

Letter to a Fundamentalist

By Steve Ray

Dear Brother Bartholomew:

Thank you for your response to my letter. Also, thank you for the booklets and tracts you sent, some of which I had already read. The last comment in your letter was “I would like to hear from you.” And so I write again. With a limitation on time I will try to knock this letter off this afternoon. I am sorry that only certain types of testimonies are published in your newsletter, but as the director, I guess that is your prerogative. I am sorry you rejected my story of conversion into the Catholic Church.

Lately I have been asked to speak in many forums, to share my testimony of my finding the Catholic Church. In fact I was just asked to speak to a group at Eastern Michigan University. I have also written a short account of our conversion and the arguments that finally flipped the lever for us. I have already received a contract from a major publisher for its publication. I think Catholics are getting tired of getting kicked around and are very encouraged to have converts come over who can encourage them and train them to defend themselves. So, I have been busy, but I’ve never had so much fun either.

I will answer your questions in good faith and then respond to the content of your letter. As I close out my letter however, I would like to ask you a few questions, which I hope you will show good faith by answering. They shouldn’t be too difficult.

Are you familiar with the Latin phrase “*argumentum ad hominem*”? I find that many anti-Catholics resort to these tactics when they fall short in their arguments. It is quite natural and I noticed you utilized it quite extensively in your letter. You ridicule and chide in an attempt to gain the intellectual and spiritual high ground, without having to earn it first. If you *do* have a *right* to the high ground, it will be manifested after an honest discussion, and we’ll see in the end if you have the right to stand above others, judging them and their motives. Earning the high ground is not as simple as arrogating it.

I also noticed that you resort to flinging adjectives around that are loaded with negative connotations. Simpler folks obviously applaud your tactics and fall dead before them, but not everyone succumbs to weak debate tactics. Your colorful descriptions, such as “*Romish*,” “*Roman humanist tradition*,” “*Roman harlot*,” etc. I could do the same, by relying on loaded connotations, and referring to my old fundamentalist allies, and you, as *Protestant sectarians, Bible idolaters, hatemongers, pontificating self righteous schismatics, exclusivists, hermeneutically deficient private interpreters of Scripture, little personal infallible popes, sacrament desecrating individualists, Scriptural relativists, Gnostically inclined anti-incarnational platonists*, etc. I will try however to keep to the subject at hand and not stoop to hurling invectives and flinging adjectives.

I will start out by saying that, though I was once one of you-and I will get to that a little later-I am now a Catholic. I do not condemn you nor doubt your salvation. You believe in the Lord Jesus, have presumably been baptized in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and seek to serve the Lord and obey His will. We will most assuredly spend eternity together in heaven. You may say, “*No way Steve, you are not saved the “Bible way” and never have been, and you will spend eternity in hell.*” However, even by your soteriology I will go to heaven, since one who accepts Jesus as their Lord and Savior “your way” has eternal security. I have done so. I used to be an anti-Catholic and spent a good bit of time writing tracts, witnessing to Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, unsaved pagans and the “salvation-by-works-Catholics.” We went door to door and hit every home within a ten-mile radius of our church over a period of six years. We brought people in for Gospel Meetings, even taking the meetings to halls we rented in all the nearby towns and cities. We converted many Catholics to the fundamentalist gospel.

Answers To Your Two Preliminary Questions

But before I get off the track, I will start out by answering the two questions you asked at the end of your letter, and then I’ll return to the body of your letter. I must first comment that I am under no obligation to answer your questions, but since I understand their purpose-to prove I was never in the *Protest-ant*, Fundamentalist, “Bible-Christian” tradition-I will humor you with a few historical minutiae to slacken your curiosity. I understand that you find it hard to believe that anyone who is a born again believer, washed in the blood of the Lamb, could possibly fall for the “Romish tradition,” as you call it. However, here I stand (didn’t someone else say that back in the 16th century?), a convert to the Catholic Church and knowing I have finally pulled into port.

First, you asked if I married a Catholic. Heavens no! I was anti-Catholic. I had never set a foot in a Catholic Church before January of 1994 and had never met a Catholic clergyman. I married a fellow Fundamentalist. My wife was raised in southern California and got “saved” in the Maranatha Ministries with Chuck Smith. She moved to Michigan and immediately joined Calvary Baptist Church in 1971, where my family fellowshipped. We later joined Salem Christian Fellowship whose pastor was Bill Nottenkamper and he was a graduate of Detroit Bible College (which is now William Tyndale College), and had a Gospel Program on the local Christian radio station. My wife and I got married at Salem Christian Fellowship six years later. During our eighteen years of marriage we have attended several Evangelical Churches including Trinity Evangelical Presbyterian, and Trinity Baptist where I was a teacher for several years.

My wife and I sold everything we owned in 1982, except for our library which was then more than 5,000 volumes, and moved to Switzerland to study with Francis Schaeffer, at L’Abri Fellowship, before he died. Are you familiar with him and his books? He was *sola Scriptura* and *Sola fide* to the core and one of my heroes for his moral courage in a relativistic society. He was one of the first Evangelical Fundamentalists to open the eyes of the Protestant communities to the horrors of abortion, infanticide and euthanasia.

My parents were “saved” in 1954 in Detroit when Billy Graham had his first Detroit Crusade. I “asked Jesus into my heart” after simple instruction from my mother at four years old. I knelt at the green vinyl couch, which I still remember clearly. I remember several times in my early youth renewing my commitment when I heard Billy Graham myself, as well as many times in Church. My parents were members of Joy Road Baptist in Detroit, then Calvary Baptist in Plymouth, then Salem Christian Fellowship for six years, and lastly, at Wayne Baptist where they have attended since 1976. Back to myself and answering your questions. At seventeen I made a lifetime dedication of my life to Christ and within a few months had seen more than 50 of my friends and high school peers “accept Christ as their Lord and Savior.” Where the Commons Area at Plymouth High School had once been filled with hippies (this was back in the early seventies) there were almost one hundred kids reading Bibles, witnessing and praying. When I graduated, I moved out to the country and joined Salem Christian Fellowship.

Now, in our 18th year of marriage, my wife and I, along with our four children, and several friends, have joined the Catholic Church and both sides of our families have been grieved at best, and hostile at worst. I hope that answers question #1, as to whether I married a Catholic. Sorry to negate your first attempted explanation for this “strange development” in a ex-fundamentalist’s life.

Second, you ask what Bible school I went to. I will tell you. During the six years I attended Salem Christian Fellowship, the pastor and the four elders (deacons, if you prefer) set up a local Bible school, which was an adjunct to the fellowship. Three of them were graduates of Detroit Bible College (now William Tyndale), one a graduate of the University of Michigan and the fourth was a graduate of Moody Bible Institute. Maybe you will recognize some of the textbooks we used: *A General Introduction to the Bible* by Geisler and Nix, published by Moody, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* by Alfred Edersheim, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* by Henry Thiessen (Wheaton College), *Christianity Through the Centuries* by Earle Cairns (Wheaton College), *Galatians: The Charter of Christian Liberty* by Merrill Tenney (Dean of Wheaton Graduate School), *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* by Dana and Mantey (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Northern Baptist Theological Seminary respectively), and *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* by Hobart Freeman published by Moody Press. This is just to name a few. They were supplemented with Watchman Nee, Harry Ironside, Paul Little, John Stott, J. I. Packer, John Bunyon, Andrew Murray, Charles Spurgeon, and a host of others too numerous to mention. As I said, my library is now approaching 8,000 volumes (*ed.note*: it has since reached 20,000) and I have all the fundamentalist, evangelical, Protestant classics and have read most of them. The Bible School is no longer in existence.

You can discount my salvation and understanding of God’s word and my salvation the “bible way,” as you call it, but if you do, you simply display a lack of integrity on your

part and you'll lose credibility. You must look for explanations elsewhere and hopefully I can offer you a few as we proceed. Everyone who knows me, or has known me, would assure you of my orthodox, Baptist, fundamentalist, Evangelical background. I have now answered your two questions.

Response To The Heart of Your Letter

But, let's get to the heart of your letter. Your first paragraph states, after the part about EITHER *heart conversion* OR *intellectual conversion*, that "*it is evident that you were not born again' the Bible way.*" This is an amazing claim for someone who doesn't even know me; but it doesn't surprise me, because I understand your problem and the fundamentalist mind set. Remember, I used to be one of you. Since joining the Church I've had people say that I must have never *really* known the Lord, and probably my parents didn't either. However, this has only been said by people who do not, or did not, personally know me, for *no one* who knows me would dare say it. Someone who willingly joins the Catholic Church, can't possibly be saved, right? Let me ask you this: Do you think there are any "saved" people in the Catholic Church? Do you think there are any "unsaved" people in your "Bible church"?

