

Return to Rome: Confessions of an Evangelical Catholic*

Francis J. Beckwith

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Notes taken and comments given by Tony A. Bartolucci

Opening Observations

TAB: The title is telling, "Confessions of an Evangelical Catholic." Beckwith's not an evangelical catholic, I am!" All "evangelicals" are "catholic" in the correct sense of the word. Of course, Beckwith twists the meaning of the phrase beyond historical recognition:

"At the end of the day, I am an Evangelical Catholic because I believe in the Evangel, the Gospel, the Good News, and that it is a gift of God that ought to be embraced and lived by everyone. As an Evangelical, indeed as a Christian, I have an obligation to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. I am Catholic insofar as I believe that the Church is universal and that its continuity is maintained through history by the whole of its membership, the Body of Christ, and not merely as a collection of isolated individuals in personal relationship with Jesus. I also believe that this Catholic Church is under the direction of the Holy Spirit working through the Church's Magisterium, the Apostle's successors." [128, underlining mine]

*TAB: Note that throughout his book, Beckwith avoids using the phrase "Roman Catholic" (although it is implied by the capital "C" - but he also uses a capital "E" for evangelical). He believes in the "Gospel," but what is the Gospel? What would Beckwith tell someone, under conviction of sin, as to what he or she needs to do to be saved? Would it be enough to "**Believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved, you and your household**" (Acts 16:31). As a Roman Catholic, that would not be enough. In fact, there is no hope or assurance of salvation under Rome, as the Council of Trent makes quite clear. That is not "good news."*

The fact is, Beckwith's "gospel" is: "Believe in Jesus Christ and in the One Holy Roman Catholic Church that He founded. Believe that the Pope is the vicar of Christ and that the church alone can interpret the Scriptures. And you must be baptized so that your sins can be forgiven. In fact, this is what it means to be 'born again.' And you must be baptized in the Roman Catholic Church for there is no salvation outside of her. And you must remain in full communion with Rome to be saved. And then you must partake of the sacraments - especially the Eucharist. Only Rome has the ability to transubstantiate the elements so that they literally become the body, blood, and divinity of Jesus Christ. We take quite literally his words, "unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in yourself." You must regularly confess your sins to a priest and do works of penance. You must believe in everything the Roman Catholic church teaches, for you cannot rightly be Catholic and hope to be saved unless you believe it all. Then, if you are faithful and do good works and participate in the sacraments, God's grace will be infused to you and you will become righteous. However, you won't likely be righteous enough to inherit eternal life. Not right away. You will have

to endure the purging fires of purgatory for years, decades, perhaps centuries so that you may be fit for heaven."

Then note his second statement, that he is "Catholic" because he believes "that the Church is universal and that its continuity is maintained through history by the whole of its membership, the Body of Christ, and not merely as a collection of isolated individuals in personal relationship with Jesus." What does he mean by this? I know of no credible Evangelical theologian who would disagree with that statement. The Reformers themselves argued that there is a universal church of the elect, a spiritual church, that Rome has all but forgotten about having erased the invisible church in favor of the visible. However, if Beckwith means by this Roman Catholicism as a "denomination" then he ought to specify what he means by a "continuity that is maintained by the whole of its membership."

Endorsements

The list of endorsements for the book are interesting. They include:

- Edwin M. Yamauchi (Miami University and 2006 ETS president); Featured in the widely read Christian apologetic work *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel) - He has done much work in the area of first century Christianity.

According to Wikipedia, his areas of expertise include: "Ancient History, Old Testament, New Testament, Early Church History, Gnosticism, and Biblical Archaeology."

- Scott Hahn;

"Education - Hahn received his B.A. in 1979 from Grove City College in Pennsylvania with a triple major of theology, philosophy, and economics (magna cum laude). He obtained his M.Div. (summa cum laude) from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 1982. In May 1995, he was awarded a Ph.D. in systematic theology from Marquette University (Phi Beta Kappa). His dissertation, entitled *Kinship by Covenant: A Biblical Theological Analysis of Covenant Types and Texts in the Old and New Testaments*, is a significant example of contemporary covenantal theology.

Conversion to Catholicism - Rome Sweet Home published in 1993 - Hahn claims to have started out as a Presbyterian minister and theologian with years of ministry experience in congregations of the Presbyterian Church in America, and Professor of Theology at Chesapeake Theological Seminary, which is no longer in existence.

