

**Drowning in the Tiber (Part 4)**  
**Responding to Francis Beckwith's 2009 Book:**  
***Return to Rome: Confessions of an Evangelical Catholic.***

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**-The Question of Ecumenism-**

Transcript of a Sermon Preached at Christ Church of Clarkson  
by  
Tony A. Bartolucci on April 19, 2009

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Well, if you would grab your Bible and open it to Galatians, chapter 4 and then stand for our reading of the Scripture this morning. Galatians, chapter four. Let's stand.

Beginning in verse 1:

Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave, although he is owner of everything. But he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world, but when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the law that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father." Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. However, at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those, which, by nature, are no gods, but now that you have come to know God, or rather, to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things to which you desire to be enslaved all over again. You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years. I fear for you that perhaps I have labored over you in vain. I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong. But you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the Gospel to you the first time, and that which is a trial to you in my bodily condition, you did not despise or loath, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus, Himself. Where, then, is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness, that if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. Have I therefore become your enemy by telling you the truth? They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out in order that you may seek them. But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you, my children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you. But I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone for I'm perplexed about you. Tell me, you want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman, another by the freewoman. But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the freewoman through a promise. This is allegorically speaking for these women are two covenants, one proceeding from Mt. Sinai

bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mt. Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother, for it is written, “Rejoice, barren woman, who does not bear. Break forth and shout you who are not in labor, for more are the children of the desolate than of the one who has a husband.” And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. But as at that time, he who is born according to the flesh persecuted him who is born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son.” For the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the freewoman. So then brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the freewoman.<sup>1</sup>

*[Opening Prayer]*

Well, this morning we continue a series we started several weeks ago, my response to Francis Beckwith’s book, *Return to Rome, Confessions of an Evangelical Catholic*. Part of me is anxious to finish this little series and get back into 1 Peter, but I feel that addressing this is needful. It’s something that needs to be addressed, but believe me, I don’t do it without reservation. Part of me is quite uncomfortable in all of this; I don’t enjoy criticizing someone else, however it is a matter that is public. As far as I’m concerned, I like to fly under the radar. I don’t look forward to the personal attacks that will likely come my way. I realize that this sort of thing is politically incorrect and I prefer to spend my time in the pulpit in Biblical exposition anyways. But all of that to say, I’m keenly aware of staying on schedule with this and I’m very, very, grateful for those of you who may not be interested so much in this issue. I know some of you have expressed to me your keen interest in following this series and addressing this issue. You’re anxious to see how it all unfolds. Others of you may not be so excited about it, but you have been patient and I don’t take that lightly. I greatly, greatly appreciate that. It’s certainly a very difficult subject. By his own admission, Francis Beckwith’s book, which carries the publishing date of 2009, is a chronology of his life’s journey, particularly his spiritual journey. And you see that on pages 15 and 16 where he gives his purpose for writing his book. Quoting:

What I hope to offer here is an account of a personal journey that focuses on my own internal conversations, or struggle, between the Protestant theology that I embraced during most of my adult life and what I’ve come to think of as my Catholic constitution.<sup>2</sup>

In short, the book, 140 pages, is a testimony of his life, his spiritual life. Now how you go about criticizing, or critiquing, somebody else’s testimony, that for many seems to be the height of hubris! Who am I to criticize somebody else’s experience? Or what *they say* that they have experienced,

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are taken from the New American Standard Bible (The Lockman Foundation, 1971).

