianity that the world has ever experienced.

If you saw Mel Gibson's movie, *Apocalypse*, you can see what the Aztecs' religion was like. It was polytheistic, and to maintain control over the other tribes, they would conquer them then sacrifice alive as much as 20,000 men every day. The sacrifices were brutal, including ripping a man's heart out of his chest and eating it in front of him before he had a chance to die.

Within ten years of Cortes' conquest, very few had converted to Christianity. The people still had a fear of what would happen to them if they abandoned their former gods. They also saw a big inconsistency with the lifestyles of the conquistadores and the lifestyle that was preached.

Mary appeared to Juan Diego, and performed the miracle of the roses and her image appeared on his *tilma* (poncho). After the people saw incontrovertible proof of the Providence of God, they began paying attention to the Gospel. News of Christianity spread like wildfire, and within a span of a couple of years, over 9,000,000 (that's not a typo!) people abandoned the pagan religion, and embraced Catholic Christianity.

This one incident completely obliterated the disgusting practices of the Aztec people.

For more details of this well-documented historical event go to <http://www.sancta.org/intro.html>

Protestants, Catholics, and the "literal" interpretation of the Bible

I really don't understand why Evangelicals/Fundamentalists/Baptists—whatever (I'm going to just start calling them EvaAnabaptamentalists, that covers it all) claim to believe

in the literal interpretation of Scripture. It is certainly not true. A literal interpretation would mean that they would have to believe that:

- Baptism is essential for salvation
- Babies can, and should be baptized
- “Salvation” can be lost
- The bread and the wine at Communion actually become the Body and Blood of the Lord
- Peter was ordained by Jesus himself as the earthly head of the Church
- That there is one, and only one, Church ordained of God
- Groups that splinter from the Church are outside of God’s will
- That Purgatory is real

The only way that you can NOT believe in these doctrines/dogmas is to take the literal truth of Scripture and explain it away somehow. This is often done by taking verses out of context. It is done by saying that Jesus did not mean what he said. Instead he was only speaking symbolically or figuratively. It is also done by rewriting history, saying that the early Church believed as they do currently. Pardon me, but isn’t that called “lying”? I certainly don’t want to be at the Judgment Seat of Christ and try to explain to him where He was wrong!

The truth is, the EvaAnabaptamentalist position did not exist until Martin Luther and after. Even then, Luther himself still accepted most of the above as truth.

How Firm a Foundation

I was lying in bed last night praying and listening to the Rosary on [EWTN radio online](#). When it was done I was thinking about the past few months since I surrendered to the Lord’s will and rejoined the Catholic Church.

I was thinking about how long it had been since I had regularly prayed or read the Bible. Since I have come back into the fold, I have found that I spend a lot of my time in prayer.

I know that that is my own fault, but I’ve come to realize that EvaAnabaptimentalism doesn’t really make it any easier. By having no accountability to anyone except God alone, it’s easy to put Him on a shelf, along with our Bible, and forget He’s there. Later we feel guilty that we haven’t prayed all week long, even though we meant to, and told others that we would pray for them. We go to church and look for our Bible and realize that it is sitting in the same place that we left it last week when we got home from church.

But the Catholic Church, by making us accountable to the local priest, by obligating us to go to Mass every week, by making Mass about worship instead of listening to someone talk, by providing prescribed prayers to say throughout the day, having rosaries and medals in our pockets, by hearing with our own ears by Christ’s own representative on earth that our sins are forgiven, keeps Jesus at the forefront of our minds all the time.

I also thought about how different the attitudes are of people to go to church (Protestant churches), and people who go to Mass. At church people will be talking and laughing until the music starts and even then it takes a couple of minutes for people to be quiet. People in the narthex/foyer who have been socializing begin to take their seats.

At Mass, we come in and are immediately introspective and reverent in our attitude about where we are. We sign ourselves with holy water, genuflect before Christ, and immediately kneel to pray and prepare ourselves for worship and to partake of Christ's sacrifice. We can socialize later. Now it's time for God. Everything else can wait.

I don't mean to disparage here the faith of anyone who is not Catholic. I have known a lot of good, reverent Protestants who are dedicated to daily prayer and Bible reading. Maybe it's more a reflection on the way that I was than anything else.

I have never been so awed by the presence of God. It's like for so many years I was swimming in a lake, having a good ol' time enjoying the weather and the sunshine. Then someone came along and gave me some scuba gear. I then realized that everything I knew was only on the surface. There was a whole other world right below me that I didn't know existed.

The Catholic Church is like that. Instead of being founded on someone's interpretation of the Bible that he came up with only last Tuesday, it is firmly planted in history and tradition. Jesus said it pretty well. Whether you are talking about Jonathan Edwards, John Piper, or Billy Graham; Protestantism is built on the shifting sands of personal interpretations of the Bible, blown about by winds of doctrine—whereas, the Catholic faith is built on the firm foundation of Christ's own body and blood, with the authority that He personally handed down to Peter and the apostles and on down to today.

Easter Vigil 2008

I just got back from Easter Vigil at my church. This was my first vigil as a Catholic, even accounting for my past. For those of you who don't know me, I grew up Catholic and left the Church at age 20. I became a Baptist, and after almost 30 years I have returned.

And to think that only a year ago, I went to an Easter Vigil as my niece and nephew were baptized and confirmed. I remember that all the Bible readings were cool (except they always have to throw in one of those Apocryphal readings). But all the kneeling, standing, candles, lighting the fire, etc. I almost couldn't stand. I kept thinking to myself, "these people are pagans. *Pagans!*"

How far the Lord has brought me in less than a year. I can't believe that I could never see the truth as revealed through the Church. My first Mass as a Catholic was last August, on Assumption Sunday. I once rejected Mary as our Mother. Now I have had more victory over sin in the past year because of her intervention than I have ever had in my entire life. Praise God for his grace and mercy and lovingkindness! Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