As a young theologian, Scott Hahn was convinced that the Catholic Church was bad, and boasted of having converted some Catholics into embracing a purer Christianity. His conversion began when he and his wife became convinced that contraception was contrary to God's law. He

continued to study various issues relating to salvation, faith, and good works, as well as the Protestant doctrine of sola scriptura.

According to his book *Rome Sweet Home*, a key factor behind his conversion is his research on what he saw as the key to the Bible: the covenant. This is a sacred kinship bond that brought people into a family relationship. God established a series of covenants and the new covenant established by Jesus Christ is an establishment of a worldwide family. He believes that Jesus and the apostles used family based language to describe his work of salvation: God is Father, Christ is Son and the firstborn among brethren, heaven as a marriage feast, the Church is the spouse of God, Christians as children of God.

This new family, according to Hahn, is headed by Christ, and the Pope is his "prime minister" to whom he has given the keys of the kingdom, a process that he believes is also present in the Old Testament. Hahn tries to show that the Catholic Church, whose head is called "Holy Father", is the worldwide family described by the Bible and that the Protestant doctrines of sola fide and sola scriptura are not biblical because, in his view, the Bible stresses charity and works equally with faith for gaining salvation and points to the Church as the "pillar and the bulwark of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15). He affirms that the Protestant view of the Bible as a "fallible collection of infallible writings" is flawed.

Scott Hahn converted to Catholicism on Easter 1986 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Many people, using his wife's words, have started to call him "Luther in reverse," since a large number of Protestant pastors and Bible scholars have from then on followed suit in converting to Catholicism.

Hahn's wife Kimberly had a similar conversion at a slightly later date, entering the Catholic Church on Easter 1990 in Joliet, Illinois. *Rome Sweet Home* describes their process of conversion together.

In *Ordinary Work, Extraordinary Grace*, he narrated the influence of Opus Dei in his conversion, and what made him feel that Opus Dei was his specific calling within the Catholic Church: (1) its members' devotion to the Bible, (2) its ecumenism, since Opus Dei was the first Catholic institution to welcome non-Catholics as cooperators, (3) the upright lives of its members, (4) they were ordinary people, who lived theology, (5) holy ambition: "a devout work ethic", (6) the practice of hospitality in answering his questions, (7) prayer: "They made time for intimate prayer every day." [Wikipedia]

- J.P. Moreland;

"He is currently Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology at Biola University in La Mirada, California. He received a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Southern California." [Wikipedia]

- Richard John Neuhaus

"Born in Pembroke, Ontario, Neuhaus was one of eight children, and his father was a Lutheran minister. Although he never graduated from high school, he was ordained a Lutheran minister around 1960, later serving as pastor of St. John the Evangelist Church, a predominantly black and Hispanic congregation in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. He was active in the Lutheran "Evangelical Catholic" movement and spent time at Saint Augustine's House, the Benedictine-Lutheran Monastery, in Oxford, Michigan. He was active in liberal politics until Roe v. Wade was handed down. He is the originator of "Neuhaus's Law", which states that "Where orthodoxy is optional, orthodoxy will sooner or later be proscribed".

In 1984, Neuhaus established the Center for Religion and Society as part of the Rockford Institute, which also publishes Chronicles. He and the center were "forcibly evicted" from the Institute in 1989 under disputed circumstances. Neuhaus wrote in 2003 that:

"I became increasingly uneasy with what was understandably viewed as the racist and anti-Semitic tones of Chronicles under the direction of [Thomas] Fleming, its then new editor. I was preparing to break the connection with Rockford and go independent when one rainy Friday morning Rockford executives showed up, fired the entire staff, put us out on the street, and changed the office locks. We could have done without the melodrama, but every May 5 we have a gala staff luncheon to celebrate the occasion."

In 1990, Neuhaus founded First Things, a journal published by the Institute on Religion and Public Life, as an ecumenical journal "whose purpose is to advance a religiously informed public philosophy for the ordering of society."

Neuhaus belonged to and was ordained in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the conservative wing of American Lutheranism. He subsequently joined the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, before being received into the Roman Catholic Church on September 8, 1990. A year later, he was ordained a priest by John Cardinal O'Connor. He was a commentator for the Catholic television network EWTN during the funeral of Pope John Paul II and the election of Pope Benedict XVI.