<sup>2</sup>Francis J. Beckwith, *Return To Rome: Confessions of an Evangelical Catholic* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009), 15-16.

religiously-speaking? Yet, when it comes to our testimony of what we believe, what we say speaks volumes as to the truth. It may be subjective experience, but that experience has to hang on something. There has to be something objective upon which it rests, a foundation of truth. After all, what is a testimony? If you run into some Mormon missionaries, they will likely repeat their testimony. It's a canned sort of thing. "I testify to you, I know the book of Mormon is true; I know Joseph Smith was a prophet of God; I know the Mormon Church is true." Has nothing to do with the Gospel and everything to do with a perversion of it. If you take the apostle Paul's testimony as it's recorded in Acts 22 and 24, Philippians chapter 3, and 1 Timothy chapter 1 (and by the way, this might be a good exercise, I did this really quick, but you basically could set out a spread sheet, put four columns together, at the head of each column write the Scripture passage, Acts 22, Acts 24, Philippians 3, 1 Timothy 1, and then look at the section in each of those chapters that relates to the Apostle Paul's testimony of his faith in Christ and what the Gospel is, what it means to him, take those relevant sections and put it in each column and then try to look for some of the key elements and the things that come up again, common sorts of things, those that were important to Paul in talking about his transformation to light from darkness). Well, in doing that very quickly, here are a few things I found, generally speaking:

- There's a confession that I once may have been religious, and in Paul's case, highly religious, very orthodox as far as his peers were concerned (his Pharisee peers); so I may have once been religious, yet at the same time I realize that I was lost and hell-bound.
- There's an affirmation that salvation is totally the work of God. He sovereignly opens eyes and hearts to the truth.
- There's a pearl of great price transaction. Remember the story that Jesus told, that parable (Matthew 13): the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and he finds one of great value, and he sells all that he has in order to have it. And that's the sort of thing that you see for Paul. It's a statement that he counted all things lost for the sake of gaining Christ. So, among genuine believers there's this sentiment that resonates within our hearts that everything that I am, everything that I have, I willing exchange for the truth of the Gospel. There's a repudiation of any personal merit or righteousness; a desperate understanding that my righteousness is totally in Jesus Christ. That's not something I can add to. It is a perfect once for all transaction.
- There's a confession of Christ resurrection and His Lordship.
- There's an affirmation that this salvation is received by faith.
- There's confidence in persevering or continuing in the truth of the faith by God's grace.

Think about your own testimony. How would you sum it up in a paragraph? As I thought of mine, I could sum it up this way:

I was a Roman Catholic, yet had no understanding of what the Gospel was. And God, in His mercy and grace, sovereignly drew me to Himself. I believed in Jesus Christ, the risen Son

of God, that His death on the cross was the only thing that could save me. My life has been changed and I know that my only hope, *and I underline that*, my only hope is in the finished work of Jesus Christ on my behalf.

Let me tell you, these things are conspicuously absent when you read Beckwith's account of what it meant for him to be an Evangelical. Instead, here's what one finds: experientialism, lots of mystical experiences that brought him from professing evangelicalism to returning to the Roman Catholic Church. There's Thomism and free-will theism.

Thomism is a philosophy that follows the thought of the middle-ages theologian Thomas Aquinas (Thomas Aquinas, the key theologian and philosopher of the Roman Catholic Church). And free-will theism flows right out of that philosophy. And so the book resonates with this—"Well, I wasn't convinced of this, and, I needed to study that, and, now, I'm convinced of that, but these arguments weren't convincing, and, I chose to do this, and I chose to do that"—as if the truth rests on the fulcrum of one brain! This is why we defer to the presuppositional position that it is the Holy Spirit that leads one to truth, not the little nut between our ears. (Now, don't get me wrong, certainly that's important, but our sin prevents us from doing it on our own.)

So there's experientialism, there's the background of Thomism and free-will theism, there's ecumenicism, that is, Christianity is a big tent and devout Roman Catholics and devout Protestants are all brothers and sisters in Christ, and lastly, there's a very muddled understanding of the Gospel. *You read the book and you never get any sort of definition of what the Gospel really is.* It really, for the most part, ends up being a message of creedalism. You believe these certain things about Christ and His Person, that He's Lord, that He was resurrected from the dead, and if you affirm these things then you're a Christian. And in the end, you end up saying to yourself, "This guy never really left Rome in the first place."