The reason you have a problem with this is because you probably believe in the doctrine of Eternal Security. How can a person who is saved join the Catholic Church and love the Mass? If anyone *could* lose their salvation, it must be this kind of turncoat (for in your mind, joining the Catholic Church is the wickedest evil, even worse than going to a brothel according to your own words). But, since you have the wonderfully easy dogma of Eternal Security, developed by Protestant theologians, and don't believe a "Bible Christian" can lose their salvation, you are in a real theological dilemma. What do you do with a person like me? Since I can't lose my salvation, you need an out, and you escape the dilemma by making the statement "*it is evident that you were not born again' the Bible way.*" Why don't you explain how, without knowing me, that it is so *evident*. I am curious to know.

The fundamentalist-created "*eternal security*" presents a dilemma that fundamentalists have yet to honestly confront. Let me give you an example. What if a good pastor of a Baptist Church, who preaches the Gospel of Christ "your way" for forty years, carefully leads the flock and holds fast to baptist theology, witnesses daily, prays without ceasing, and raises a godly family, suddenly begins to have sinful thoughts? After a while he succumbs to the thoughts and falls into sin. He cracks and leaves the Lord. He denies Christ, leaves the pastorate, binges on adult beverages, divorces his wife, commits sexual adultery with a church member's wife and finally commits suicide? How would a good fundamentalist grapple with this? This is somewhat of an extreme example, but please don't tell me it never happens, because I know better. Even the high profile televangelists, who have much more to lose than the average pastor, give us multiple examples.

You have one of three choices: first, he lost his salvation because he went too far (but

who decides what “too far” is). Second, he is still saved even though it goes against the whole teaching of Scripture. Or third, he was never saved to begin with, at least not the “Bible way.” *This last alternative is the escape hatch for the fundamentalist.*

Unfortunately it is blatantly dishonest and totally unacceptable for it is an attempt to have it both ways. By accepting this solution, you never know if “getting saved” ever really “took hold” with *anyone*. If *you* fall into sin Bartholomew (or heaven forbid, join the Catholic Church) your friends and associates would have to say, “*Well, Bartholomew had us all fooled, but he obviously was never saved to begin with, it was just an intellectual conversion, and he was obviously never “born again” the “Bible way.”*” This is an intellectually dishonest answer, but intellectual honesty as never been the fundamentalist’s strong suit.

The Catholic teaching is *so* much more biblically sound, so much more feasible, so much more in harmony with the revealed character of God. It does not force one into making individualistic, personalized determinations that the Bible says are the prerogatives of God (2 Tim. 2:19). You really ought to read the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which even Jack Van Impe, the fundamentalist “Walking Bible,” admits is “right on” and recommends that all his followers read.

Your Third Paragraph

In case you forgot what you wrote I will reproduce your third paragraph in its entirety, also for all the others that will read this response.

“Maybe you are “ecstatic” in being a convert to the Romish system, but what does that prove, Steve? You claim that you never loved the Lord more.’ What do you mean by love: Are you talking about Charismatic goose bumps and carnal sensations? I am sure the sensual rites and ceremonies of the Roman religion are pleasing to the natural man. How you ‘missed the church for so long’ is a mystery to you? Roman Catholicism is not a church by Biblical definition. Do you think having tears every Sunday’ constitutes being a child of God? If you knew the Scriptures, you would abhor the idolatrous, blasphemous, pagan, non-Christian mass. Attending mass is worse than going to a brothel. I suggest you seriously study the Scriptures. Employ the apostolic method of interpretation, not the papal method which makes people mental slaves.

I do not think your third paragraph is worth spending much time on. Nevertheless, here we go. You are right, being “ecstatic” does not prove anything, though I never claimed it did. I just made a statement of fact. As far as love being defined as “goose bumps and carnal sensations,” I’m not quite sure where you got this from. This is a Hollywood type love and certainly not a biblically defined love of God. I would say that, in my deeper love of God since I joined the Church, it would be defined more as a love with my whole mind, soul and strength. I think someone else has already given this as a biblically acceptable definition of agape love. The “Romish” system (there you go with your

homemade, loaded adjectives again) has little to do with goose-bumps.

The funny thing is that fundamentalists hurl condemnation at the Catholic Church for what they perceive to be “dead liturgy,” condemning Catholic and Orthodox liturgies as a great evil, yet they have their own liturgies. They know when to stand up, sit down, sing a song, say a prayer, preach a sermon (keeping it within the proper time frame), eulogy, sit down, stand up again and say a closing prayer. Every sect has a liturgy, even if they deny it. Liturgy simply comes from the Greek word for “service” to God and is used in the New Testament (See Acts 13:2). However, since God saves the whole man, not just his spirit, joy in worship, even expressed in tears or goose-bumps, is not a bad thing. Just as pleasure in marital sex, or enjoyment of a delicious meal are not evil. Do you avoid good food or marital love because they may give you “carnal sensations?”

You say that “*sensual rites and ceremonies of the Roman religion are pleasing to the natural man.*” Do you ever find pleasure in a well-sung Christmas hymn sung by the choir? Do you ever sense a deep-seated pleasure at an inspiring sermon, delivered with gusto and spirit? Is this appealing to the natural man, or is this somehow a pleasure qualitatively different? Are you a good judge of the various joys, loves, pleasures, feelings, senses and blessings that are a part of being humans made in the image of God? Do you deprecate my spiritual experience because you hate the Church or because you consider any joy and pleasure to be carnal? The word *sensual* implies physical sensations, especially sexual, and gratification of the physical senses. I’m not sure what you are trying to intimate with the use of that word. If it is simply that the multifaceted aspects of the Catholic liturgy appeal to the whole man, then I have no problem with that use of the word *sensual*.

As pertaining to the senses, I would bet you don’t discount them in worship either, for you expect a clean building for worship, with the heat on in the winter and the air conditioning on in the summer. You play pretty music and have “heavenly choirs” to establish the ambiance of worship. You have a cross on the wall and an opened Bible in the place of prominence on the dais (of course it is not considered an idol or icon, even though it stands in such a place of prominence). Symbols such as American and Christian flags are strategically placed to make sure everyone knows we are all “Christian soldiers. Symbolism and emotion are not unfamiliar to you Baptists.

Neither do you deny emotion as a valid aspect of worship, for I’m willing to bet you’ve shed a tear or two in church, maybe even gotten goose bumps when singing *Just As I Am* or *A Mighty Fortress is our God* after a particularly inspired message. Do you consider goose bumps unfit for church, only to be experienced by profligate sinners, fleshly Christians? Why do you always apply double standards? Because they always get such a good response from the unwary?

So in answer to your next question about tears; no, I do not “*think that having tears every*

Sunday constitutes being a child of God,” but I am convinced a child of God can have tears, and should, as he worships God and enters into the glory of His presence. I condemn no one for tears. I condemn no one for dry eyes. I do not think tears prove anything, and I didn’t say they did. Again, I only stated a fact.

Next you comment on the Biblical definition of the Church? You say “*the Roman Catholic Church is not a church by Biblical definition*”? I assume by your authoritative declaration, almost a papal declaration, that you consider yourself the final, infallible word on this matter? I know a lot of godly people who would disagree with you. You read what you want into the Bible, apply your own private judgement, filtered through your fundamentalist tradition. I know, because I did too. We will get into what Jesus thought the Church would be, and what Paul called her later in the letter.

Your last few sentences in paragraph three are a little silly but I will address them briefly anyway. You say that “*attending mass is worse than going into a brothel.*” Do you mean just going in the front door, or actually participating in the forbidden activity within? I understand why you say this, and from your perspective, your evaluation you are probably correct. Worshiping idols is spiritual idolatry and is directed directly at God, whereas physical indiscretion is harmful, but only a sin against ourselves, not directly affronting God Himself. However, they are both sin and whether each rates a 9 or 10 on the “serious meter” I am not sure. Having held your theory of the mass at one time myself, I must say it is incorrect, and that the liturgy of the Catholic Church, as it has been celebrated since the time of the apostles, is the celebration Christ Himself instituted, and it’s the celebration the apostles taught the churches of the first century. History tells the story, but you don’t like history, you only like your personal interpretation of the Bible tainted by your traditions and your hatred for the Church.

Please educate me as to the “apostolic method of interpretation” which you refer to at the end of paragraph three. I was not aware that the apostles gave any formal instruction in the matter. Are you sure you didn’t just “invent” your own infallible method for which you now claim apostolic authority? Are you aware that there are hundreds of competing and contradicting “apostolic methods of interpretation” claimed by every tradition imaginable? Your’s must be right though, because the Holy Spirit leads you. A funny thing though, the others claim that authority too. A confusing situation, isn’t it? Who is one to believe? Many are returning to the *real* apostolic tradition, apostolic method of interpretation, and apostolic authority within the Church Jesus founded through His apostles, and which is still faithfully living for Him today, protected by the Holy Spirit. Before we leave this topic, please inform me of the “papal method” of scriptural interpretation, for I could find nothing in the new Catechism with that title. Again, I was not aware there was such a thing.

I also appreciate your exhortation to seriously study the Bible. I will do so, for it is also an exhortation of the Church. The new Catechism of the Catholic Church says, “*The*

Church forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful . . . to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures.” (CCC para. 133).

