

I Must Have Gotten Under White's Skin

After my [response](#) to White's "Catholic Legends", White wrote this response entitled "What Do Some Roman Catholic and Mormon Apologists Have in Common?"

So again, I have responded word-for-word.

It is very painful and irritating when something gets under your skin. You can't think about much else. Seems this is the case in Phoenix these days especially on James White's www.aomin.org website. My book *Upon this Rock* must have really hit a nerve. I am responding here to the second article James White has posted about me in about as many months. In addition I was told I received "honorable mention" in his latest debate and discussed at his church as well. I'm not sure whether I should be flattered or disgusted. But one thing that I *am* grateful for is that if our critic wants to keep "playing ball" with me, at least he keeps tossing nice slow pitches right over the plate.

Referring to James White as "our critic" again, I thought it would be wise to take a few hours to respond to his latest website article. Why spend the time to respond to our critic? Actually, this is more of an "Open Letter" to Catholics and interested Protestants than it is a response to White. But, I would have responded in like fashion to anyone who posted such a web article casting suspicion upon my books, and the teaching of the Catholic Church. Mr. Bill Webster ([click here](#)) and Pastor Chris Bayack ([click here](#)) can testify to this. Also, these are issues that need to be addressed. When men like White and Webster use the Fathers the way they do, it requires a response and a few hours of my time is worth the effort, at least in my estimation. Plus it is an enjoyable diversion from the many projects I am involved in.

In this rebuttal, White's words are in **blue**; my responses are in **black**.

The section mentioning me, Stephen Ray, begins:

>>>But dishonest misrepresentation is not limited to LDS apologists like Darryl Barksdale. No, Steven Ray, Roman Catholic apologist and author, likewise seems to be truth challenged these days as well.<<<

When a man, who assumes such scholarship and precision of thought and word for himself, as does our critic, fails on such a fundamental level as getting the author's name correct, it makes one question his analytical and writing abilities. I am not saying a writer has to be a great speller or grammarian to be effective—the Lord knows these are not my gifts (that's why I have good editors), but getting something like the name right of the author being critiqued seems pretty basic and important to me. Failing to get the name right immediately causes one to doubt how careful our critic actually is.

To help our critic on this basic matter, my name is Stephen with a “ph”, like the preacher in Acts 7, *not* Steven with a “v”. If he really has my book and has read it thoroughly as he implies, I would suggest that he should prove his erudition and attention to detail by at least getting the name correct. It is, after all, boldly printed on the cover of my book. (My guess is that by the time most people read this, our critic will have corrected this evident carelessness on his website and end up claiming this was a figment of my imagination.)

The assertion that I am “truth challenged” will be looked at more closely as I develop this response. I’ll let the reader draw his own conclusions. But one can already draw his own conclusion on this matter by reading the [earlier correspondence](#).

I failed to see anything but an arbitrary connection in the imagination of our critic between me and the Mormons in his article. Let a person taught in composition and clear thinking read our critic’s article and discover any substantive link established and demonstrated between myself and the Mormons. You will search in vain for anything but a flimsy connection in the mind of our critic, but certainly not in the article. Earlier in his article our critic says

>>>It is fascinating, though, to note that two groups which espouse VERY different theologies (Rome and Salt Lake), often use the very same tactic in an attempt to defend their positions by dehumanizing and attacking their opponents, rather than dealing with the *arguments* of their opponents.”<<<

The link between me and the Mormons seems to loosely be that our critic has a *persecution complex* and feels that people are out to get him—to “dehumanize” him. Me (associated with Rome) and a guy named Darryl Barksdale (associated with Salt Lake) seem to be picking on poor Mr. White and he has his dander up about it. How dare we challenge him! He even says we “dehumanize him”! What a foolish and blatant exaggeration! What a paranoid and neurotic comment. Having been trained by Francis A. Schaeffer at L’Abri in my early years that everyone is made in the image of God and their humanity makes them of infinite worth, I have always maintained the dignity of everyone I have interacted with. But, on the other hand I have challenged certain people’s honesty and integrity, but I have certainly never “dehumanized” them. This claim by our critic seems VERY bizarre to me—childish. And to say I have attacked him (where is the evidence in his recent article?) and not the issues makes me wonder if he ever read my response to his first article.

Dehumanize is a very strong word. Let the non-partisan reader judge whether I have dehumanized this poor man.

The *real* comparison here is not between Rome and Salt Lake, but Salt Lake and *Phoenix*! Both have considered the Catholic Church to have apostatized from the pristine Church of the Apostles. That is where the real comradery lies.

And, do I address the *man* as well as the *arguments*? Yes. At first I would have addressed only the issues but now the man has made himself an issue as well, both his integrity and

his methods. I feel he, as a person—as he has revealed himself in his writings, especially those in my regard—has made himself an object for discussion as well. So do I use *ad hominem* arguments (arguments against the man). Yes and no. I address the man in this rebuttal, but not the man alone or primarily. Actually, I have addressed the issues thoroughly and the man only as an adjunct. When a man becomes a public critic of authors and the Catholic Church he sets himself up as a topic to be discussed, especially if he is not perceived as being a straight shooter in his criticisms. If *ad hominem* is the *only* argument one has against their critic, then *ad hominem* is to be rejected. But to argue the issues thoroughly and to mention the person as well, especially if they have made themselves an issue, seems completely justified to me.

Saying anything against the *man* seems to be uncategorically condemned by many modern apologists, but Jesus and Paul did not hesitate to speak about the *person* as well as the *issue* when they felt it appropriate or applicable. Jesus didn't hesitate to call those who were stubborn, dishonest, and unteachable “white washed sepulchers” and “sons of the devil”. St. Paul did not refrain from speaking his mind to the Galatians referring to them as “stupid” or “foolish” (Gal 3:1), going so far as to say he wished the antagonists would mutilate (i.e., castrate) themselves (Gal 5:12). According to John Calvin Paul was saying the Galatians were ““disordered in mind”. [Paul] accuses them not only of having suffered themselves to be deceived, but of having been carried away by some sort of magical enchantment, which is a still more serious charge. He insinuates that their fall partook more of madness than of folly” (*Calvin's Commentaries: Galatians*, [Albany, OR: Ages Software, Inc.] 1998). Biblically speaking, it appears that addressing the persons is as acceptable as addressing the issues—of course, that may be my own private interpretation (tongue in cheek).

I do not use such strong language about our critic. At this point, in what unhappily seems to be an ongoing discussion, I do not apologize for addressing *him* as well as his *arguments*. And I don't hesitate to use a bit of sarcasm and good humor in the process. Life is too short to groan and moan through our few years of life without a bit of fun and levity.

Saying this, I profess no animosity against the man. I would be pleased to have coffee with Mr. White sometime. In fact, my in-laws have moved to Arizona for the winters and sometime when I visit I would be pleased to meet with James for coffee or dinner. The same goes for Mr. Webster in Washington State. Consider it a friendly invitation. Maybe a good hour or two over a cup of coffee would go a long way toward understanding each other.

White writes:

>>>Aside from producing the worst examples of patristic chicanery ([see a recent example here](#)), Ray likes to join Patrick Madrid and the folks at Envoy in promoting the untruth that I believe the early Fathers were “Protestants.” Such is simply absurd. When Envoy magazine ran a cover article promoting this silliness, the Christian Research Journal was kind enough to allow me some space to point

out the absurdity of the claim. This response was published on pages 52-53 of Volume 21, number 4.<<<

Here unhappily, we find the second *faux pas* in our critic's "scholarly review". Where did I write that our critic believes that the early Fathers were "Protestants"? Where did I ever say this? I want to see it in writing. Did *Envoy Magazine* attribute those words to me? To the best of my knowledge I have never written specifically that our critic believed the early Fathers were Protestant as he alleges, nor do I remember saying so verbally. I have written very little to or about our critic and the claim that I have specifically promoted this specific idea about him is not true and appears to be a misrepresentation. (Isn't misrepresentation something he accused me of in his article? Now the shoe fits on his *foot*. People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. If I am incorrect on this matter, I'd like to know it.