So I want to look at a couple of these issues. We've already covered experientialism, we did that last time. Now, I want to look at ecumenicism. That's a hot word today. "Ecumenicism," "ecumenical," what is that? Well, the word group comes from the Greek noun οἰκουμένη (*oikoumenē*) which has a basic meaning of "the whole" or "the entire world." It's a word of inclusivism. In modern-day usage, the word "ecumenical" became popular following the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Scotland. It was there the delegates from missionary organizations met to address what they considered the scandal of competing Christian denominations. And they resolved to put aside their doctrinal differences for that of peace and unity. Well, out of that 1910 World Missionary Conference came the World Council of Churches. And the goal of the World Council of Churches can be summed up in that one word, "inclusivism". Ecumenicism is inclusive. It doesn't like to exclude anyone. The idea is, our differences don't really matter, what's important is that we are one. It's the spirit of tolerance, it's the spirit of diversity, it's the spirit that pollutes our age.

Now, obviously there are different levels of ecumenicism. Some would say all religious views are equal. Some are so ecumenical that they say it doesn't matter if you're a Muslim, a Buddhist, a

Hindu, a Christian, or a Jew. There are others that practice ecumenicism within the broadly defined realm of Christendom. And then there is what I would call a healthy ecumenicism, and you've probably heard me say that phrase before. In other words, not all things need to divide us. It's like the story I've related to you that comes from Emo Phillips:

A man is standing up atop the Golden Gate Bridge, contemplating suicide. And you see it, your heart goes out to him, and you ask the man, "Are you a Christian, a Muslim, a Hindu, a Jew, or what?" And the man replies, "I'm a Christian." And you say, "Me, too. Small world. Are you Protestant?" And he says, "Yes." And you reply, "Me, too. What denomination?" And he says, "Baptist." And you say, "Me, too. Northern Baptist or Southern Baptist?" And he says, "Northern Baptist." And you say, "Me, too. Northern Conservative Baptist or Northern Liberal Baptist?" And he says, "Northern Conservative Baptist." And you say, "Me, too. Call Ripley's Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist or Northern Conservative Reformed Baptist?" And he says, "Northern Conservative Reformed Baptist." And you say, "Me, too! Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Great Lakes Region or Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Eastern Region?" And he says, "Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Great Lakes Region." And you say, "Me, too! Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1879 or Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1910?" And he says, "Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1910." And you say, "*Die, heretic!*" And you push him off the bridge.

A lot of times I don't agree with myself! Within evangelical orthodoxy, there can be a healthy difference of opinion, a healthy ecumenicism, but it's only healthy when the fundamental doctrines are agreed upon, and that includes of course, things like God's Triunity, the inerrancy of Scripture, salvation by grace alone through faith alone; but also things like the doctrines of grace, the solas of the Reformation, the fact that salvation is totally 100% a work of God.

I'm going to argue that Beckwith's ecumenicism isn't so healthy. In fact, it's damning. Any ecumenicism that renders the essential truths of the Gospel null and void is just that. And, frankly, one does not even have to open the book to get a taste of the smorgasbord of ecumenicism that's inside. You see it in the title, *Confessions of an Evangelical Catholic*. You also see it with the list of names that have endorsed the book, including Evangelicals like J.P. Moreland, another Thomist, and Roman Catholics like Richard John Neuhaus, who was strongly ecumenical, even to the point of expressing hope in the heresy of universal salvation. You also see it in the name, Peter Kreeft whose book *Ecumenical Jihad* was a best-seller about a decade ago. So you get it from the cover and from the endorsements, and when you open the book and start reading it, nothing changes.

There's an old saying, maybe your grandmother or your mother used to use it, maybe you use it: "You can't have your cake and eat it, too." Well, clearly, with all due respect, Beckwith does. He wants to have his cake and eat it, too. He wants to contend on one hand that the Roman Catholic Church is the true church, infallibly correct in all that it teaches, including what it teaches as it relates to salvation, but he also wants to embrace his former Evangelical friends as being fellow brothers

and sisters in Christ, even though they're not Roman Catholic, even if they disagree with the Roman Catholic position on justification. This is what I mean when I say he wants to have his cake and eat it, too.