When did the “Roman humanist tradition” begin? Is there a point in time when the early Church was apostolic and “Bible believing,” and then suddenly turned away and became the Roman tradition? I would be curious as to when this happened. As I study the history of the Catholic Church, as it flowed out of the apostles and the apostolic period, I find it very faithful to the teachings of the Scriptures. I find it also very essentially Catholic. From the first century on the Eucharist *was* the body and blood of Christ. Ignatius of Antioch, (c. 35 - 107 AD; a contemporary and student of the apostles) wrote:

“But look at those men who have those perverted notions about the grace of Jesus Christ which has come down to us, and see how contrary to the mind of God they are. . . . They even abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they will not admit that the Eucharist is the self-same body of our Savior Jesus Christ, which flesh suffered for our sins and which the Father in His goodness raised up again. Those, therefore, who speak against this gift of God, incur death in the midst of their disputes. But it were better for them to treat it with respect, that they also might rise again . . . Shun divisions, for they are the beginning of evils . . . The sole Eucharist you should consider valid is one that is celebrated by the bishop himself”

“. . . obey your bishop . . . share in one common breaking of bread - the medicine of immortality, and the sovereign remedy by which we escape death and live in Jesus Christ forever more.”

“Make certain, therefore, that you all observe one common Eucharist; for there is but one body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and but one cup of union with His Blood, and one single altar of sacrifice - even as also there is but one bishop, with his clergy and my own fellow-servitors the deacons. This will insure that all your doings are in full accord with the will of God.”

I know you don’t care about history, and you don’t care what these men say. But let me ask you a simple question: Was Ignatius of Antioch before or after the infiltration of “Romish humanistic tradition?” He knew the apostles, especially Peter, and also Polycarp, the disciple of John. You don’t care though, do you? You are more impressed with your *own* interpretation of events and teachings in the New Testament than the perspective of these men *who lived with the apostles!* Amazing! I am so glad to be out of the mind-numbed, life-robbing, anti-intellectual, anti-historical, fundamentalist tradition!

You then ask and judge as follows: *“How much reading have you done from the early Church Fathers? Probably not much.* The real question is not have *I* read them, but have

you read them. It is hard to stay misinformed and parochial when you read the sermons, epistles and eloquent defenses of the faith written by our first brothers in the Lord. What you will find, in these early Christians you try to claim for your own, is that they fundamentally disagree with you on just about every major point of practice. They are essentially Catholics to the very core. You should read them! You will not find “justification by faith *alone*” in their works (or in the New Testament for that matter).

You will find no emasculated “Lord’s Supper,” like you do in fundamentalist sects, where they have sucked the core out of the sacrament and left their followers with the shell of easy believism and “nothing happens here.” Empty, symbolic baptism is nowhere to be found in the early Church, except in the Gnostic heresies, before the so-called Reformation. Baptism, as the Baptists know it today, was condemned by the early Christians. I know you don’t care about history, or what the brothers who preceded us in the faith (the bishops of the apostolic Church) had to say, but for the benefit of the many others who will be reading this letter, I include one of hundreds of quotations from the first two centuries, from Irenaeus (c. 130 - 200 AD), Disciple of Polycarp:

“Thus there are as many schemes of redemption”; as there are teachers of these mystical opinions. And when we come to refute them, we shall show in its fitting place, that this class of men have been instigated by Satan to a denial of that baptism which is regeneration to God, and thus to a renunciation of the whole [Christian] faith.”

In the early Church (much to my chagrin, when I finally realized this two years ago) you will find nothing of your fundamentalist pulpit preaching being used as a substitute for the Eucharist (this was a tradition started at the Reformation), your disdain for the mother of our Savior, the easy-believism of fundamentalism, the eternal security of recent invention, the concept of the *invisible* unity of the Church, the denial of apostolic succession and apostolic tradition. There are so many issues I feel like writing all day. I feel such pity for the impoverished souls that have been sold a bill of fundamentalist goods and have swallowed them hook, line and sinker.

To move on, you say that “*No Christian fundamentalist leaders keep their people from reading the early Church Fathers. They simply inform their constituents that the early Church Fathers were not infallible.*” As to the infallibility of the Fathers, you and I agree. The Church Fathers are *witnesses* to the Word of God preached and practiced by the Lord Jesus and His apostles. The apostles left us a tradition (I know you hate that word, but bear with me for the sake of discussion), some of which was enscripturated in the New Testament many years later, and traditions that were orally passed down (e.g., 2 Tim. 2:2) and carefully preserved in the early Church and in the writings of the Fathers. They were not infallible, but neither are they irrelevant. Don’t tell me that fundamentalists don’t keep their people from the writings of the Fathers. They most certainly do. If they don’t do it overtly, they do it by making them irrelevant, or implying it is just “old Catholic

stuff.” Your statement is not true, and I know it from my own experience and the experience of many, many others I have discussed it with over the last two years.

A friend of mine is a graduate of the Trinity Evangelical Seminary in Deerfield, Illinois. He studied a graduate course on Patristics (the study of the Fathers). He was never told that the Fathers were bishops in the Church. They were only referred to as “early Christians.” They never discussed their beliefs, practices or teachings other than the topic of Christology. He later felt cheated and lied to and wrote a scathing letter to the seminary. Also, you may be interested to know he and his family also have converted to the Catholic Church in the last year.

You claim the Scriptures all-sufficient. We will get to that a bit later.

Next you say the “Pope’s Church is losing 265,000 yearly. The burden of proof is on you to prove this statistic. The truth is, for every person leaving the Church world-wide, there are seven (7) joining the Church. There are more Catholics in the world than all the Protestant sects, “Christian” cults and Orthodox combined. Formidable, like the Church of Jesus should be!

Whew, that was page one of your letter, it is all downhill from here. Next comes another *argumentum ad hominem* where you say I am amusing. I am glad to amuse you, it was not my intent, but if I do, all the better.

You next say, “*If you knew the Word of God, you would feel the Roman harlot.*” All of a sudden, the objective word of God and the objective truth gives way to feelings? Weren’t you just attempting to criticize me for basing my beliefs on feelings? And now we find that you are opposed to the Church because you “feel” the Roman harlot? Wow. I know the word of God, and I don’t feel the harlot. Harlots are “felt” in brothels. When I celebrate the Eucharist I experience the presence of the Lord and my response is one of obedience, love, worship and a deep sense of awe that He would willingly die for me while I was yet a sinner. I am in awe that the Father so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever should believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

This is an interesting verse. Have you ever checked the Greek tenses of this oft used verse? I have dissected the verse a little to show the verb tenses: John 3:16 “*For God so loved (aorist, punctiliar) the world, that he gave (aorist, punctiliar) his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth (present, progressive) in him should not perish (aorist), but have (present, progressive) everlasting life.*” (KJV)

Interesting, uh? The present tense “that whosoever *is believing* in Him” puts a different light on the verse. One would expect the *believe* to be aorist, to show it’s a once-and-for-all, a one-point-in-time event. One could ask why Jesus switched to the *present tense* in a

verse full of aorists. The present tense implies continually believing, a process of believing, and not the punctiliar belief I was once convinced of. Hewitt in his grammar textbook, *New Testament Greek* (James Hewitt, B.A., B.D., M.A., Ph.D.; Hedrickson Publishers; 1986, page 13) says:

“The present tense is basically linear or durative, ongoing in its kind of action. The durative notion may be expressed graphically by an unbroken line, since the action is simply continuous. This is known as the progressive present. Refinements of this general rule will be encountered; however, the fundamental distinction will not be negated.”

He who is currently, habitually and continuously believing . . .

Also, the word believe can't be reduced to mere mental assent. The word *believe* in biblical times carried with it the concept of obedience and reliance. Kittel says “*pisteuo means to trust*’ (also to obey)’ . . .”

Vines says, “. . . *reliance upon, not mere credence* . . .” This is confirmed further by John the Baptist's statement in John 3:36 “*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not (apeitheo) the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.* (KJV) The work *apeitheo* is understood by all good translators and commentators to mean obedience. The opposite (antonym) of believe is *disobey*. The verse in the RSV says “*He who believes (present tense) in the Son. . . he who disobeys (present tense, progressive, state of persistence) the Son . . .*” The NASB translates the verse like this: “*He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him*”. Kittel, a Protestant reference work, clearly defines *apeitheo* to mean “to be disobedient.” Belief has obedience wrapped in its arms and the opposite of biblical belief is disobedience. One cannot consider themselves to be biblical if they teach salvation by mental assent (which amounts to cheap grace) *without* the subsequent and corollary obedience.

But, back to your letter. You ask me where I get the figure of 23,000 competing Protestant sects. The answer is the United Nations statistics on Protestant denominations in the world. *World Census of Religious Activities* (U.N. Information Center, N.Y. 1989). (Ed. Note: In the year 2000 edition of *Oxford University World Christian Encyclopedia*, the number now exceeds 33,000.)

Next, I was not naive to think you would use my testimony, I offered my testimony with tongue in check. I thought you would pick that up right away.