But maybe our critic is claiming that I am guilty by association. In other words, simply because I write a small feature article for each issue of *Envoy Magazine* entitled "Bible Basics", I am somehow implicated in the mythical "crime" against our critic. A magazine's cover article says something he doesn't like and poor Stephen Ray (notice I spelled it with a "ph") is implicated even though I have no editorial control of the magazine's content and have no idea what any particular issue is going to say.

I wonder how our critic would respond if he were a guest on a radio show or a contributor to a magazine and then held accountable and implicated in everything the radio show or magazine espoused or taught? It seems evident to most intelligent folks that writing an article or making a guest appearance does not mean that one necessarily agrees with everything said or held by the editor or interviewer involved, nor should words be put in one's mouth based on something someone else allegedly wrote.

If I did *not* say what our critic claims and if I have been made guilty by association, I wonder if our critic will be a big enough man to admit his mistake and correct it. Our critic is really slipping. Maybe he is overworked—single-handedly saving God and the world from the scourge of Catholics and others who don't agree with his parochial views—or maybe he isn't getting enough sleep.

Also, notice the next weakness in his article. Our critic does not even mention which issue of *Envoy*, or which cover article he is referring to. This makes it a little difficult to verify if the magazine did or did not make such a claim concerning our critic and if I am somehow included. Again, we find a glaring example of sloppy writing and obscure allegations without substantiation or the ability to verify. My guess is that our critic will correct this mess too, probably before the reader gets a chance to see this for themselves.

(Later note: It has just come to light that the e-mail referred to by Mr. White later in his article might have had a heading of "Claims the Early Fathers were Protestant". This may be why he says I stated the same. However, if this is the case, I should make it clear that those were not my words. They were the words of the person asking me an e-mail question. If this is the case, I must have simply hit the "reply" key and answered the e-

mail, but I certainly don't remember seeing that subject line, if in case that was the subject line. For those not familiar with e-mail protocol, when hitting the "reply" button it automatically reuses the "subject line" inserting a "RE: " to inform the original sender which message is being responded to.

It would have behooved our critic to find out who wrote the "subject line" before automatically attributing it me. The lady who wrote to me just commented, "The words . . . were definitely MY words, not yours." If this *is* the source of our critic's charge, it is again a matter of guilty by association because I answered an e-mail without changing the original writer's subject line, which I don't even recall seeing. Either way he should cite the source for his charge (something I wrote, an article in *Envoy* or a random subject line for an e-mail I didn't write?). Either way, an assumption was made by our critic and you know the old saying about the one who "assumes". *I think an apology is in order.*

What *does* our critic think about the Fathers? That comes out a bit in this response but a more thorough discussion of that matter would be better done at a later time, if necessary.

>>> Recently an e-mail was forwarded to me wherein Mr. Ray wrote: "You are right of course in your view of the Fathers. I have had a long "history" with White and have his books and know his shoddy arguments well. He does not respect the Fathers like we Catholics do. He uses them only to prove his point, kind of like weapons. He takes their quotes out of context and does them great injustice. [At this point he refers his correspondent to articles on his webpage, including the above mentioned article. Have no fear of White and Webster. They sound good at first, especially if you want to believe them, but once you look at them carefully, especially their abuse of the Fathers, their disingenuousness becomes quite apparent." This e-mail is dated 5/2/00.<<<

First, I stand by my words as quoted—they are true. There is a history to this anti-Catholic movement and these two men. It is a reminiscent of the debates a century ago in England with the Anglican divines, and I must say they did a much better job of it than the current Protestant, Reformed Baptist critics. *I stand by my words in the e-mail.* I don't dislike these two men as men and as I've stated elsewhere, I wouldn't mind having a cup of coffee with either of them sometime. I also don't necessarily attribute bad intent to them, but what I said about their writings is *true* and it is there for all to see who take the time to investigate and not settle for a superficial reading.

Funny thing: I have received several messages lately from White/Webster devotees and supporters, all of who have decided to join the Catholic Church. After comparing my books and writings with Webster's and White's they abandoned the leaking ship and all of them, after much study and comparison, have concluded my assessment of the Fathers (the Catholic view) was correct and honest. After comparing my writings with those of our critic and his friend, these sincere searching Protestants have made their decision to become Catholic. I have heard similar stories from many others and these most recent ones are only the tip of the iceberg. This is what really scares our critic. When they see even their loyal followers leaving their fold for the one, holy, catholic and apostolic

Church the marrow in their bones begins to melt.

Ironically, I just received the following e-mail this morning—how apropos. I will provide an excerpt. This man writes,

“I want to thank you for making the journey across the Tiber and for providing a path for others to follow. I too have been on a similar journey—always seeking what the Catholic Church has but always afraid of what it was as defined by fundamental Protestant churches. It was only in the last couple of months that my disillusionment with my Baptist church forced me to seek out finally the true Church and find out for myself the truth. I too have been somewhat angered by what seems to be deliberate deception about Catholic doctrine but now am over that for the most part and am busy learning and doing what I need to do to be a real, official, participating Catholic. I should be confirmed within four weeks or so as I am on an accelerated, personal study course. *You may be interested to know that I came to your website as a result of James Whites website where he tells of your dismal failure to make your points truthfully. My only problem was that I didn't stop there—I went to your website and found out the truth.* I bought your book “Crossing the Tiber” and am benefiting from it very much. Sola Scriptura doesn't work and only now do I understand that. I too have said and repeated the same lies about the Catholic Church and yet she has remained ever faithful to the truth and is welcoming me home” (emphasis mine).

>>> [Steven Ray is known to Protestant apologists as the man who argues from silence.](#)<<<

Really? Now, I am known as one who argues from silence, eh? Is this a charge that I argue from silence *alone* or that I use silence as one of many tools for researching history and truth? If it's the first, our critic is dead wrong; if it is the second, I admit guilt because such a use of silence is perfectly proper and necessary for proper research, along with substantial evidence it provides a helpful subsidiary argument. It is humorous, as we will see in a moment, that what I am accused of, the critic and his friends consistently do but won't admit it—or possibly don't realize it.

But, who besides Webster has claimed *that* and what is their basis for making such a claim? Anyone with the temerity to say I argue from silence with an implication that that is my major emphasis, only proves they have not interacted with my books or other writings. Or like Webster, they “proof-texted” my book by taking one paragraph or footnote out of context. In this case, Webster made the claim of *silence* based on one paragraph in my book, which he wrenched from its context (page 12 of my book *Upon this Rock*). This wouldn't surprise me if our current critic has done the same since it is their typical method of doing research. It also seems he likes to parrot his friend Webster often enough without doing his own research. However, if our critic had kept up with the conversation and done his own homework he would not stick his foot in his mouth like this.

So, is our critic's comment based on that *one* paragraph taken out of context or is he

again simply parroting his friend's mistake? I tried to help Mr. Webster understand that my most appropriate use of such astounding silence in historical research is only one of many tools a researcher utilizes when investigating and writing. Every workman has his tools; silence is one of many tools used by the historian. My arguments in *Upon this Rock* (pg. 12) are absolutely sound and [clearly defended](#)?

It is certainly comical in this context that we find these two fellows using silence themselves, repeatedly, often as their main argument, though they don't realize or acknowledge what they are doing. We shall see this again below as we see so often in their other writings. For those who want to read just a small excerpt from my response to Webster, they can look below at *Appendix A*. I wish our critic would keep up on the latest discussions if he is going to weigh in with his two cents. It would at least add a small bit to his waning credibility.

>>>His anachronistic attempts to turn the early Fathers into faithful followers of modern Romanism are almost the stuff of legend, and would be humorous if they were not resulting in such damage in the personal lives of individuals who are deceived by his writings.<<<

This is, of course, a matter of our critic's personal and private opinion—and he is entitled to his own opinion, no matter how flawed it is. My book—had our critic actually read it, which I doubt—and my [Responses to Webster](#) speak for themselves. I get weary of saying the same thing over and over again to these guys. The clear explanation is in my book and open for all who desire to pursue this issue further. I wish our critic had read it before making statements that are not true and which my books and writings clearly refute. Like the numerous disciples of the “White/Webster team” who took the time to honestly study and research the matter, you the reader can decide for yourself.