One of the key stories relevant to his ecumenicism comes about a third of the way or so through the book. He talks about the late Walter Martin, and he says:

Years later I would hear a wonderful story about Walter Martin from Fr. Mitch Pacwa, SJ, a former theology professor at the University of Dallas who hosts EWTN Live, a weekly talk show broadcast on the Catholic cable television network, EWTN (Eternal Word Television Network). I met Martin only twice, but Father Pacwa had know him quite well. They had debated each other on several occasions, which resulted in a long-term friendship that included Fr. Pacwa contributing to and serving on the editorial board of Christian Research Journal, the publication of the Christian Research Institute, whose founding president was Walter Martin. . . . According to Fr. Pacwa, he had been invited by Martin to attend his ordination to become a Southern Baptist minister.

The minister officiating the ceremony asked all the ordained ministers present to come forward and participate with him in laying hands on Martin. Fr. Pacwa, a Catholic priest, remained in his seat, not wanting to cause offense to his Protestant brethren by walking up to the front of the sanctuary while wearing his Roman collar. Martin, who had his head bowed, lifted it up and looked directly at Fr. Pacwa and said in his deep, booming voice, 'He said "all ordained ministers."' Fr. Pacwa then left his seat, proceeded to the front, and placed his hands on Martin while the words of ordination were uttered by the Protestant celebrant. After telling me this story, Fr. Pacwa chuckled, 'You can now tell your Protestant friends that a Catholic priest helped ordain Walter Martin.'<sup>3</sup>

I know a story like that nips at the sentimentalities of many. But we have to see this sort of thing for what it is, and the bottom line of what it is: Rome does not possess the Gospel. There are insurmountable differences. And there can be no agreement between light and darkness.

I could cite so many more pages and passages out of the book that really make it clear that Dr. Beckwith thinks that we're all just one happy family. He talks about his experience at Baylor University, and he says:

When it comes to the bonds of Christian friendship, Baylor has been an embarrassment of riches for Frankie and me. In addition to those already mentioned, there are many, many others whom we think of as friends. And they consist of Catholics as well as Protestants from virtually every denomination.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 42-43.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 68.

At the beginning of the book, he says:

Much of this book is a celebration of the Christianity that has shaped my life, intellectually and spiritually, both in its Protestant and Catholic forms.<sup>5</sup>

Note, *both in its both in its Protestant and Catholic forms*. So there are forms of Christianity, according to Francis Beckwith, that are Protestant, and forms of Christianity that are Catholic. And I would ask, *are there forms of the Gospel that are Protestant, and forms of the Gospel that are Catholic?* Apparently, Beckwith thinks so, as he states:

It is my hope that this book may effectively communicate to my fellow Christians, both Protestant and Catholic, an understanding of the reasons that culminated in my departure from and eventual return to the Catholic Church.<sup>6</sup>

So, throughout the book, you see him talking about Christians who are Evangelicals, Christians who are Protestants, Christians who are Catholic. And we're going to take a look and see, is that really logical? So, hold on.

One of the other things that you almost always see when it comes to ecumenicism is the connection to the supposed culture war that we're to be engaged in. The idea that we're to put aside all of our differences and join hands because our contemporary American culture is literally going to hell. We need to cooperate with one another, because of things like gay marriage and abortion. My first realization of this culture-war connection to ecumenicism was when I read Peter Kreeft's *Ecumenical Jihad* some ten years ago. Peter Kreeft claims to be a convert to Roman Catholicism from Dutch Reformed Calvinism. He is a professor of philosophy at Boston College (Roman Catholic Boston College) and is considered one of the leading Roman Catholic apologists. And his book, *Ecumenical Jihad* was quite popular. From what I understand, it was endorsed by *Christianity Today*, widely read by Evangelicals and Catholics alike. His contention in the book was that God was uniting all religions, Christians, Jews, Muslims, in order to fight this culture war. Well, it's interesting that Peter Kreeft is one of the people that endorses Beckwith's book. And we see the same thing with Francis Beckwith. There's a connection to this culture war, particularly abortion.