You next tell me to get into the Scriptures and everything will fall into place. You are right, when I got into the Scriptures, I found the Church. What a blessing. As to telling my family I have made a “*grievous mistake by lining up with ‘the magnificent Whore.’*” I

have been communicating with them on a regular basis and last summer wrote them a thirty-two page letter, which is now getting published, to explain to them that my conversion to the Catholic Church was the best thing that has happened to our family. To find Christ is wonderful, and to find His Church is wonderful too.

A Few Questions For You

Now that I have responded to your letter, and answered your questions, I have a few things I would like to discuss with you. Where does the New Testament claim for itself what you claim for it, that it is the only source of God's word and the only authority binding on the souls of men? Yes, it is binding, but where do you find in sola Scriptura that the Bible, as we have it today, is the only binding authority? Doesn't Jesus give the apostles binding authority in both Matthew 16:19 and 18:18? Does your fundamentalist tradition allow you accept these verses? Or does your "grid" of private judgement and "baptist" customs filter out the Lord's intent, when He gave this authority to His Church (the apostles as the foundation; Eph. 2:20) to bind and to loose?

What is the Word of God? Paul said his spoken words to the Thessalonians were accepted for what they actually were, the word of God. What he was referring to included much more than what is "scripturally" passed on to us in the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, as we know it today. The spoken words, not the written, the oral tradition, were also the very "words of God". When did Paul's spoken words cease being the word of God, after the sound wave vibrations fell from the air? Is God's spoken word self-retiring after they hit the human ear? Or do they continue to be God's word the following day, and the following century, even if not written on parchment? I just ask this as an honest challenge. The sola Scriptura position taken by those espousing the fundamentalist tradition is the Achilles heel of Protestantism, of which anti-Catholics are immersed up to their ears. The whole issue of the canon cuts to the very heart of the issue of the Church and leaves the fundamentalist position open to question, if not ridicule.

Paul tells the Thessalonians "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." (2 Thes. 2:15 (KJV)). He doesn't even limit this to his word, but uses the word "our", including Silvanus and Timothy. The word, or tradition (*paradosias*), that had been left to the Thessalonians is the spoken word, as well as the first epistle. Paul considers them equally binding upon the Thessalonians. Consider this: Paul spends time among the people in various geographical areas he visits (Ephesus, Corinth, etc.) and while living there preaches the Gospel (oral presentation of God's word), starts the local church, teaches them the Gospel and the way they should conduct themselves (including how to celebrate the Lord's Supper, Baptism, confession, etc.). This is the oral/living tradition. Later, when a problem arises a letter is written to remind them of the tradition the apostle had implanted in their local church. The written word is sent to correct the practice and bring them back to the tradition he had taught them.

The Corinthians were praised for keeping the tradition Paul had taught them. The written epistles Paul sent to the Churches did not and does not negate or substitute for the oral/living tradition he had left them-it adds to, or supplements, it. The Apostolic Tradition was maintained in the early Church through the apostolic succession and the unity of the “one holy, catholic and apostolic Church” which Paul declared to be the “pillar and foundation of the truth”. Even Jesus, who you claim to obey in the “bible way”, told believers to “listen to the Church”. Pray tell, what Church could He mean? Historically speaking, there is no question what Church He was referring to, everyone understood it was the Church Jesus promised to build and protect, the one anti-Catholics rant and rave against. Was He referring to the local denomination on the southeast corner of the intersection or the competing denomination on the northwest corner?

The early Church, the Church of the Apostles that existed as one visible, organic, Church for the first 15 centuries, knew nothing of this sectarian madness, denominational confusion and conflicting private interpretations. How can the believer today obey Jesus and listen to the Church? The relativistic sectarianism brought about by the so-called Reformation, makes a farce of Jesus’s words. In fact, the Fundamentalists, in keeping to their private interpretations and little manmade churches (born through ecclesiastical divorces and divisions) have created a new human tradition which nullifies the word of God and makes it impossible to obey Jesus’s words in any real objective way.

To make a long story short, what did the early Church depend on for its “infallible” source of truth and morals? Was it the canonized New Testament we buy so freely today in the local bookstore? You know as well as I do that the New Testament was not canonized until the fourth century, which is by comparison the span of time from the arrival of the Mayflower to our current decade-quite a period of time to be without a formal New Testament.

Did the early Christians believe in the doctrine of sola Scriptura? By no means! If you disagree, the burden of proof is on you, produce your evidence! For the first centuries there was no formalized New Testament, as we know it today. How did they survive, and in 300 short years conquer the whole Roman Empire? How could it be done without the King James Bible and good fundamentalist preachers pounding pulpits with the doctrines of sola Scriptura, the invisible Church, sola fide, and the other doctrines of recent development? Yes, the letters of Paul and the Gospels were well accepted and ubiquitous. But so were many other writings including the Didache and the Shepherd of Hermas and hundreds of others, many of which were considered Scripture for the first three centuries. A short study of our history shows the Apostolic Tradition and the Apostolic Succession was the basis for orthodoxy and obedience to the Gospel. To deny this is to be ignorant and deny history. These same men, the bishops of the Catholic Church (who Fundamentalists refer to as “early Christians” to avoid the reality that they were bishops), were the men who defined the doctrine of the Trinity (an extra-biblical word), the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ and the canon of Scripture!

A friend of mine said the Catholic Church placed “extra-biblical” doctrines on the souls of men. I would say it is the other way around! I will use the New Testament as an example. Since you believe the Bible is the only infallible word we have from God, how does God tell us which books should make up your New Testament? In this sense the New Testament canon itself is definitely extra-biblical. You accept the 27 books with no “word of God” to tell you which ones they are! Have you ever thought about that? By binding my soul to only 27 writings, which are not listed by Jesus, the apostles or the New Testament, to be the only binding authority, you are binding my soul by an extra-biblical, or even unbiblical, authority. You are binding my soul to Church Tradition without realizing it. How does one prove sola Scriptura from sola Scriptura? These questions posed no problems to the early Church nor to the Catholic Church today. They are only the Achilles Heel to those who deny the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church” which is still in obedience to Her Lord and keeping His commands in every corner of the globe, something the parochial sects cannot, and never will be able to, claim.

We know from the writings of one of the earliest followers of the Apostles, Papias (c. AD 60–130, a contemporary and disciple of the apostles), Bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor, that the oral Tradition was held in very high esteem, even more so than written documents. According to Irenaeus, Papias, a disciple of the Apostle John, said,

“. . . on any occasion when a person came who had been a follower of the Elders (Apostles), I would inquire about the discourses of the elders-what was said by Andrew, or by Peter, or by Philip, or by Thomas or James, or by John or Matthew or any other of the Lord’s disciples . . . For I did not think that I could get so much profit from the contents of books as from the utterances of a living and abiding voice.” (*The Apostolic Fathers* edited by J. B. Lightfoot.).

Papias is referring to the living and oral tradition which was the mainstay and message of the early Christians and preserved faithfully to this day within the Catholic Church and preserved by a sovereign act of the Holy Spirit. Remember, Jesus promised to keep His Church and protect it from being overcome by the power of Hell. Do you doubt He can do it? Did He fail for 1,500 years until Luther arrived?

The Church, “the pillar and foundation of the truth”, was given the sacred deposit of the Lord Jesus and the Apostles, the Gospel and the word of God (both written and oral/practice). It was this Tradition, both in word and epistle, that laid the foundation for the early Church founded by the Apostles. The Church Fathers are not infallible, to say they are would be foolish, but they are witnesses to the tradition left to us by the Lord Jesus and His Apostles, both in word, practice and epistle. Simply stated, this is the Tradition the Church refers to when it speaks of Scripture and Tradition—the Church simply echoes the words of the Apostle Paul.

The Catholic Church believes that all public revelation ceased with the death of the last apostle. But witnesses to this revelation did not cease, nor did the ability and obligation to pass them on and to develop the doctrines left the Church. This deposit of faith, the Sacred Tradition, in spoken and written form, was not to lie dormant. The development of doctrine (the Church pondering the truth in her heart) was not only a possibility, but an obligation, as proved by the development of the Trinitarian doctrine, Christological doctrines and the canonization of the New Testament, all of which you accept, but none of which are clearly defined in the New Testament, for if they were, Arius and his ilk would have found the going much more difficult than they did.

Here is a simple example for you, right from the New Testament. In Acts 20:35 Paul says, "I have shewed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." (KJV) How did Paul know that Jesus said these words? Can you find them in the Gospels? Yet Paul assumes his audience (as does Luke, the author of Acts) is intimately familiar with the extra-biblical words of Jesus. This was long after the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The answer is simple. The Apostolic Tradition (oral teaching and practice) was widespread and passed on faithfully by spoken word, long before Paul, Peter, Matthew or Luke wrote their epistles and Gospels, and long before anyone comprehended the compilation of these writings into a formal "new testament". How did Paul know Jesus's exact words at the Last Supper? He was taught the apostolic tradition. Place yourself in their historical situation. These were the apostles and their disciples.