White writes:

>>>While he accuses me of disrespecting the Fathers, is it showing respect for Augustine, for example, to put words in his mouth he never spoke? Is it showing respect for the Fathers to force them into the mold of modern Romanism, replete with doctrines and beliefs they never embraced?<<<

Putting words in the mouth of the Fathers is something I do not do; in fact, my book *Upon this Rock* is actually a compilation of quotations from the Fathers with footnoted comments and explanations. Also, unlike the two mentioned above, I have included the toughest quotations in my works, the ones our critic and his friend assume hurt the Catholic cause. They are mistaken; these “difficult quotations” are far from damaging the Catholic teaching when understood in their full context and a proper understanding of the “unanimous consent of the Fathers”.

Unfortunately we find another great omission in our critic's article: where do I “put words in his [Augustine's] mouth”? We have no reference or citation given for verification or to discover the fuller context. This compositional weakness doesn't

surprise me or anyone else familiar with our critic's tactics and articles. We are not told what words, but is our critic possibly referring to my use of the commonly cited summary of St. Augustine's conclusion to his *Sermon 131*? I hope not because that would again demonstrate disingenuous conduct on his part since that issue was already addressed in quite some detail in my article ["Steve Ray responds to 'Catholic Legends and How They Get Started'"](#) and has never been responded to by our critic other than to ignore it and pound on the same piano key again in this his latest article. If Augustine's *Sermon 131* is the object of his discomfort, then he probably has still not read footnote 187 on page 233 of my book *Upon this Rock*. I am afraid you can explain things to some people over and over again and if there is no desire to deal with the truth or willingness to admit a their faults it goes in one ear and zoom, right out the other one. Then they wonder why folks like me—and their fallen-away disciples—stare at them with puzzled looks in our faces after a while.

The words "Rome has spoken, the matter is closed", as confirmed by many scholars and historians, capture the essence of St. Augustine's words and conclusion in his *Sermon 131*. I will reiterate again that I clearly explained that the shortened, popularized version was not verbatim and I provided the actual text on the same page of my book and several other places in the book as well. No mystery here, no smoking gun, no masked man foisting misquotes on unwary readers. All we find is a critic who can play only one key on the piano lately and it starts getting old after a while, and somewhat monotonous. Too bad one like myself has to repeat things only to see them fall on the deaf ears of someone so entrenched in his anti-Catholic tradition that he can't hear or see to save his own life.

To continue whining about something that was not an issue to begin with (since it is fully discussed in my book) and that has already been explained on my website to the perfect satisfaction of objective readers, would seem to bring the critic's comments and comprehension skills into question. It is one thing to object to an error, but quite something else to continue to object well after the situation has been put to rest and satisfactorily explained and shown *not* to be an error and *not* motivated by deceitful intent. If this is not the case, the burden of proof is most certainly lies with our critic. His discomfort might possibly be due to his miserable failure to prove this earlier.

I think he "doth protest too much" to borrow a phrase from Shakespeare. If the best our critic can do is to continue to protest in writing and at debates something that has already been resolved, it seems to demonstrate a failure to keep informed and up to date with the latest discussion on the matter—or a failure to be honest (?).

>>> Was it fair for Mr. Ray to present a section on Augustine that *utterly ignores the vital passages that demonstrate his higher commitment to Scripture than to the opinion of the bishop of Rome*? The sad but true fact is that it is Mr. Ray who is guilty of every charge he makes against me, and any fair reading of his work, *Upon This Rock*, bears this out. ("White's fans" have converted to the Catholic Church based on my book so obviously not everyone agrees with our critic's subjective and self-serving opinion.) **There is no attempt made by Mr. Ray to attain some level of fairness: Instead, this is a sterling example of the vain attempt**

to create a “unanimous consent of the Fathers,” something honest Roman Catholic scholars admit simply does not exist.<<<

First, this is a classic example of what is called “poisoning the well”. If you disagree with our critic you automatically “prove” you are not an “honest Roman Catholic scholar”. Thanks Mr. Critic, but that’s nonsense, as you and I both know. Your definition of “honest Roman Catholic scholar” really boils down to those Catholic writers who have said something you can use to prove your point—writers who have said something you can agree with. This is a very subjective definition of “honest Roman Catholic scholar”—shame on you!

We all know how very many topics we can list that would command the unanimous consent of the Fathers as properly defined (the moral unanimity of the vast majority). Our critic simply ignores these.

Our critic has failed to understand, or at least failed to explain to his readers accurately the common Catholic phrase “unanimous consent of the Fathers”. A simple definition is this: “When the Fathers of the Church are morally unanimous in their teaching that a certain doctrine is a part of revelation, or is received by the universal Church, or that the opposite of a doctrine is heretical, then their united testimony is a certain criterion of divine tradition. As the Fathers are not personally infallible, the counter-testimony of one or two would not be destructive of the value of the collective testimony; so a moral unanimity only is required” (*The Maryknoll Catholic Dictionary*, 153).

For those who want more info on this technical, theological, and historical phrase (which is not open to our critic’s personal interpretation and twisting) I would suggest they read:

- 1) My correspondence with Webster on [Unanimous Consent](#).
- 2) Appendix D: “Yves Congar and the Unanimous Consent of the Fathers”.
- 3) My dictionary article [“Unanimous Consent of the Fathers”](#).
- 4) Dave Armstrong’s article “Refutation of William Webster’s Fundamental Misunderstanding of Development of Doctrine” at <http://ic.net/~erasmus/RAZ423.HTM>, to name a few.

Our critic questions,

>>> Was it fair for Mr. Ray to present a section on Augustine that *utterly ignores the vital passages that demonstrate his higher commitment to Scripture than to the opinion of the bishop of Rome?*<<<

If our critic is referring to St. Augustine’s Sermon 131 (if it is he should have said so in his article), then I refer the reader, and our critic to Appendix B, which I have provided at the end of this response. St. Augustine of course understood the necessity and primacy of

Scripture, but he also understood the necessity and primacy of the Catholic Church. This is not an either/or situation; rather, it is a both/and situation. St. Augustine did not drive a wedge between Scripture and the Church, rather he saw the Church as the final means of interpreting, judging, and enforcing the Scriptures.

Finally, before moving on, our critic says,

>>>no attempt made by Mr. Ray to attain some level of fairness: instead, this is a sterling example of the vain attempt to create a “unanimous consent of the Fathers,” something honest Roman Catholic scholars admit simply does not exist.<<<

The mythical unanimous consent of “honest Roman Catholic scholars” suggested by our critic is a figment of his imagination. Talk about being fair (and honest)! Roman Catholic scholars and historians, theologians and clergy have used, explained, and defended the term as I have explained it from the earliest times. I have listed elsewhere a host of honest Roman Catholic scholars who would scoff at our critic’s attempt to categorize them in such a fictitious camp. I will not address this here since I have done so in great detail in previous works on my website in my discussion with Webster.

>>>Who can allow the early Fathers to be.... the early Fathers? Protestants can. We can allow them to teach *everything* they taught, not just those parts that later Roman tradition codified as doctrine or dogma.<<<

This last comment makes one wonder if our critic has had enough sleep lately. Delusions and loss of contact with reality often accompany lack of sleep. Just wondering . . .

A short perusal of my books and the Fathers will show that our critic is delusional if he really believes what he just wrote. The Fathers are essentially Catholic, organically Catholic, and it is from their teaching based on the Scriptures and Tradition that the Catholic Church has grown and flourished. *Maybe this is why thousands of Protestants are converting to the Catholic Church today after reading the Fathers.* Protestant ministers by the boatload who have recently become interested in the Fathers are crossing the Tiber, converting to Catholic Christianity. I met with many of them at Steubenville this weekend. The *Coming Home Network* for ministers converting or considering conversion to the Catholic Church now has over 9,000 members. I am personally in contact with many Protestant clergy who are on this journey or already in the Catholic Church.