He writes on pages 22 and 23:

Prior to my return to the Church, virtually all of my professional work in Christian philosophy and apologetics, as well as in legal, political, and moral philosophy, has focused on questions and issues of concern *to all Christians, regardless of theological or ecclesiastical tradition*. For example, long before I had thought about returning to the Catholic Church, I had written about and defended the Catholic Church's positions on

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 16.

abortion, natural theology and natural moral law--positions held by many other non-Catholic Christians as well.<sup>7</sup>

He talks about how he met William F. Buckley, Jr. who he describes as a Roman Catholic intellectual. And Beckwith, in meeting him, told him about the book that he (Beckwith) had recently published, *Politically Correct Death, Answering the Questions About Abortion Rights*. So we see this thread of fighting a culture war. Chuck Colson, who is involved in ECT I<sup>8</sup> (I don't know if he was involved in II), wrote in a *Christianity Today* article entitled, "Why Catholics Are Our Allies," that believers:

are on the front lines battling such issues as abortion, pornography, and threats to religious liberty. . . . Our best weapon is the distinctiveness of Christian truth, expressed in unity by all true believers.<sup>9</sup>

I read recently that one-third of the Moral Majority was Roman Catholic. We could go back to our previous pope, Pope John Paul II. In January of 1995, he ended his trip to Africa with a call for the world's great religions to unite on behalf of shared moral values. At the time, he was addressing Buddhists and Hindus.

Let me ask you, is this what Scripture says we're to be about as believers? Fighting some culture war? No wonder the Gospel gets watered down to nothing. If we have right-wing political allies who say they believe in Jesus, they're our brethren! It doesn't matter if it's a Roman Catholic Bill O'Reilly on one hand or a Mormon Glenn Beck on the other. We're all God's children fighting a common cause of winning the culture for . . . for what? For Christ? No, for some definition of Judeo-Christian morality. You can go to hell as a moral person or an immoral person, as a Republican or a Democrat. There is, in fact, no real morality where the Gospel is absent. It's the Holy Spirit that changes lives and He does so by quickening dead sinners to new life in Christ. And that comes in response to a message: "repent, and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior," not, "join me in boycotting some company," or, "let's join hands around the flagpole; Muslim, Jew, Christian, Protestant, Catholic, Evangelical, let's all sing Kumbaya together."

I'll argue that the Judaizers of Paul's day were more moral. They would have been allies in fighting against the Godless culture of first century Greece and Rome, a culture that was much worse than ours. They could have been great allies, but what does Paul call them? Brethren? Allies fighting

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 22-23. Emphasis mine.

<sup>8</sup>ECT I (Evangelicals and Catholics Together) refers to the joint declaration of unity and cooperation fostered by Evangelical and Roman Catholic leaders in 1994. Charles Colson was indeed involved in ECT II, released in 1997.

<sup>9</sup>As cited by Mike Gendron (Pro-Gospel Ministries: <http://pro-gospel.org/x2/content/view/36/1/>). Accessed May 20, 2009May 20, 2009.

in a common cause against the demise of Greco-Roman culture? What does he call them? *Dogs, evil workers, members of the false circumcision fraternity!* "Aw, come on, Paul, that's not going to fly. That's not very politically correct and sensitive of you."

I know someone may argue, "but things are different. You see, Roman Catholics are reading the Bible, they've changed their beliefs." And with that, what do people generally point to? *Vatican II*. Did Vatican II really change anything? The quick answer is no.

A friend of mine, former Roman Catholic priest, Richard Bennett writes:

The major tactical change that took place in Vatican Council II 1962-65 was to declare officially that Rome was now ready to ecumenize with Hindus, Muslims and other religions. In particular Evangelicals, formerly called heretics, were now to be seen as separated brethren, and thus, wooed, little by little, back into the Roman Catholic fold. This was to be done primarily by means of dialogue.<sup>10</sup>

In other words, Vatican II may be marked as the beginning of modern Roman Catholic evangelism with its goal of reaching former Roman Catholics and Protestants, bringing them "back home to Rome." Vatican II didn't undo the church's past infallible pronouncements that salvation was *only* through the Roman Catholic Church. None of that has changed. It just gave all of that old stuff a new facelift.