For that matter, you consider the New Testament books to be inspired, infallible and the only binding source of authority for the believer. I agree with all my heart. But I have a solid ground for believing so, in the Tradition and the binding authority of the apostolic succession. What basis do Protestants have for trusting the twenty-seven writings that make up the New Testament? The answer comes back that "they are inspired." Yes, but how do we know they are inspired? There were many hundreds of writings passing from hand to hand, city to city, province to province. There was the Gospel of Thomas, The Shepherd of Hermas, The Didache, The Epistle of Clement, Acts of Peter, Acts of John, The Gospel of the Hebrews, The Secret Gospel of Mark, The Protevangelium of James, etc. etc. Who decided which were inspired and which were not? To say it was the Holy Spirit who chose the twenty-seven writings, is to sidestep the question - and is not an honest answer for the Holy Spirit works through His Church, which is made up of men.

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

Testament seem sparse in this area.

Many of the Reformers, when faced with the obvious problem, reduced it to a claim of an “internal witness” which confirmed that the twenty-seven writings were inspired, and therefore canonical. Others feel a writing is inspired based on its inspiring content. But, how inspiring is Leviticus or Philemon and many things written today are very inspiring. Another criterion is apostolicity, in other words, it is inspired if it was written by an apostle. However, we have in our New Testament the book of Hebrews whose authorship is unsure and disputed to this day, and the Gospels of Mark and Luke written by men who were not apostles. How do we know Matthew was written by Matthew? Jude implies he is not one of the twelve apostles. There is no adequate answer from a Protestant perspective; it is a major problem, one that goes to the very core of the Protestant belief. R. C. Sproul admits that the best the Protestant can hope for is a “fallible collection of infallible books”.

How do you know Bart, that the 27 books in the New Testament are the only inspired books? You must trust the very bishops of the early Church that you say are infallible! So how do you know you have an infallible collection? Do you have an infallible source outside the Bible? If you say the Holy Spirit chose them, please show me where it says that in the Bible, where the Holy Spirit gives you the infallible list. And since when did the Holy Spirit act thus on His own without using men. Did he use men to write the New Testament books, and not use men to determine which were to be included? Based on the doctrine of sola Scriptura you need an infallible authority to know which books the New Testament contains; this is necessary. Otherwise, what is to prevent a self-styled “apostle” today from taking away or adding to the canon, as Luther tried to do. Why has there never been a book defending the manmade theology of sola Scriptura? The Fundamentalist position is not as tightly sewn as they like to believe and many are leaving to join the Church that from the beginning has had an answer to the many questions that buzz right over a Protestant’s head.

Fundamentalist claim that “God promised to preserve His word-not the Church Fathers.” Are you aware that nine out of ten times when the New Testament writers refer to “the Word of God” they are referring not to written documents, but to the spoken word? Read the New Testament through with this in mind and it is a revolutionary experience. Now, what “word of God” did God promise to preserve: The written word alone, or also the spoken and practiced word? If the spoken word was not included, where does the Bible tell us there is a distinction between the two, that the written word takes precedence over the spoken, and that the “spoken” word of God would be self-retiring? And if God promised to preserve His word, how would He do it? The written word was preserved by His Church in the New Testament documents. How would He preserve the spoken words? Would it seem unreasonable to assume He would want to preserve them too, and would do so in the Sacred Tradition (2 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thes. 2:15; 3:6; 2 Tim. 2:2, etc.) preserved in His Church? Is the Holy Spirit unable to do this? Is the Holy Spirit only able

to preserve written text, and unable to preserve His spoken word?

There is a queer little equation here that may have slipped by you. It is not however, slipping by the thousands of Fundamentalists coming to grips with the weaknesses of their tradition. You will say the bishops of the early Church (the Church Fathers) are not infallible, only the word of God is infallible. However, you fundamentalists are also not infallible. The Fathers read the Scriptures and interpreted them; you read the Scriptures and interpret them. Neither of you are infallible, yet you treat them with disdain, but present yourselves and your newly devised interpretations as infallible.

You claim to center your “ministry around the objective truths of God’s word.” You are not clear as to whether this means the spoken or written word of God; nor have you explained why, if it is so objective (unambiguous, interpreting itself) that there are so many conflicting “Holy Spirit-led” interpretations, even among your own camp? Why should I trust your tradition, which is built on the man-made doctrines of sola Scriptura, faith alone (read James 2:24), etc. before I trust the apostles and their disciples. Houses built on sand eventually begin to show gaping cracks as the whole Fundamentalist tradition is now exemplifying.

As you see the Catholic position is not so ludicrous as some Fundamentalists make it out to be. In fact, in light of all the biblical and historical information, as soon as we blow some dust off the tiresome cliches, the Catholic position looks quite feasible, if not wonderful. But too many Fundamentalists, who are so immersed in their parochial heritage of division and personal infallibility, that they can’t see the forest for the trees.

Becoming Born Again

“Bible Christians” love to refer to themselves as “born again”. So do I, because I am born again, baptized and washed in the Blood of the Lamb. But how does the Lord Jesus say we are born again? Many quote John 3:3 and ignore John 3:5. How would you have suggested Jesus reword this verse to make it more in harmony with the fundamentalist tradition and culture? Jesus says by “. . . water and the Spirit.” What did John mean (writing in about 90 - 100 AD)? How did his readers (and Jesus’ listeners) understand these words? “Bible Christians” teach the Bible literally until of course it conflicts with their traditions. This is a perfect example.

Fundamentalists are so concerned with how they interpret (or misinterpret) these words, but so cavalier when it comes to how other godly Christians have interpreted the words. Spurgeon once said, “It seems odd that certain men who talk so much of what the Holy Spirit reveals to them should think so little of what He has revealed to others.” This is precisely my point regarding the early Church. They were much closer to the historical space-time events (crucifixion, resurrection, Apostolic preaching and teaching, etc.) than we, yet nearsighted people care so little for what men of God in the past had to say, and how they understood the teaching of their mentors, the apostles.

Does the Catholic Church teach that works can save, which you seem to imply? The Council of Trent stated in their Sixth Session on Justification, in Canon 1, "If anyone says that man can be justified before God by his own works, whether done by his own natural powers or through the teaching of the law, without divine grace through Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." This is what the Church teaches, so why does the tract dishonestly claim it is by "baptism alone," without the grace of God and faith? Why don't you insert this quotation into your tracts to show what the Church really teaches? One must live in obedience to God, working out their salvation "with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12), "working your faith out in love" (Gal. 5:6) You present a caricature of the Church's position, which is inherently dishonest. It seems to me you violate the Commandments by bearing false witness. I see it every day in anti-Catholic material, a blatant disregard for truth, accuracy and fair play, and a seeming nonchalance with violating the Ten Commandments. (I forgot. You are no longer under bondage to the Ten Commandments. Sorry, an oversight on my part.)

But, let's get back to John 3:5. When Jesus spoke these words to Nicodemus, what had just happened? What was still ringing in the ears and dancing before the eyes of the listeners? Shortly before the discourse with Nicodemus John tells us in John 1:32 "And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him." This of course refers to Jesus' baptism (which is narrated in Mt. 3; Mk. 1 and Lu. 3) where we clearly have "water and the Spirit". What did Jesus do immediately after the discourse with Nicodemus? John 3:22 tells us, "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized." Why did John couch the Nicodemus discourse in such a blatantly "baptismal" framework if he did not intend his listeners "to get the wrong idea". Maybe He did it on purpose to emphasize His words and means of New Birth! How would you have suggested Jesus (or John) reword these passages to fit better with your tradition? This is what I mean when I say the tracts are dishonest. I understand their purpose, but the ends do not justify the means.

I could go on and on, but I will bring this to an end. I admire your sincerity and fervor. I wish more of my new found brothers in the Catholic Church were as committed and enthusiastic. There are however, a flood of new converts from Fundamentalism entering the Church-like myself and more than thirty of my friends, including two families that just came to the Church from local Baptist churches, just this month-and we will be bringing new life and fervency into the Church as the flood continues. I think you will witness amazing things in the years to come as the sleeping giant arouses from drowsiness. As I said earlier, even now, worldwide, for every person the Catholic Church is losing, she is gaining seven! God bless His Church.

I am surprised by the intensity of your vitriolic hatred for the Catholic Church. When feelings and resentments run so deep, and are so easily brought to the surface, there is

usually more involved than just a theological difference of opinion. Sometimes it is because people were “wounded” or offended in some way, possibly in childhood. A bee sting at age two can cause dramatic, even irrational fear, when a bee buzzes by later in life. A traumatic experience with the Church or the clergy may have the same reaction later in life. Is there a remote possibility that you have had such an experience in the past, which may be fueling such an intense emotional response?

Thanks again for the time you took to write. I hope we can converse further in the future. I am very passionate about the Church, now that I have found her after so many years. I do not mean to be harsh, and anywhere that I came across that way, I am sorry. You are my brother in Christ and I have no intention of being uncharitable (as many anti-Catholics can be) with you or your friends. I respect your sincerity and sincerely wish God’s blessing in your life. May the peace of God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Your friend in the Blood of the Lamb, and in the Catholic Church,

Steve Ray

PS. Brother Bartholomew, one last question if I may. Take a look at Psalm 106:31 and let me know what you think. Make sure as you read, that you let the word of God speak for itself. Make sure you don’t force the Scriptures to say what your tradition, and gut feelings, want it to say. By the way, I will save you a little work. The phrase in Psalm 106:31 is the same Hebrew grammatical structure as the phrase in the Hebrew text of Gen. 15:6, and it is the same Greek structure as Gen. 15:6 in the Septuagint. I have yet to find a fundamentalist who knows about this verse. Did you?