This is not an accident, nor is it because the Fathers were essentially Protestant in their theology, as I used to believe. The reason is simple: the earliest Christians and the Fathers of the Church were Catholics in the very core of their being and teaching and those hundreds and thousands who are converting from Protestantism to Catholicism after giving the Fathers an “honest read” are evidence of this truth.

I have yet to hear of any such mass exodus of Catholics to the sects of Protestantism as a

result of reading the Church Fathers. Ask yourself: why is that? The Church Fathers read in context, fairly and honestly are bringing Protestants into the Catholic Church, certainly not bringing Catholics into the Protestant camps. If they are essentially “friendly” to Protestant theology and outside the pale of modern Catholicism, why is it that they are a major factor in the multitude of conversions into the Catholic Church and not visa versa?

Why are the Protestant apologists so intensely concerned? As I wrote in my last response: “[White] is also desperate to contain the bleeding since so many of the brightest Evangelical Protestants are jumping ship and joining the Catholic Church. Even Evangelical writer Riddlebarger admits “While evangelicalism is growing numerically, apparently there are not as many notable Roman Catholics becoming evangelicals as vice-versa” (*Roman Catholicism*, ed. John Armstrong [Chicago: Moody Press, 1994], 240). And why is that? Because they cannot live comfortably with the Fathers or the fuller understanding of the Bible within their Protestant traditions, among other reasons. I think our critic would be hard pressed to come up with *any* significant list of notable and knowledgeable Catholics who have left Catholic Christianity for the Protestant sects, especially as a result of reading the Fathers.

>>>We can accept the truths they lived and taught, and reject the errors each man, as a fallible human being, embraced. We do not have to turn them into Protestants, and I have *never* said they were.<<<

Nor have I claimed that our critic said they were, as he unfortunately implies (or actually states outright). Catholics never say the Fathers were infallible; rather, they are authentic witnesses, through their moral unanimity, to the Sacred Tradition and the proper understanding of the Scriptures. “Proof-texting” the Fathers (the “hunt ‘n peck method” of research) without regard for the whole context of their lives, cultures and works is disingenuous. Thus, our critic “uses” the Fathers to bolster his view of the Trinity, for example, but rejects them when it comes to the doctrines he is unwilling to accept because he is so choked by his Fundamentalist traditions and presuppositions. He accepts the biblical brilliance of the Fathers in some areas and rejects their identical brilliance and unanimity on the issues that separate Catholics and Protestants. If we can’t trust the Fathers and the councils in the areas of the Real Presence, regenerative baptism, etc., how do we know we can trust them in the choosing of the canon and the fine distinctions of the Trinity and the deity of Christ? Our critic sets himself up as the final word not only of the Fathers, but seemingly of the Scriptures as well. Phoenix becomes the “Little Baptist Rome of the Arizonian Desert”.

We Catholics can again and again point to the theological antecedents for Catholic dogmas in the Fathers. We can always trace a clear trajectory of development and expanding understanding from the Fathers to the present day. That’s all that is necessary on our own principles. The Protestant, especially the Reformed Protestant like our critic, can do no such thing. On topic after topic they must admit that there are no theological antecedents prior to a rather late date (I’m thinking specifically of forensic justification, eternal security, *sola Scriptura*, a purely symbolic Eucharist, non-regenerative baptism, denominationalism, and so on and on.) There is no theological trajectory that can be

established. Again and again their doctrines are shown to be theological *nova*—new inventions. Geisler, Packer, McGrath and many other Protestants understand this. Even non-partisan historians recognize the fact that the Catholic Church today is the same organic Church that Jesus started—the theological and historical continuity is easily traced. An example of this is the line of 264 Popes in clear succession that demonstrates the longest lasting institution in history, at least in the modern era. That we have a trajectory and the Protestant does not is a great difference between us.

Guess what camp I'll cast my lots in with. In my book *Crossing the Tiber* I write, "I am not the first to cross the Tiber, I won't be the last—I am in good company" (90).

>>>I *have* said that they often expressed sentiments that are far more Protestant than Roman Catholic in today's context: Athanasius' standing on the foundation of Scripture over against councils and bishops and prelates is not the action you expect from a Roman Catholic. It is the Roman Catholic apologist who has to turn them into something they were not, and this Steve Ray does in glowing colors.<<<

Bringing St. Athanasius into this discussion at this point is not wise on White's part. White has been refuted on this over and over again. He reminds me of the Energizer Bunny, he just keeps going and going and going, pounding his little drum as if nobody had ever corrected him on this matter. Even now, in responding to him I feel like I'm poking at a mad dog. I question whether it is merciful to do so. It seems our critic doesn't want to be confused with the facts. Our critic can proof-text and twist the Fathers to supposedly express Protestant sentiments, if, and only if he divorces them from the full context of their writings and times. Athanasius, my patron saint by the way, needs to be understood in the context of his life and writings, something it appears our critic has failed to do.

Two very early Church historians, contemporaries of the era, whom I will trust *long* before I trust the opinions of our critic, understood St. Athanasius in his full contest. I will provide a few examples, both of which are taken from my book *Upon this Rock* (our critic seems to have missed them in his "fair reading" of my book.) What did St. Athanasius depend upon? The Scriptures of course. His writings are full of dependence upon Scripture. But why must our critic drive a wedge between Scripture and the Primacy of Rome; something St. Athanasius *did not do*? It is the typical *either/or* dichotomy. It is *either* Scripture *or* tradition. *Either* Scripture *or* Church authority. *Either* faith *or* works. This is like saying you can love *either* your wife *or* your children. Unnecessary dichotomies are by definition unnecessary.

What do these early *Eastern* historians write about St. Athanasius? These historians were not from Rome, or the West and they had no "Roman agendas" to promote. Let me give two examples:

Socrates Scholasticus (c. 380–450 A.D.) was a Greek Church historian. He was native to Constantinople and wrote mainly of the Eastern Church, touching only on the West when

it affected his narrative on the East. He would obviously have no reason to promote or exaggerate the Roman primacy. He was writing in the generation following St. Athanasius, with the great saint's life and words still ringing in his ears. The first quotation from Socrates Scholasticus shows the authority of Rome even in the East and the second, the authority of Rome regarding the bishops and their appointments in the East. St. Athanasius depended upon the signature of the Roman bishop to regain his bishopric in Alexandria.

Interesting question: as you read these early historians, ask yourself "Where do we find this Church today? Where is the comparable 'court of appeals' today in the Protestant world?" It is easy to jerk a quote from here or there in the writings of the Fathers, but where does the Church of the Fathers' exist today—the Church with a final court of appeal, the Apostolic see in Rome? Where is the Church that the Saints, martyrs, confessors and Doctors of the Church, St. Athanasius and St. Augustine, knew and loved? Where is this court of appeal for the independent Reformed Baptist? Where is *their* "Apostolic see"—in Phoenix Arizona?

"Neither was Julius, Bishop of the great Rome, there, nor had he sent a substitute, although an ecclesiastical canon [Church law] commands that the churches shall not make any ordinances against the opinion of the bishop of Rome" (*History of the Church* 2, 8 in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd series, 2:38).

"*Athanasius, meanwhile, after a lengthened journey, at last reached Italy. The western division of the empire was then under the sole power of Constans, the youngest of Constantine's sons, his brother Constantine having been slain by the soldiers, as was before stated. At the same time also Paul, bishop of Constantinople, Asclepas of Gaza, Marcellus of Ancyra, a city of the Lesser Galatia, and Lucius of Adrianople, having been accused on various charges, and expelled from their several churches arrived at the imperial city. There each laid his case before Julius, bishop of Rome. He on his part, by virtue of the Church of Rome's peculiar privilege (Shotwell and Loomis translate this "oversight"), sent them back again into the East, fortifying them with commendatory letters; and at the same time restored to each his own place, and sharply rebuked those by whom they had been deposed. Relying on the signature of the bishop Julius, the bishops departed from Rome, and again took possession of their own churches, forwarding the letters to the parties to whom they were addressed*" (*History of the Church (Hist. Eccl.)* 2, 15 in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 2nd series, 2:42, emphasis mine).