Somebody asks, What about ECT-1 and 2? I mentioned that earlier. For those of you not familiar with what I'm referring to, ECT stands for *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*. There was ECT-1 in 1994 and ECT-2 in 1997. They were joint declarations by Evangelical and Catholic leaders that contended that we are all true Christians, need to set aside our differences for the sake of unity and fighting against the encroaching darkness of secularism and humanism throughout the world. So we're back to what? Back to the culture-war issue. What about the Gospel? Well, the signers define a Christian (and thus the Gospel) as *one who has embraced the fundamental doctrines as formulated by the major creeds and councils in the early church*. As ECT-2 puts it:

We give thanks to God that in recent years many Evangelicals and Catholics, ourselves among them, have been able to express a common faith in Christ, and so to acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, we confess together one God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we confess Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, we affirm the binding authority of Holy Scripture, God's inspired Word, and we acknowledge the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds as faithful witnesses to that Word.

Is that the Gospel? *We're back to creedalism!* You can believe all of those things and die and go straight to hell. It doesn't really touch on how one appropriates salvation, it doesn't touch on issues

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<sup>10</sup>Richard Bennett, "Catholic Mysticism and its Influences on Christians." Unpublished manuscript of audio lecture (<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=61007155520>).

of sin, it doesn't touch on justification by faith, it doesn't touch on the issue of works. So we're back to creedalism: if you say you believe the early creeds, you're a Christian. Again, what does James say? James 2:19, *demons believe*, they're orthodox! It's not enough to save you. And the bottom line is both of the documents, ECT I and II, are misleading and meaningless. They're misleading in that they wrongly define the germane issues; they're meaningless in that they were never officially adopted by Rome. As far as Rome is concerned, it was just a group of rogue Protestants and Catholics who came together in a dark room one night and put together a document. It didn't mean anything! It's not official; there's no authority behind it.

Am I just being legalistic? Am I just unbending? Am I showing my age? Come on, we've got—times are new—we've got a Roman Catholic Church that just wants to extend it's arms and be friends and say we're all brothers in Christ.

Is the Roman Catholic Church really ecumenical?

The truth is, we are under more than *one hundred official anathemas* from the Roman Catholic Church. Do you know what an *anathema* is? It's used three times, in two different places, but three times in Scripture. It goes back to the sum of Galatians 1:8-9, *If anyone perverts the Gospel, let him be anathema. Anathema* is the Greek word.<sup>11</sup> It means “devoted to destruction” (eternally condemned). By Rome's infallible, unchanging pronouncements as the true church, we are under over one hundred anathemas. These are infallible, irreversible decrees that say that we are to be condemned as heretics and schismatics.

You've got to understand something. Rome's claim to infallibility is her worst enemy. Rome can't go back and say that those things that it has infallibly decreed in the past are wrong. To do so would be to admit that we're not infallible. So I'm not talking about the opinion of some priest somewhere. I'm not talking about some prayer book written in 1942. I'm talking about the official pronouncements of the Roman Catholic Church, which the Roman Catholic Church believes are as equally binding and official and infallible as the Scriptures themselves.

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia:

Most firmly hold and in no way doubt that every heretic or schismatic is to have part with the Devil and his angels in the flames of eternal fire, unless before the end of his life he be incorporated with, and restored to the Catholic Church.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>ἀναθεμα.

<sup>12</sup>The Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v. "Heresy" (Principles of Church Legislation). The article continues: "No one is forced to enter the Church, but having once entered it through baptism, he is bound to keep the promises he freely made. To restrain and bring back her rebellious sons the Church uses both her own *spiritual power* and *the secular power* at her command." Emphasis mine.