FOOTNOTES:

1. As quoted in *Amo, Amas, Amat and More*, “Argumentum ad hominem” is an effective rhetorical tactic, appealing to feelings rather than intellect, or directed against an opponent’s character rather than the subject under discussion. It is considered a logical fallacy, in that such an argument fails to prove a point by failing to address it. There is no doubt, however, that in practical politics and in many a court of law, argumentum ad hominem is persuasive.

2. Your favorite word *Romish*, by the way, was not in the dictionary, not even in the fundamentalist theological dictionaries. Did you make it up or just carry on the tradition of earlier “anti-papists”?

3. Are you familiar with *Halley's Bible Handbook*? I received my first copy in the 1960's through the Billy Graham Assoc. There is an interesting item in the book. The index directs you to the "most important page in the book". When you turn to the page it says the most important thing for every pastor to do, is to "Enthroned the Bible in the hearts of his congregation". What a precious little statement, "enthroning the Bible in our hearts". It amazes me that while Fundamentalists will accuse Catholics of creating a nomenclature of "unbiblical words", they betray themselves with phrases like "personal relationship with Christ", "accepting Christ as Savior", "asking Jesus into your heart", "enthroning the Bible in your heart" (a classic in the *Halley's Bible Handbook*), "age of accountability", "eternal security", "denominations", the "invisible Church", etc. etc. I have a long list of words created within the fundamentalist tradition that can be found nowhere, in word or substance, in the Bible. Do you use them?

4. In your letter you state that there is a distinction between intellectual conversion and more true heart conversion. Maybe you can distinguish the two for me. Are you sure they are mutually exclusive? Can one have a heart conversion without the use of the intellect? It sounds like a either/or dichotomy. You are either saved in your heart or in your mind. It is a typical fundamentalist fallacy. I find the Apostle Paul referring to salvation as "coming to the knowledge of the truth" twice (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 3:7) and the writer of Hebrews referring to it once (Heb. 10:26). Is this a "bible way of salvation" or simply an intellectual conversion? Does knowledge have anything to do with the intellect? In Matthew 22:37 "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Does Jesus cut up the human being into sections to see what faculty is really being used to love God? I think you make an unnecessary dichotomy. Have you had an intellectual conversion to accompany your heart conversion? Please help me on this confusing dissection of the spiritual innards.

5. You certainly lack eloquence and style in your writing but you are good at flinging adjectives that add more heat than light, more smoke than substance. It is typical of the Fundamentalist style, to create their own nomenclature, like the Gileadites in Judges 12, and by their Fundamentalese, exclude everyone who smells a little different than your close knit clique.

6. My heroes were always Martin Luther, for bringing about the Reformation, Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, C. S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer. To this day I still have a Martin Luther T-shirt, an anniversary Christmas tree bulb commemorating Luther's 500th birthday, several quotes of his in calligraphy framed on the wall and I did several half hour commentaries on Luther and the Reformation on the local Christian Radio Station. I still have tapes of them. I spoke of how he broke away from the evil Whore of Rome to reinstate the true Church that had been underground for 15 centuries. The water was purified as it ran through the rocks underground and resurfaced as the true and pure Gospel, lost since the time of Christ.

7. Where, incidentally, a deacon sexually accosted my older brother in the men's restroom on a Saturday morning when my brother was mowing the Church lawn. I guess it happens with Baptist deacons also and is not exclusively a Catholic issue. It actually happened to him twice, by two different church leaders. He quit going shortly thereafter, he felt the Baptist church was not a safe environment for a young boy.

8. We also set up a local youth center with ping pong tables, snacks and games, in order to create a forum for witnessing to the neighborhood kids. We charted out the surrounding areas into geographical zones and went door to door in each area.

9. We will get to the Bible and its interpretation later in this letter, so I do not want to comment on your statement "Bible way" yet. But just remember, the Bible is a book not short on ambiguities, as is demonstrated by the multitude of interpretations even among your own camp, and is not read without the filter of a tradition, be it Catholic or fundamentalist. If you claim complete objectivity, if you claim infallibility, we might as well discontinue our discussion now.

10. Funny story here. The first person who told me this (by yelling and losing her temper) ended up finding out that her and my mother are good friends and attend the same Bible Study together every week. She never put two and two together. She was a little embarrassed for playing God and making omniscient declarations about my eternal soul, especially for the manner in which she did it. Have you ever noticed that Fundamentalists frequently put their "Bible way" theology over and against the love and gentleness that should characterize the true Christian? They are the first to get red in the face and make impulsive judgements and harsh statements.

11. Find that phrase in the Bible. Eternal security is an extra-biblical word created by fundamentalists to describe an unbiblical concept, created by the Reformers to explain a new doctrine developed out of a reaction to Rome. There are a whole slew of phrases like this: consider age of accountability, the Rapture, denominations, total depravity of man, etc., etc. And I was always told Catholics were the ones who invented new words and developed new doctrines.

12. You use phrases like "Bible Christian" or "Bible way". Where do you find these criterion in the New Testament? I never remember Paul referring to someone as a Bible Christian or that they were "saved the Bible way"? Can you, a sola Scriptura man, show me where you get this from the Scriptures? It seems to me it might just be a man-made *shibboleths*, little litmus tests you make up, using unbiblical criteria, to see if people actually belong to your clique or not. Paul's tests were more stringent and had to do with obedience, sacrifice and unity. He was not as big on labels as most fundamentalists are.

13. *System* is such a cold, mechanical word. Do you use it for its connotative value? Are you aware that your church is also a "system" if you apply the terms equally? You have a

paid pastor, ordained deacons, a hired secretary, by-laws, constitutions, affiliations, certain procedural directives and an established theology. You are registered with the state for tax-free status, you have a board of deacons, a planning committee, a budget, a bank account, a building and finance committee and on and on. If the Catholic Church is to be called a “system” then yours could equally be considered a “baptistic system” to which your followers must subscribe. Do not apply double standards with me, for I’m not intimidated nor buffaloes by your carefully selected words. Another example of this dishonest double standard you employ.

You anti-Catholics make a big deal about the billions and billions of dollars hoarded by the Catholic Church. You ignore the fact with your followers that most of that is tied up in real estate, such as churches, hospitals, nursing centers, etc. around the world. Many nations have no health care except that which is provided by the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is a world-wide entity, which would of necessity, command a formidable budget. Let’s make a fair comparison: If you add up all the accumulated wealth of all the “Bible churches” around the world (including property, buildings, church busses, fancy pulpits, hymnbooks, computers, telephones systems, schools, pastor’s salaries, etc., etc.) what do you think it would total in dollars? Should you be criticized for your accumulated wealth and real estate? And, let me ask you, what countries and impoverished areas of the world do you provide with their only source of health care, orphanages, nursing homes, etc.? In this regard, you ought to reread Matthew 7. Jesus does not like double standards, it is far too Pharisaical.

14. In hermeneutical terms this is called isogesis, reading your biases, traditions and personal preferences into the Bible, instead of exegesis, which is allowing the Bible to speak for itself.

15. I recently wrote a book on the celebration of the Eucharist and its biblical and historical development. There is no question, for one who is interested in knowing truth, that the Sunday celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy is as old as Christianity itself and it was taught and practiced by the apostles and the early Church. Read the Didache, Justin Martyr, Ignatius of Antioch, Clement, and many others. These listed were all disciples of the apostles and confirm the teaching and practice of the New Testament church of the first century. Why should I be willing to accept your recently devised theological denigrations of Christian worship instead of the apostolic truth confirmed by those who knew the apostles, especially since theirs is so much more biblical?

16. Ignatius of Antioch, (c. 35 - c. 107 AD), is a very important link to the Apostle’s teaching. Peter presided over the church in Antioch Syria as bishop until c. 50 AD, and was then followed by Evodius, and then by Ignatius in about 96 AD [*History of the Church* by Eusebius 3,22]. Paul also spent over a year in Antioch [Acts 11:25,26] in 44 or 45 AD. He also came back to Antioch frequently between his missionary journeys. It is possible, and even probable, that Ignatius personally knew the Apostles Peter and Paul

and worshiped with them in Antioch. In this case he would be intimately acquainted with the Apostolic Tradition of the Eucharist. Who would have a better understanding of the Apostle's teaching and celebration of the Eucharist: Ignatius or those of us 20 centuries later? In about the year 106 AD Ignatius was arrested for being a Christian and was chained to Roman guards and escorted from Antioch to Rome where he was eaten by lions. This is how he assessed the situation, "I am His wheat, ground fine by the lion's teeth to be made purest bread for Christ" [Epistle to the Romans 4]. He was also good friends with Polycarp who was a disciple of the Apostle John and others who had seen the Lord.