Does this sound Catholic to you—Roman Catholic? Or, does it sound Reformed Baptist, or Presbyterian, or Mormon? It sounds Roman Catholic to me and to millions and millions that have preceded me in the Church. Of course our critic, one of the relatively few in the recent centuries, tells us we are wrong. On what authoritative basis does he tell us he presides over the Fathers and councils of the Church—over the Apostolic See in Rome?

Sozomen from Palestine (c. 370– later than 439 A.D.) the other Eastern historian wrote:

“*Athanasius, on leaving Alexandria, had fled to Rome. Paul, bishop of Constantinople, Marcellus, bishop of Ancyra, and Asclepas, bishop of Gaza, repaired thither at the same time. Asclepas, who was opposed to the Arians and had therefore been deposed, after having been accused by some of the heterodox of having thrown down an altar; Quintianus had been appointed in his stead over the Church of Gaza. Lucius also, bishop of Adrianople, who had been deposed from the church under his care on another charge, was dwelling at this period in Rome. The Roman bishop, on learning the accusation against each individual, and on finding that they held the same sentiments about the Nicæan dogmas, admitted them to communion as of like orthodoxy; and as the care for all was fitting to the dignity of his see, he restored them all to their own churches. He wrote to the bishops of the East, and rebuked them for having judged these bishops unjustly, and for harassing the Churches by abandoning the Nicæan doctrines. He summoned a few among them to appear before him on an appointed day, in order to account to him for the sentence they had passed, and threatened to bear with them no longer, unless they would cease to make innovations. This was the tenor of his letters. Athanasius and Paul were reinstated in their respective sees, and forwarded the letter of Julius to the bishops of the East.*” (*The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen 3, 8 in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 2nd series, 2:288–289, emphasis mine*).

Also, “The bishops of Egypt, having sent a declaration in writing that these allegations were false, and Julius having been apprised that Athanasius was far from being in safety in Egypt, sent for him to his own city. He replied at the same time to the letter of the bishops who were convened at Antioch, for just then he happened to have received their epistle, and accused them of having clandestinely introduced innovations contrary to the dogmas of the Nicene council, and of having violated the laws of the Church, by neglecting to invite him to join their Synod; for he alleged that there is a sacerdotal canon which declares that whatever is enacted contrary to the judgment of the bishop of Rome is null” (*The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen 3, 10 in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 2nd series, 2:288–289*).

It is understood by Sozomen, and not contested, that there was an ecclesiastical law from Nicaea and earlier, that Rome had the final authority to sanction or nullify the decrees of councils and local churches. Sounds awful Roman Catholic, eh?

St. Athanasius argued from the primacy of Scripture, but it was the signature of the Roman bishop that returned him to his bishop’s chair in the East. I could provide much more on St. Athanasius, but since it is not the main issue brought up by our critic, I will leave it for another time.

>>>One of my favorite patristic citations might well illustrate this. Augustine said: All things that are read from the Holy Scriptures in order to our instruction and salvation, it behooves us to hear with earnest heed.... And yet even in regard of them, (a thing which ye ought especially to observe, and to commit to your memory, because that which shall make us strong against insidious errors, God has been pleased to put in the Scriptures, against which no man dares to speak,

who in any sort wishes to seem a Christian), when He had given Himself to be handled by them, that did not suffice Him, but He would also confirm by means of the Scriptures the heart of them that believe for He looked forward to us who should be afterwards; seeing that in Him we have nothing that we can handle, but have that which we may read.” *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series Volume VII, Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of John, Homily 2, 1 John 2:12-17, section 1.* <<<

What is in this quote that a Catholic would disagree with? The Catholic says, “Amen!” This is good Catholic theology. Catholic teaching continually emphasizes the teaching of St. Augustine, that God has revealed Himself in Scripture against which no man dares speak. But where do we find here, in one of our critic’s favorite quotes, a statement that pits Scripture against Sacred Tradition or Apostolic Authority preserved in the Apostolic Succession or the Apostolic see in Rome. I don’t see it. In fact, *Sermon 131* proves there was no dichotomy in St. Augustine’s mind or teaching. Again there is an unspoken assumption of *either/or* on the part of our critic. Who misrepresents the Fathers? Go ahead and guess. Who drives wedges between compatible teachings of Augustine and tries to emphasize one over the other to the detriment of the full teaching and life of St. Augustine? I think the objective reader knows.

If the Popes contemporary with St. Augustine made grandiose, unbiblical, and heretical claims to primacy and jurisdiction over the Church, why did not St. Augustine jump down their throats and denounce them. Why don’t we find him condemning such “power grabbing”? Why instead do we find him sending the results of his local council to the Roman See for ratification? Why doesn’t our critic inform us of these historical facts which he is either ignorant of or sweeps under the rug.

Does St. Augustine reject Church councils and customs, Sacred Traditions and Roman primacy? Of course not and our critic knows it. Our critic depends on silence to promote his Baptist traditions. It is a desperate maneuver. Read my section on St. Augustine in *Upon this Rock* (pgs. 227-234) and my [Response to Webster](#) to see more. The very passage, and my explanation of it, which has so clearly gotten under our critic’s skin, is the ending of St. Augustine’s *Sermon 131*. What was the final determining authority that denounced Pelagius, putting an end to the issue (*causa finita est*)? Was it Scripture? Of course not. Pelagius was *also* arguing from Scripture. Two opposing interpretations clashed head on! What to do?

It was no quandary for St. Augustine! Here is what St. Augustine says, “[On the matter of the Pelagians] two Councils have already been sent to the Apostolic See [Rome]; and from there rescripts [authoritative documents] have come. The matter is at an end [*causa finita est*]; would that the error too might sometime be at an end” (Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* 3:28).

You *don’t* see Augustine say, “[On the matter of the Pelagians] two local Bible teachers have already decided and sent their conclusion to Phoenix, and Phoenix has sent us “his” private interpretation back in writing so the matter is at an end.” Humph! How silly! The

more I read and interact with men like our critic the more I revel in the joy and sanity of being Catholic!

It should be apparent to all that St. Augustine argued with the Pelagians from Scripture, and from Scripture came to the orthodox conclusion, *but* in the end it was the official teaching of the Catholic Church through her councils and the ratification from Rome, the Apostolic see that put the matter to rest. Would that today's heretics and self-proclaimed experts would submit to the councils of the Church and to Rome; something St. Augustine would most certainly have expected and demanded. Where is the Church of the Fathers' today? This does not take a historical rocket scientist to figure out.

>>>Are these the words of a modern Roman Catholic who subjects himself to the ultimate authority of the infallible Magisterium in Rome?<<<

In the context of *Sermon 131* and the whole of St. Augustine's corpus as discussed above—yes! Oh that the blind could see and the deaf hear!

Why does St. Augustine believe in the Scriptures and the Gospel in the first place? And why did he remain Catholic? Let's allow him to speak for himself: "In the Catholic Church, there are many other things which most justly keep me in her bosom. The consent of peoples and nations keeps me in the Church; so does her authority, inaugurated by miracles, nourished by hope, enlarged by love, established by age. The succession of priests keeps me, beginning from the very seat of the Apostle Peter, to whom the Lord, after His resurrection, gave it in charge to feed His sheep, down to the present episcopate. And so, lastly, does the name itself of Catholic, which, not without reason, amid so many heresies, the Church has thus retained; so that, though all heretics wish to be called Catholics, yet when a stranger asks where the Catholic Church meets, no heretic will venture to point to his own chapel or house. Such then in number and importance are the precious ties belonging to the Christian name which keep a believer in the Catholic Church, as it is right they should.... With you, where there is none of these things to attract or keep me.... No one shall move me from the faith which binds my mind with ties so many and so strong to the Christian religion.... **For my part, I should not believe the gospel except as moved by the authority of the Catholic Church**" (Against the Epistle of Manichaeus [*Contra Epistolam Manichaei Quam Vacant Fundamenti.*] a.d. 397, emphasis mine).