In the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church, I'm a heretic, *I'm going to hell*.

Those of you who are older know this. My mother was saved out of Roman Catholicism in the 1980s. She was raised Roman Catholic; she even went to a Roman Catholic high school in Buffalo, NY. And I asked her about a month ago, "Mom, when you were in high school, what were you taught as it related to people that weren't Catholic?" She said, "Well, they were going to hell. Only Catholics could ever have the hope of going to heaven."

There used to be an old religious joke about a man who died. He was greeted by St. Peter at the pearly gates, and Peter's showing him around. He brings him to a large mansion filled with hundreds of rooms and these rooms don't have doors. And he's showing the man the rooms. "Well, here's the Methodist room." And they're all having a good time in there. "Oh, here's the Presbyterian room, and over here's the Baptist room." You get down to the end of a hallway and there is one room with a door tightly closed and the man says, "Well, what's with this door?" And St. Peter says, "Don't open that. Roman Catholics are in there and they think they're here alone." Now don't derive any theology from that story. I only tell it to demonstrate a point. Vatican II (which was official), ECT I and II (which were not) did not change anything.

Go back to Pope Boniface VIII, his bold *Unum Sanctum*. That document begins by saying:

Urged by faith, we are obliged to believe and to maintain that the Church is one, holy, Catholic, and also apostolic. We believe in her firmly and we confess with simplicity that outside of her there is neither salvation nor the remission of sins . . .<sup>13</sup>

You want eternal life? You want to be right with God? You've got to come through our church.

The 16<sup>th</sup> century Council of Trent was called in response to the Reformation. How many of you believe in total depravity? You're under *anathema*. Canon V of Trent:

If anyone says that since Adam sinned the free will of man is lost and extinguished, let him be anathema. (Or, *devoted to destruction*.)

Any of you deny baptismal regeneration? Any of you here this morning say, "no, baptism doesn't wash away sins, it's just a sign." And if you believe that (I hope all of you do) well, you're under *anathema* for believing that:

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<sup>13</sup>Pope Boniface VIII's Papal Bull, *Unum Sanctum* was delivered in the year 1302. It is clear that the use of his word "Catholic" refers to the Roman Catholic Church and must not be confused with a similar statement by Augustine which referred to the universal (or catholic) church of Jesus Christ.

If anyone says baptism is not necessary unto salvation, let him be anathema.<sup>14</sup>

Anybody here believe in transubstantiation? When we partake of the elements, do you believe that you are literally eating the body and divinity of Christ? Drinking His blood?

If anyone denies that in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist are contained, truly, really and substantially, the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ, but saith that He is only therein as in a sign or in figure or virtue, *let him be anathema.*<sup>15</sup>

Do you believe in justification by faith? To have appropriated your salvation by belief in Jesus Christ? You're anathematized for that, as well:

If anyone says that faith alone, or that by faith alone, the impious is justified, let him be anathema.<sup>16</sup>

Do you believe in the imputed righteousness of Christ to your account as that which saves you? You're anathematized according to Canon XI of the section on justification.

What do we teach in this church? That you're not saved by good works, but good works, or change of life, issues from salvation. Canon XXIV:

If anyone says that the justice received is not preserved, and also increased before God through good works . . .

*In other words, works add to your salvation.*

. . . but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof, let him be anathema.<sup>17</sup>

Oh, we could look at Vatican I, we could look at Vatican II.

How about the official *Catechism of the Catholic Church*? Under the heading, "Outside the Church There is No Salvation:

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<sup>14</sup>Seventh Session, Decree on the Sacraments. On Baptism, Canon Five.

<sup>15</sup>Thirteenth Session, Decree Concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. One the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, Canon I. Emphasis mine.

<sup>16</sup>Sixth Session, On Justification. Chapter XVI, Canon IX.

<sup>17</sup>Sixth Session, On Justification. Chapter XVI, Canon XXIV.