17. Ignatius of Antioch, *The Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* [7, 8], c.106 AD

18. Ignatius of Antioch *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, [20], c.106 AD This is the church to which St. John had presided only a few years earlier, and may have still been alive and living there.

19. Ignatius of Antioch, *The Epistle to the Philadelphians*, (c. 106 AD). Notice the four key words that continually crop up: body, blood, altar and sacrifice.

20. I have by the way read extensively, and have increased my efforts now that I finally understand the treasure they are. I have the full thirty-eight volume set put out by Eerdmans. I've had them for ten years. Having the original source material is a great asset, I don't have to take fundamentalist's word for what the Fathers supposedly said and didn't say.

21. Are you aware that the only time the words "faith alone" are used together is in James 2:24 "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only". (KJV) No wonder Luther put it in the back of his Bible and called it the "epistle of straw". No wonder I never heard a sermon on it in my thirty nine years of fundamentalist churchgoing.

22. I have written another book on this topic, going from the Old Testament through the New Testament and up through the fourth century. It is soon to be published.

23. Irenaeus of Lyons says this about himself, "For, when I was still a boy, I knew you (Florinus) in lower Asia, in Polycarp's house, when you were a man of rank in the royal hall, and endeavoring to stand well with him. I remember the events of those days more clearly than those which happened recently, for what we learn as children grows up with the soul and is united to it, so that I can speak even of the place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and disputed, how he came in and went out, the character of his life, the appearance of his body, the discourses which he made to the people, how he reported his intercourse with the Apostle John and with the others who had seen the Lord, how he remembered their words, and what were the things concerning the Lord which he had

heard from them, and about their miracles, and about their teachings, and how Polycarp had received them from the eye-witnesses of the Word of Life, and reported all things in agreement with the Scriptures. I listened eagerly even then to these things through the mercy of God which was given me, and made notes of them, not on paper, but in my heart, and ever by the grace of God do I truly ruminate on them.” [Eusebius History of the Church 5,20,5-7]

24. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (c. 130 - c. 200 AD), *Against Heresies* [1,21,1]. This is a powerful testimony to the practice and belief of the first and second century Church. Only Gnostics denied the “baptism which is regeneration” and here it is said to be an invention of Satan, a denial of the whole Christian faith.

25. Just as the public schools make God irrelevant by ignoring Him, so the fundamentalist leaders relay the message to their constituents that the Fathers are irrelevant by ignoring them.

26. I took in verses like John 3:16 and Ephesians 2:8 with my mother’s milk. Do not think I am ignorant of these verses. I had them memorized before my multiplication tables. They are the foundation of my life to this day. They are the essence of the Catholic teaching. The only difference is they are much richer and deeper now, and they fit into a beautiful biblical framework.

27. According to Dana and Mantey in their *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* “The fundamental significance of the present tense is the idea of progress. It is the linear tense . . . the progressive force of the present tense should always be considered as primary, especially with reference to the potential moods, which in the nature of the case do not need any A present punctiliar tense . . . “Narrowing it down further they say, “There are three varieties of the present tense in which its fundamental idea of progress is especially patent.” Under The Progressive Present “This use is manifestly nearest the root idea of the tense. It signifies action in progress , or state of persistence . . . In short the present tense expresses ongoing action in the present time.”

28. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* by Gerhard Kittel, a renowned Protestant theological dictionary of ten volumes. Eerdmans, 1968

29. I agree that it is the word of God and is the only writings in which God is the primary author, working through the agency of men. We both agree unequivocally that the Scriptures are inspired (2 Tim. 2:16) and that no jot or tittle will pass away. Those who try to argue sola Scriptura from this verse, end up proving too much, since these passages, in context, refer to the Old Testament Scriptures, since there were no New Testament yet in existence.

30. 1 Thes. 2:13 Paul was not referring to a case of King James Bibles being shipped to

the Thessalonians from the local Bible bookstore. This was the spoken word, uttered with apostolic authority. All of what Paul said was not written, only the minutest portion of what Paul taught and practiced, not to mention the other apostles, was enscripturated.

31. 2 Kings 14:25 “He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which [was] of Gathhepher.” These words of Jonah were not enscripturated in the canon, yet were they the word of God? The written word of God tells us they were. Should the Jews have ignored them because they were not written down, or should they treasure them in their heart and put them into practice (tradition) showing the reverence God’s word deserves? Should the early Church have obeyed and put into practice the word of God not enscripturated in the New Testament, but the word of God none the less?

32. Can you find anywhere in the New Testament where Jesus commissions His apostles to write? Did Jesus ever write? Accept when He wrote in the sand, defending the adulterous women, you will come up empty handed. If the writing of the New Testament was to be the central source of authoritative, binding authority, where do you find it proclaimed in the New Testament? Sola Scriptura is really a man-made doctrine (our drunken friend Luther) that was an attempt to fill the void when the authority of Christ’s “one holy, catholic and apostolic Church” was rejected. Where do the apostles tell us, in sola Scriptura, that they were commissioned to write, or compile a New Testament that would be the only binding authority? This was the later development (ouch, fundamentalists hate the concept of “doctrinal development”) of the Catholic Church, a decision you and your comrades have accepted without question.

33. In reading the King James many Fundamentalists think the word ordinances is referring to an emasculated form of baptism and Communion, being the ordinances accepted by so-call “Bible Christians”. The word used in 1 Cor. 11:2, however, is the same Greek word used in 2 Thessalonians 2:15 (paradosia) and means according to *Vines Expository Dictionary* “a handing down, . . . denotes a tradition . . . of apostolic teaching . . . of instruction concerning the gatherings of believers, . . . of Christian doctrine in general . . . of instructions concerning everyday conduct.” According to *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* it is “a giving over which is done by word of mouth or in writing.” Paul gives a great example in 2 Timothy 2:2.

34. Matthew 18:17,18 “And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (KJV)

35. A good friend of mine, and a pastor of a non-denominational “bible church”, had a great deal of frustration when one of the members of his church fell into sin. When he was

disciplined and removed from the congregation, he went across the street to another Fundamentalist church that welcomed him with open arms. When my friend approached the other pastor, confidentially relaying the condition of the man in sin, the new pastor brushed it off and the man is still a member of the “new church” today, and still in sin. This condition of denominations makes a laughing stock of the word of God. Protest-ant sectarians ought to give up their man made traditions and divisions and obey the word of God.

36. No one claims the Roman Catholic Church has been perfect, no one denies it needed great reformation during the sixteenth century. Much like the nation of Israel, she has gone through periods of decline and then great repentance and renewal. God always reforms His people. Israel never ceased to be His people or His nation. The prophets never taught the people to ignore the traditions and interpret the Torah the way they individually wanted to (Matthew 23:1). They were never encouraged to leave and begin their own “little Israels”. Even Luther knew it was a great evil to divide the Church.

37. During the intervening centuries, many of the books of our New Testament were doubted, or flat out rejected. For example Hebrews (unknown author), James, Jude (implies he is not an apostle in verse 17), Revelation, 2 Peter, and the last two epistles of John. Most of the eastern Church accepted The Shepherd of Hermas as scripture. Even Luther thought he had the prerogative to re-canonize the Scriptures, putting the less worthy, uninspired books (including James) at the back of the New Testament, taking a back seat to the worthy books. It was only Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) that convinced him to stay with the tradition of the Church in the New Testament’s canon. However, without a Bible-authorized final list, Luther understood that by rejecting the authority of the Catholic Church, the canon was again open for inclusions and exclusions, since the Bible gave him no final list. It was strictly Church Tradition, which you denounce, that finalizes and binds you to the twenty-seven books in the canon of the New Testament, the book of the Catholic Church.

38. Besides Paul’s own words (2 Thes. 2:15; 3:6; 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Tim. 2:2; etc. etc.) listen to the great theologian and defender of the faith Irenaeus (“Having founded and built the Church, the blessed apostles entrusted the episcopal office to Linus, who is mentioned by Paul in the Epistles to Timothy; Linus was succeeded by Anacletus; after him, in the third place from the apostles and, the bishopric fell to Clement, who had seen the blessed apostles and conversed with them, and still had their preaching ringing in his ears and their authentic tradition before his eyes. And he was not the only one: there were still many people alive who had been taught by the apostles . . . In the same order and the same succession the authentic tradition received from the apostles and passed down by the Church, and the preaching of the truth, have been handed on to us.” (*Against Heresies*, III 3, 2f. Irenaeus c.130 - c.200 AD). Notice the early Church appealed to the Tradition and succession as their basis of credibility and orthodoxy. Even if one doesn’t accept apostolic tradition they must accept the fact that Irenaeus and the Early Church

used succession and tradition as their argument they viewed succession as the way the apostolic teaching would be sustained, along with the use of Scripture.

39. My experience is that Fundamentalists give very little credence to history and truth, unless it fits their tradition and their recently devised and arrogant private interpretation of Scripture, with a cavalier disregard for what Christians before them held sacred.