>>>Are these the words of a Roman Catholic apologist who is often telling us about how Jesus did not command the apostles to *write* but instead to *preach*?<<<

Our critic complains that Roman Catholic apologists are often telling us about how Jesus did not command the apostles to write but instead to preach. This is ridiculous. We know that Jesus commanded the apostles to write because *we* have access to tradition. Of *course* St. Augustine (who also had access to tradition) would not deny that Jesus told the apostles to write. But our critic has denied the validity of that tradition, therefore he has no record of Jesus ever commanding the apostles to *write*. How convenient of him to

forget this. This has been our only point; he has no *written record* of Jesus telling anybody to write anything while on the earth, thus his assertion that Jesus somehow established Christianity based solely on a written record is (from his chosen vantage point) based on . . . are you ready? SILENCE! No where does St. Augustine deny the Primacy of Rome even though in his era the Roman bishops claimed primacy and jurisdiction in the strongest terms (see Appendix C: Pope St. Innocent and his Papal Authority in St. Augustine's Time). Too bad our critic did not take time to study and then inform his readers of the whole historical situation. Silence and ignorance are the only arguments our critic has in his quiver. His conclusions are not drawn from the words and historical milieu of the Fathers but from his own narrow and simplistic Baptist tradition—a tradition of very recent origins. St. Augustine and St. Athanasius deserve better!

>>>Roman apologists are always saying that sola scriptura is responsible for doctrinal chaos, yet, Augustine taught that it is the Scriptures that make us strong against insidious errors!<<<

There is no questions that *sola Scriptura* contributed greatly to the chaos we find in Christendom today. Only the Catholic Church has maintained order and theological continuity. Tens of thousands of denominations popping up since the sad day that Martin Luther let the proverbial cat out of the bag demonstrates that. Take our country as an example. If everyone decided there was no need for government, the courts, the laws, and historical continuity, what would happen? What if everyone decided that all they needed was the Constitution and they “invented” a new principle called *sola Constitutiona*. What kind of chaos would that foster? In no time little sects and cults would arise with their own interpretations of the Constitution and begin building their own little empires. No longer would we be “one nation under God, indivisible”. Funny thing that Protestants are willing to say that phrase from the Pledge of Allegiance about our secondary allegiance, our country; but they don't pledge such about the kingdom of God which should be our first allegiance. It should be one, unified as Jesus prayed for in John 17. In fact it should be the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Thanks God the Catholic Church *has* maintained that visible unity and continuity. We invite the rest of the family back home to the fullness of the faith.

But, regarding our critic's last statement, once again he is simply wrenching a Father out of his context and thus mutilating his views. Of course St. Augustine believes that the Scriptures, read *in the Church*, insulate us against errors. The Catholic argument with which St. Augustine would agree is that the Scriptures read OUTSIDE the Church are cause for confusion. It is Scripture read IN the Church with the approbation of tradition, councils and the Apostolic See that St. Augustine refers to. This is the context of *Sermon 131. The chaos of the sects has certainly been proved in the last centuries with the “Protestant experiment” and has resulted in spiritual anarchy.*

Ironically, *Sermon 131*, if this is the passage alluded to by our critic, actually demonstrates that St. Augustine did *not* appeal to *Scripture alone* in the end, *but to the councils of the Church and to Rome*. He ends his *Sermon 131* with the conclusion and

pronouncement of the *councils* and the *Apostolic see* (Rome) that had closed the case (*causa finita est*). The final condemnation of Pelagius' erroneous interpretation of Scripture did not come from a Bible study, but rather, from the councils and the Apostolic see (Rome). Certainly sounds Catholic—*Roman Catholic*. Certainly *doesn't* sound Baptist.

And let's put St. Augustine in the fuller context. St. Augustine can only be misunderstood as a proto-Protestant, or should we say "one who has Protestant sentiments", if passages are pulled out of their context—historically, theologically, and culturally. But, even though St. Augustine holds the Scripture in highest regard (as does the Catholic Church), does that mean he rejects Church authority, councils, tradition, Rome? Is it *either* the Bible *or* the Church? Or might it not be demonstrated to be the Bible *in* the Church? Our critic hopes you will think it is the first option based on his lone quotation and his loud drum pounding.

Does our critic put this "favorite patristic citation" in the full context of St. Augustine's *Homilies on the Epistles of St. John*. NO! Read what St. Augustine says about the Scriptures in his very next homily on the Epistles of St. John and ask yourself where we are to go for the truth of the Scriptures. St. Augustine writes, "Whoso knows that he is born [of water and Spirit], let him hear that he is an infant; let him eagerly cling to the breasts of his mother, and he grows apace. Now his mother is the Church; and her breasts are the two Testaments of the Divine Scriptures" (Homily III, 1 in NPNF 1st series, 7:476). Why doesn't he include this balancing and clarifying passage?

And, you will also not find our critic citing these *next* quotations from St. Augustine because they are incongruous with Protestant thinking and certainly not in line with *sola Scriptura* thinking.

St. Augustine wrote "*As to those other things which we hold on the authority, not of Scripture, but of tradition, and which are observed throughout the whole world, it may be understood that they are held as approved and instituted either by the apostles themselves, or by plenary Councils, whose authority in the Church is most useful* (Jurgens: "quite vital in the Church"), e.g. the annual commemoration, by special solemnities, of the Lord's passion, resurrection, and ascension, and of the descent of the Holy Spirit from heaven, and whatever else is in like manner observed by the whole Church wherever it has been established) . . . I answer, therefore, that if the authority of Scripture has decided which of these methods is right, there is no room for doubting that we should do according to that which is written; and our discussion must be occupied with a question, not of duty, but of interpretation as to the meaning of the divine institution. *In like manner, if the universal Church follows any one of these methods, there is no room for doubt as to our duty; for it would be the height of arrogant madness to discuss whether or not we should comply with it.* But the question which you propose is not decided either by Scripture or by universal practice. It must therefore be referred to the third class—as pertaining, namely, to things which are different in different places and countries" *Letter to Januarius* 54, 1, 1 and 5, 6 in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 1st series, 1:300.

And look at what St. Augustine says here:

“For if the lineal succession of bishops is to be taken into account, with how much more certainty and benefit to the Church do we reckon back till we reach Peter himself, to whom, as bearing in a figure the whole Church, the Lord said: ‘Upon this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!’ The successor of Peter was Linus, and his successors in unbroken continuity were these: Clement, Anacletus, Evaristus, Alexander, Sixtus, Telesphorus, Iginus, Anicetus, Pius, Soter, Eleutherius, Victor, Zephirinus, Calixtus, Urbanus, Pontianus, Antherus, Fabianus, Cornelius, Lucius, Stephanus, Xystus, Dionysius, Felix, Eutychianus, Gaius, Marcellinus, Marcellus, Eusebius, Miltiades, Sylvester, Marcus, Julius, Liberius, Damasus, and Siricius, whose successor is the present Bishop Anastasius. In this order of succession no Donatist bishop is found” (*Letters of Augustine* 53, 2 in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 1st series, 1:298).

St. Augustine quite clearly shows in his dispute with the Donatists and Manicheans that he considers communion with the bishop of Rome, as St. Peter’s successor, to be an essential mark of catholicity:

“Why! A faggot that is cut off from the vine retains its shape. But what use is that shape, if it is not living from the root? Come, brothers, if you wish to be engrafted in the vine. It is grievous when we see you thus lying cut off. Number the bishops from the see of Peter itself. And in that order of Fathers see who succeeded whom. That is the rock against which the proud gates of hades do not conquer. All who rejoice in peace, only judge truly” (*Psalmus contr. Partem Donati*, str. 18; PL 43:30).