How are we to understand this affirmation, often repeated by the Church Fathers? Re-formulated positively, it means that all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body. Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and Baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through Baptism as through a door. Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it.<sup>18</sup>

*You cannot be saved if you refuse to go home to Rome.*

John Harden's popular and authoritative catechism asks the question:

What must a Catholic believe with divine faith?

Answer:

A Catholic must believe with divine faith the whole of revelation, which is contained in the written Word of God and in sacred tradition.

Question 45:

Can a person be a Catholic if he believes most, but not all the teachings of revelation?

Answer:

A person cannot be a Catholic if he rejects even a single teaching that he knows has been revealed by God.

Question 46:

What will happen to those who lack the faith necessary for salvation?

The answer:

Those will not be saved who lack the necessary faith, because of their own sinful neglect or conduct.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Roman Catholic Catechism, Question 846.

<sup>19</sup>As cited by William Webster, *Saving Faith: How Does Rome Define It?* (Battle Ground, WA: Christian Resources, Inc., 1997), 17.

So you can't have a "buffet approach." Most of my Catholic friends and relatives would freely say, "I don't believe in everything the Church teaches." Well, according to the official teaching of the Church, you can't be Catholic if you say that. And if you're not Catholic, you're not saved.

We could quote the present pope, Benedict the XVI, who, in 2007, reasserted that there is no salvation outside the Roman Catholic Church. He even released a document that claimed Vatican II has been misinterpreted. Salvation comes only through Rome. In fact, other churches, such as ours, don't even deserve the title "church." We're "ecclesial communities." Only the Catholic Church, "has the fullness of the means of salvation. Outside the Church, there is no salvation."<sup>20</sup>

Can Francis Beckwith have his cake and eat it, too? Is he willing to say that his Evangelical friends are not brothers, but have made a *shipwreck* of their faith? That's the words of the Council of Trent at the very beginning, they have made a shipwreck of their faith and are lost.<sup>21</sup>

I think it's pretty clear. And in the end, as I said, you read the book and you get a sense that he never really left Rome. He was a Protestant by convenience; raised in the Roman Catholic Church, got involved in the Roman Catholic Charismatic Movement, started reading the Bible, liked some of the things he learned from some of the charismatic congregations, identified with Protestantism—even at the same time, he went to a Roman Catholic school in New York City.<sup>22</sup>

And he says, in the beginning of the book:

What I hope to offer here is an account of a personal journey that focuses on my own internal conversations, a struggle, between the Protestant theology I embraced during most of my adult life and what I've come to think . . .

*Note this:*

. . . what I've come to think of as my Catholic constitution which I have to believe had always been there.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Nicole Winfield, Associated Press, July 11, 2007. Boston Globe Online Edition, *Pope Reasserts Salvation Comes From One Church*.

[http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2007/07/11/pope\\_reasserts\\_salvation\\_comes\\_from\\_one\\_church/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2007/07/11/pope_reasserts_salvation_comes_from_one_church/)

<sup>21</sup>The Sixth Session, Decree on Justification, Proem. The statement reads: "Whereas there is, at this time, not without the shipwreck of many souls, and grievous detriment to the unity of the Church, a certain erroneous doctrine disseminated touching Justification . . . "

<sup>22</sup>Fordham University. Beckwith, *Return to Rome*, 52.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

*Which I have to believe had always been there. . .*

He writes that one day his wife noted that she saw "the Spirit of Christ in Pope John Paul II." And in his book he says about this:

I explained to her that although I respected the Pope *and considered his work as essential to displacing the materialism and unbelief that had overtaken Europe*, I still had some theological issues.<sup>24</sup>

Now again, *culture wars*; see that connection?

*The Spirit of Christ in Pope John Paul II?* He was a full-blown ecumenist who, on the one hand, embraced all religious comers, and on the other hand, devoted his life to Mary, "the Mediatrix."

I tell you, you've got to contend for that truth once for all delivered to the saints. It's not popular. Not always easy. I think the lines are pretty clearly drawn, aren't they?

*[Closing Prayer]*

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 64. Emphasis mine.