40. You may claim that you do not believe in sola Scriptura, you may admit that you do. If you do not then tell me, what other sources of infallible authority do you accept as binding on your soul and the souls of others? If you answer none, you do believe in sola Scriptura.

41. Papias was bishop of Hierapolis, maybe appointed by the Apostle John. Hierapolis is about 80 miles east of Ephesus in Asia where the Apostle John spent the last part of his life, and where Paul had traveled through the region preaching the Gospel. Irenaeus says “Papias, the hearer of John, and a companion of Polycarp, in his fourth book . . . He had compiled five books entitled *The Sayings of the Lord Explained* which have since been lost.” *The Introduction to Papias’ Fragments* in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* published by Eerdmans and arranged by A. Cleveland Cox, D.D. says, “Papias has the credit of association with Polycarp, in the friendship of St. John himself, and of “others who had seen the Lord” . . . Later writers affirm that he suffered martyrdom, some saying in Rome. He gathered the sayings of our Lord and the floating traditions and wove them into five books of which only fragments remain.

42. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, “Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit . . . And [Holy] Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit . . . The tradition here in question comes from the apostles and hands on what they received from Jesus’ teaching and example and what they learned from the Holy Spirit. (John 14:26) The first generation of Christians did not yet have a written New Testament, and the New Testament itself demonstrates the process of living Tradition” (CCC 81, 83).

An interesting quote from Basil the Great, (which could be multiplied a hundredfold from the first centuries, from the early bishops who fundamentalists have a love/hate relationship with. They love to claim them as their own, but hate what they believed and taught because they expose the fundamentalists, showing they are not the heirs of the early Church) “Of the dogmas and kerygmas preserved in the Church, some we possess from written teaching and others we receive from the tradition of the Apostles, handed on to us in mystery. In respect to piety both are of the same force. No one will contradict any of these, no one, at any rate, who is even moderately versed in matters ecclesiastical. Indeed, were we to try to reject unwritten customs as having no great authority, we would unwittingly injure the Gospel in its vitals; or rather, we would reduce kerygma to a mere

term.” Basil the Great (c. 330 - c. 379); was a defender of the Faith against the Arian Emperor Valens. He was appointed Bishop of Caesarea. For the rest of his life he fought untiringly for the deity of the Holy Spirit against the attacks of the Arians. He was eloquent, learned and statesmanlike, and possessed a great personal holiness. He is one whose opinion should be of great importance to modern Christians. Why should his “interpretation of Scripture” be less valid than the theologically sloppy fundamentalists of the Twentieth century?

43. Don’t let the hair stand up on the back of your neck when I mention the “development of doctrine” for even all orthodox “Bible believing Christians” practice it and accept the doctrine without question. The doctrine of the Trinity was developed over the first 400 years. The word Trinity never appears in the Bible, in fact it’s not even clearly delineated in the Scriptures. You may think it is unambiguous, but heresies have danced around the issues from day one, trying to prove their points from the Bible. Never does the Bible say God is three persons in one nature, or one nature in three persons. We both know it is the truth, but we came to that after centuries of doctrinal development, to which you are eternally indebted. The reason Jehovah’s Witnesses don’t believe in the Trinity today is because they “can’t find it in the Bible”.

Yet the word Trinity, and the belief that God is one in substance and yet three persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), is essential to the belief and understanding of every Christian whether he is in the Church or in one of the 23,000 denominations and sects. To deny the Trinity is to deny the Christian Faith. To deny the doctrine of the Trinity developed by the Catholic Church in the first four centuries is to be a heretic, a member of a cult. So words, such as Trinity, were developed over centuries and are not found in the New Testament, nor in the writings of Paul, but are basic and essential Christian truths. You hold tenaciously to the binding decrees of the college of bishops, for bishops they were. Isn’t that interesting?

44. And what about the words of the apostles quoted by Jude, where he assumes his readers are intimately familiar with the words, yet they must be orally transmitted, for they are found nowhere in Scripture? “But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts” Jude 17.

45. In 1 Cor. 11 and also in 1 Cor. 15, Paul uses the words received and delivered, which are both technical terms referring to the receiving and passing on of tradition.

46. Not only does the Catholic Church readily agree, but they have been the primary defenders and have affirmed it for two millennia. The word “inspired” means “God-breathed”. God superintended the writings and is their primary author, though He worked through the instrumentality of men. 1 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20, 21. It should be noted

that the early Church did not use inspiration as a criteria. They used the term loosely.

47. Calvin says, “Let it therefore remain a fixed point, that those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught rest firmly upon Scripture, and that Scripture is indeed self-authenticating, not is it right that it be subjected to proof and arguments; but that it attains the certainty in our eyes that it merits by the witness of the Spirit.” And later, “Enlightened by His power, we do not believe that Scripture is from our own judgement or that of others; but, rising above human judgement . . . we feel the unmistakable power of the divine majesty living and breathing there.” He goes on to say the knowledge comes from “heavenly revelation to each person” and “I speak only of what each believer experiences in himself . . .” Institutes I. vii. 3. This is almost identical to the means used by Mormons to verify the inspiration of the *Book of Mormon*. It claims that you know the Book of Mormon is true and from God, because when you read it, you would get a “burning in the bosom” which is an internal witness to verify the inspiration. It says, “And when you shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Spirit. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:4,5). How are these two “self-authenticating” procedures different? Using Calvin’s methodology, the Mormon’s authenticate their *Book of Mormon*, and there is no way to dispute their conclusions.

48. Jude 17

49. It is a matter of authority. Those who deny any authority have no reference point or absolute outside of themselves and are left with their finite, fluctuating feelings and thoughts. The Catholic has the authority of those commissioned by the risen Christ, the Protestants have the Bible. But, without the authority of the Church they really don’t have the Bible but only what they hope is the inspired Bible. At this point their claim that the New Testament is the infallible word of God is “piggy-backing” off the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church has both the authority of the Church (Christ’s body on earth, his continuing incarnation) and therefore the authority of the infallible Word. In denying one, the Protestant lost both, in affirming the one, the Catholic retains both.

50. He even used a human being to bring His Son into the world, from whom He derived His very nature according to the flesh. In these last days He has spoken to us in His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2). He seldom speaks for Himself (though He does at times; Matt. 3:17), preferring to use people.

51. Please don’t refer here Revelation 22:18 for the verse itself is clear it is referring to the “prophecies of the book” and that was hundreds of years before it was included in what we now call the New Testament.

52. Even though many of them (Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Papias, Hermas and others) were contemporaries of the apostles, could have been their converts and lived and worshiped with them. Who should I respect more, you or them? Why should I deny their words, which were spoken and written with unanimous consistency, in order to trust the conflicting conclusions of each little fundamentalist with their private interpretations, parochial traditions and private judgements? Are you infallible? Anti-Catholics judge me as though they are infallible, they quote Scripture as though they are the final word, as though they are their own little “popes”.

53. Luther said in his Commentary on the Psalms, “Scriptura sui ipsius interpres” or in English, “The Bible is its own interpreter”. It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to see where that idea has gotten us.

54. Fundamentalists can’t even agree on which translation of the Bible is authoritative. Some believe any translation (literal or dynamic) based closely on the Hebrew and Greek is OK, whereas others consider only the King James Version inspired. “If the King James version was good enough for Paul, it is good enough for me!”

55. James 2:24 “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” Notice as you read this verse how your Fundamentalist grid forces you to find an alternative explanation than the one that is literal and obvious. Your tradition constrains you to nullify the word of God.

56. I am amazed at the mental gyrations many fundamentalist commentators go through to deny the sacramental aspect of baptism. The Protestant Evangelical is the one who broadcasts their ‘literal interpretation of the Bible’ and yet one doubts their words as the pages of denials and rejections are read, all in the misguided and desperate attempt to distance themselves from the perceived evils of Rome. I see not an objective exposition of the text, but a gymnastic twisting of the text to conform Scripture, the word of God, to the Protestant Tradition of negation and denial. Would this be exposed by our Lord, as he did with the Pharisees of yesteryear, by saying, “Why do you transgress [argue away] the commandment of God for the sake of your [Protestant] tradition?” Mt. 15:3 (emphasis in brackets are mine). How many ways can the words “saved through water” and “baptism now saves you” and “born of water and of the Spirit be interpreted”? Why the gyrations to dispute the clear meaning of the text? It is simply a denial of the implications of the incarnation based on the unbiblical and unhistorical traditions of the Protestant revolt. This reminds me of the comedic question, “What about the word NO don’t you understand?”

57. You compare the practice of Catholics with your ideals. This is patently unfair as you should know. Why don’t we try comparing fundamentalist’s practices with the Catholic Church’s ideals. We’d have a different story, wouldn’t we? Yet you mislead your followers with flawed reasoning, inaccurate representations and extreme examples. That

is why you gain followers mostly from the uninformed, uneducated and lonely.

58. Interestingly enough, this is the only passage which refers to Jesus and his disciples baptizing. The fact that the baptizing was done by the disciples is irrelevant to this discussion. It is the unique placement of this passage that is relevant. See also John 4:1,2