See how easy it is for one to “protestantize” the Fathers by selective quotations and presumptuous reasoning? See how easy it is to manipulate the Fathers to fit “Fundamentalist tradition” by simply cutting and pasting from their works and ignoring their whole theology and life? Sorry, but along with all the quotations I provide in my book and my website, the above quotation sounds astoundingly Catholic, Roman Catholic—*certainly not Reformed Baptist!* Ah, that our critic would awake from his sleepiness and slumber and read with his eyes open!

>>>Remember, this man did not believe in an infallible Papacy, did not believe in such dogmas as indulgences, the treasury of merit, transubstantiation, the Immaculate Conception, the Bodily Assumption, etc. and etc., yet, we are asked to believe he was a Roman Catholic? One truly has to wonder if, when men like Steve Ray accuse us of misusing the Fathers, they are not really just attempting to quiet their own consciences and hide from the simple facts of history.<<<

Our critic is a funny man sometimes. He accuses me of doing something and then turns around it does it himself with utter abandon and doesn’t even realize it. I was accused earlier of arguing from silence; in fact, he said I was the apologist known for arguing from silence. Did you notice the basis for his statement above? Silence! This is

tantamount to saying that St. Paul didn't believe in the Trinity or *sola Scriptura* because he never specifically used the terms or described them in modern terms (e.g., three persons, one essence, and with Jesus, the hypostatic union, one person, two natures, etc.) in his epistles.

This for the most part is an argument from silence! Where exactly in St. Augustine's writings did he deny that there was a treasury of merits, that there was no such thing as indulgences, that the Blessed Virgin Mary was *not* assumed bodily into heaven? Nowhere at all, of course. Our critic only asserts that St. Augustine did not believe them because St. Augustine may have been silent on the matter or used other terminology than that used later by popes or Church councils. And of course St. Augustine nowhere attributes error in a matter *ex cathedra* to a pope nor does he ever state explicitly that the Blessed Virgin Mary sinned or had original sin (as far as I know) nor does he ever deny Transubstantiation, though he believes in the Real Presence of Christ and uses all the terms to demonstrate he *would* have accepted the word if it had been coined in his time. All arguments from silence on our critic's part.

St. Augustine *did* believe in and accept the authoritative teaching of the Church, the councils, and the Tradition, which had developed from the time of the Apostles until his time. He did not see them as contradicting Scripture any more than we Catholics do today. Though it would be fun to explain and discuss further what he believed and did not believe and the development of doctrine, it must wait for another time.

Maybe our critic was hasty, maybe careless, I don't know. But, it is good for our readers to realize that this latest little piece on his website is not only sloppy and incorrect but is fraught with errors and Fundamentalist presuppositions to which the Fathers, unfortunately, are expected to conform. It is an embarrassment to Mr. White whether he realizes it or not.

Signing off until next time, Steve Ray wishing the blessings of our Lord Jesus on all those who read this.

Appendix A: Arguing from Silence?

Here is my response to Webster's assertion of arguing from silence taken from my [website article](#).

"I told a friend that Bill [Webster] said my 'main argument rests on an argument from silence'. He responded, 'Horsepucky! There is *loads* of positive evidence in your book.' I'm not sure what Bill is trying to do here, but to say my *main argument* is one of silence is not only silly but damages Bill's integrity. This is one of those things that make me wonder if he really read the book or only zoomed in on his own name in the index. [I would ask the same of our current critic at this point.]

“Do I use the argument of silence? Of course I do. Do I base most of my argument on silence? Ridiculous. Thumbing through the book will make one giggle at such a silly statement. Silence is a very credible argument, though it is only substantial as a subsidiary of substantial positive proof. To deny the often-resounding silence is to ignore important evidence. A good example is this: Jewish families circumcised their infant sons on the eighth day. The New Testament frequently implies that adults and children were included in the rite of Baptism. For example, when the head of a household converted and was baptized, his entire household was also baptized with him (Ac 16:15, 33; 1 Co 1:16). The inference of course, especially based on Jewish understanding of the family and covenants, would include the aged, the adults, the servants, and the infants. If the practice of Infant Baptism had been illicit or prohibited it would surely have been explicitly forbidden, especially to restrain the Jews from applying Baptism to their infants as they did circumcision. But we find no such prohibition in the New Testament nor in the writings of the Fathers—a silence that seems quite profound. Should we ignore this evidence? No, not as long as it is used in conjunction with good, positive evidence.”

Appendix B: Who is Really Anachronistic

Text provided from my [Response to White](#). Text in bold is that which is especially pertinent.

I wrote: “It may be appropriate, with my good readers’ indulgence (not the kind that allows you to sin with impunity—[grin] just having fun with a perennial misunderstanding of Catholic teaching) to discuss one earlier paragraph in our critic’s critique.

Our critic says this about the pertinent passage of Augustine in *Sermon 131*:

White: >>It is a measure of the *utter desperation* of the Roman position to have to make reference to such things, in our opinion. The topic is not the bishop of Rome nor the authority of Rome. It is obvious, beyond question, that Augustine’s point is that Pelagianism is a refuted error. It is not refuted because the bishop of Rome has refuted it. It is refuted because it is opposed to Scripture. Two councils have concluded this, and the bishop of Rome has agreed. From Augustine’s position, the error has been exposed and refuted. If only those who are in error would come to know the truth! Augustine exhorts his hearers to teach the gainsayers, and pray that they may be dissuaded from their errors. This then is the context and content of Sermon 131 of Augustine (which is, btw, Sermon 81 in the Eerdman’s set, pp. 501-504 of volume VI for those who wish to read the entirety of the work). <<

Webster’s, other than to address the short section addressed to me and my book. However, I do want to take a good look at a sample paragraph which applies to the topic at hand. First, notice the theatrics (get more popcorn): “*utter desperation* of the Roman position”. We’re not impressed. Loud squawking in italics and jumping up and down don’t impress me or my learned readers. Our critic is most assuredly entitled to his opinion, this is, of course, still America. And, I am glad he admits it is just his (actually

“our opinion” which may imply the plural of majesty, I’m not sure) opinion because it can then be weighed in relation to how much weight his opinion holds—with me, not much.

“Our critic then implies that I, and other ignoramuses and desperate folks seem to think that this comment on papal (Roman) primacy is the main thesis of Augustine’s Sermon 131. I never said that, nor did I or others imply it. But the fact that Augustine places this important concluding statement at the end of his sermon is not insignificant, both in what it says, the weight it carries, and its placement in the sermon. No one contests that the thesis of the sermon is not about the papacy—that seems obvious enough, but the fact that it is not *primarily* about the papacy is no reason to minimize an important statement by Augustine about the primacy of Rome. This would be tantamount to saying that since the message of Matthew’s Gospel is not primarily about the Trinity that we dismiss the Trinitarian Baptismal formula in chapter 28 as an argument for the Trinity. What kind of reasoning is that? Yet that is what we are subjected to over and over again. Talk about arguing in circles!

“And yes, we all know that Augustine is dealing in small part with the refuted error of Pelagianism (though the whole sermon is not emphasizing Pelagianism but is a homily on John’s gospel of which Pelagianism takes up a miniscule part of the homily) but we must ask by what *authority* was Pelagianism refuted. Is it any surprise that Augustine ends his sermon saying it was refuted by the local councils and then confirmed with a final word from Rome? This is not a matter for rocket scientists for heaven’s sake. So why does our “desperate” critic (oh my, I’ve fallen into using *his* terms now. Lord, have mercy!) now claim that Pelagianism is sermon 131 is refuted because it is “opposed to Scripture”? Where does it say *that* in the text? *Talk about reading one’s tradition back into the Fathers!* Let the average reader read Sermon 131 and show me specifically where Augustine claims the matter has been determined by Scripture alone or by a final refutation based on Scripture. Come on, show me. Now, let the reader read Sermon 131 again and show me where Augustine says the authority which refuted the heresy and closed the matter was the authority of the CHURCH, her councils, and the Apostolic see.

“Am I missing something here or is our critic showing himself to be very anachronistic—**reading his favorite Protestant traditions into the texts of the Fathers?**”

“And, I dare say the Pelagians would disagree with our critic that this homily states they were refuted because their theology was opposed to Scripture. They would ask “Opposed to Scripture according to whose interpretation?” (Our critic’s, of course.) The whole argument had been based on *opposing interpretations of Scripture* and someone, *some* authority, had to make a definitive determination on what the Scripture taught—what the truth of the matter was—and Augustine does not say, as our critic does, that it was refuted by Scripture. Rather, Augustine ends the sermon, as I say in my book, stating that the heresy was refuted by the authority of the CHURCH and her councils, and backed up by the authority of Rome, “the Apostolic see”. Would that our critic would accept the authority of the Church as espoused by Augustine!

“Our critic then says, “Two councils have concluded this, and the bishop of Rome has agreed.” However, that is not what Augustine says (but I won’t accuse our critic of deception as he has done with me). Augustine refers to Rome as “*the* Apostolic see”. The Apostolic see, the office of the Bishop of Rome has made final determination, Rome has RATIFIED the determination made by the “smallness” of the local councils. This is powerful stuff—this is territory where Evangelical Protestants haven’t even begun to crack the ice yet; but, even so they are still self-proclaimed “experts” on the Fathers (insert grin here). I am anxious to hear our critic say, “This matter has been determined by my denomination and ratified finally by the Apostolic see in Rome.” When that happens, then will I stand up, cheer and take notice of their exposition of the Fathers.

“Yes, Pelagianism has been refuted. But, Augustine does not say it was the Bible that was the definitive determining factor; rather, it was the Church, more specifically the rescripts from the Apostolic see.

“I think I have made my point on this matter. And, this was only dealing with one simple though misguided paragraph. Imagine what we could do if we tackled *every paragraph*. Oh well, let’s grab some more popcorn, or maybe ice cream this time and move on.

Appendix C: Pope Innocent I and other Contemporary of St. Augustine

Both of these quotations from Pope Innocent I are provided in my book *Upon this Rock* (pgs. 228-230) and our critic should have been aware of them.

Pope Innocent I (d. 417 A.D.), St. Augustine’s contemporary wrote:

“In seeking the things of God, . . . following the example of ancient tradition, . . . you have strengthened . . . the vigor of your religion with true reason, for you have acknowledged that judgement is to be referred to us, and have shown that you know what is owed to the Apostolic See, if all of us placed in this position are to desire to follow the Apostle himself from whom the episcopate itself and the total authority of this name have emerged. Following him, we know how to condemn evils just as well as we know how to approve what is laudable. . . . [The Fathers] did not regard anything as finished, even though it was the concern of distant and remote provinces, until it had come to the notice of this See [Rome], so that what was a just pronouncement might be confirmed by the total authority of this See, and thence other Churches,—just as all waters proceed from their own natal source and, through the various regions of the whole world, remain pure liquids of an uncorrupted head,—might take up what they ought to teach, whom they ought to wash, whom the water worthy of clean bodies would shun as being soiled with a filth incapable of being cleansed.”

Pope Innocent I also wrote:

“If cases of greater importance are to be heard, they are, as the synod decrees and as happy custom requires, after episcopal judgement, to be referred to the Apostolic See [of

Rome].”

Regarding the first quote: *Letter of Pope Innocent I to the Fathers of the Council of Carthage* on January 27, 417 A.D. in Jurgens’ *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, 3:181–182. “The Popes themselves, needless to say, upheld the primacy of St. Peter. Evidence of their views is to be found principally in their letters, which reveal a uniform pattern of thought. The text of Matthew 16 is the *locus classicus* on which they base their claims for St. Peter, whose primacy is clearly appreciated, but in a way which shows little advance on the position adopted by Pope Stephen in the third century” (Winter, *Saint Peter and the Popes*, 63). Rivington makes a few pointed observations: “But the important point is, Did the African bishops, did any African bishop, take exception to St. Innocent’s definitions of the place occupied by Rome towards the rest of the Church as the See of Peter? Did they throw out the remotest hint that, in accepting the net result of St. Innocent’s letters, they excepted the passages about the authority with which it was done? Not one. Yet the letter was much before the world. . . . But what of St. Augustine himself? St. Augustine says that Innocent, ‘in reference to all things, wrote back to us in the same way in which it was lawful and the duty of the Apostolic See to write’. I do not know how it would be possible for St. Augustine to set his signature to the Vatican decrees by anticipation in plainer terms. Of these two great letters of Pope Innocent he says, in another place, challenging the Pelagian bishop, Julian, ‘Reply to him [i.e. Innocent], yea, rather to the Lord Himself, whose testimony that prelate used’” (*The Primitive Church and the See of Peter*, 290).

Regarding the second quote: *Letter of Pope Innocent I to Victorius, Bishop of Rouen* 2, 3, 6 in Jurgens’ *The Faith of the Early Fathers* 3:179, dated Feb. 15, 404 A.D., only eleven years after the Council of Hippo formalized the canonization of the New Testament. “Pelagianism is a heresy which strikes at the very root of the Christian attitude to God and redemption. A provincial Council in proconsular Africa (A.D. 416) decreed that Pelagius and Caelestius should be anathematized ‘unless they openly anathematize’ their errors. But the Council wrote to Pope Innocent I ‘in order that to the statutes of our littleness might be added the authority of the Apostolic See. . . . Augustine, preaching at Carthage in September 417 about the Pelagian trouble, says: ‘On this matter [the findings of] two Councils have been sent to the Apostolic See, and answers have been received thence. The matter is ended: let us hope that the error [sc. the heresy] may soon be ended. Thus Augustine, the great anti-Pelagian theologian, appears to agree with Innocent that the papal determination of a controversy about the faith is final’” (B. C. Butler, *The Church and Infallibility* [New York: Sheed & Ward, 1954], 170–171).

Instead of rebuking Pope Innocent I for his claims of jurisdictional authority, St. Augustine writes, “[Pope Innocent] in reference to all things, wrote back to us in the same way in which it is lawful and the duty of the Apostolic See to write” (*Sermon* 186, n. 2 in *The Primitive Church and the See of Peter*, 290).

“We find no hint in Augustine that he challenges or resents the authority over the sea in Rome. In Africa’s receipt of Innocent’s ruling and declaration of jurisdiction, the bishops of Africa are either the tamest and most hypocritical of all men, *or* they sincerely

believed in the Papal supremacy. . . no decree was received in terms of more unqualified admiration by the Church of North Africa in the time of St. Augustine” (Rivington, *The Primitive Church and the See of Peter*, 288, 291).

Our critic may want to explain why St. Augustine, if he did not believe in Papal Primacy or denied it, did not confront Pope St. Innocent I for his “authoritarian, unbiblical” claim to authority. This is of course asked tongue-in-cheek.

Pope Celestine I (Pope 422-432), also a contemporary of St. Augustine (354-430), sent his legates to the Council of Ephesus (431) within a year of St. Augustine’s death, with a statement that was later to *be incorporated into the text of the First Vatican Council’s definition of papal infallibility*. “There is no doubt,” said the legate, “and in fact it has been known in all ages, that the holy and most blessed Peter, prince and head of the Apostles, pillar of the faith and foundation of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the human race. To him was given the power of loosing and binding sins, who even at this time and always, lives and judges in his successors.” The legate went on to point out that, since Pope Celestine is Peter’s successor and holds his place, in his name the condemnation of Nestorius is thereby confirmed by papal authority. The implication was that the Council of Ephesus, convoked by the Emperor and composed of bishops, required such papal approval to be authentic.

Had St. Augustine been opposed to such papal authority as understood and exercised by his contemporaries, Pope Innocent I and Celestine I especially, where is the evidence of St. Augustine’s opposition? What a great time to speak out and prove our critic right! But St. Augustine did not do such a thing but instead sent the decisions of the local councils to Rome for final ratification—a ratification which closed the case. This is all within the era that our friendly critic says knew nothing of Papal primacy which was an invention of later Roman Catholicism, yet we see it was a contemporary teaching with the great St. Augustine.

Also another review of White: [The ‘Tinkling Cymbal’ of ‘of Mr. Critic’](#) by I. Shawn McElhinney