He promoted ecumenical dialogue and social conservatism. Along with Charles Colson, he edited Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission. This ecumenical manifesto sparked much debate; some Catholics and evangelicals claimed that Neuhaus and Colson had compromised major doctrines to promote a neoconservative agenda and unfairly demanded that both branches of Christianity stop trying to convert the other's members.

Neuhaus expressed a strong hope in universal salvation, but stopped short of teaching it as a doctrine, emphasizing it as a hope, not a belief. "In sum: we do not know; only God knows; but we may hope." He wrote:

that absolutely no one is beyond the reach of God's love in Christ. All are found, and therefore are not lost. That some may choose not to accept the gift of being found is quite another matter.

We pray and hope that all will accept the gift of salvation that is most surely available to all. At least for Catholics, the teaching is definitive: God denies no one the grace necessary for salvation.

Similar to Cormac Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor Neuhaus said that it cannot be known if hell is populated by anyone.

A close, yet unofficial, advisor of President George W. Bush, Neuhaus advised Bush, who called him "Father Richard", on a range of religious and ethical matters, including abortion, stem-cell research, cloning, and the defense of marriage amendment. In 2005, Neuhaus was named one of the "25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America" by Time Magazine.

Neuhaus died from complications of cancer in New York, on January 8, 2009, aged 72. [Wikipedia]

- Ralph C. Wood (Baylor)

"Ralph C. Wood, University Professor of Theology and Literature at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, holds B.A. and M.A. degrees from Texas A&M University-Commerce, as well as M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Chicago. From 1971-97 he taught on the faculty of Wake Forest University, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where he was the John Allen Easley Professor of Religion. At Baylor, he teaches in both the Great Texts program and the Department of Religion. He serves as an editor-at-large for the Christian Century and as a member of the editorial board of the Flannery O'Connor Review.

His major book, first published in 1988 and still in print from the University of Notre Dame Press, is entitled *The Comedy of Redemption: Christian Faith and Comic Vision in Four American Novelists* (Flannery O'Connor, Walker Percy, John Updike, and Peter De Vries). He is also the author of *Contending for the Faith: The Church's Engagement with Culture* (Baylor, 2003); *The Gospel According to Tolkien: Visions of the Kingdom in Middle-earth* (Westminster John Knox, 2004); and *Flannery O'Connor and the Christ-Haunted South* (Eerdmans, 2004)." [From his own website: http://homepages.baylor.edu/ralph_wood/biography]

TAB: There seems to be a common thread in that there is even in the Evangelicals who endorse the book are sympathetic to Romanism, ecumenical, concerned with social issues, and specialize in areas other than theology or biblical exegesis.

Introduction

[i] Beckwith's First Paragraph is Telling:

"It's difficult to explain why one moves from one Christian tradition to another. It is like trying to give an account to your friends why you chose to pursue marriage to this woman rather than another, though both may have a variety of qualities that you found attractive." [11]

TAB: Place this under the category of "choosing my religion." It is interesting that Francis Beckwith talks about his shift in terms of moving "from one Christian tradition to another," as if this were a horizontal theological move akin to a transfer of membership from Presbyterianism to Credo-Baptism, or Wesleyanism to Calvinism.

The paragraph also sets the reader up for the free-will theism that prevails throughout Beckwith's "journey." This is a matter of Beckwith choosing his religion for factors that are difficult for him to explain. While he would certainly claim that he followed God's leading, it was he who made a free decision to rejoin Rome.

Tellingly, he does confess toward the end of the book that his decision was:

". . . as much to do with a yearning for a deeper spiritual life as it did with theological reasoning."
[129]

[ii] His Personal Experience

Beckwith then claims that his personal experience will:

"appear inadequate for anyone who is convinced [he] is wrong" and conversely confirm in the minds of "many devout Catholics" that the "supernatural power of the grace [he] received at baptism and confirmation as a youngster drew him back to Mother Church . . ." [11-12]

TAB: How do you argue against "experience?" Of course, the account of his journey, or his experience, will be inadequate for those who disagree! But on what basis? Should this matter be judged on the basis of subjective experience? Of course not! It's not a question of judging the validity of Beckwith's experiences that compelled him to revert to Rome. He can do as he pleases and what he does is what he did. But can we judge the validity of his claims, not to subjectivity, but to objective reasons why he believes Rome to be the true church? That we can do.

As a side note, I know of no theological position that Rome holds that would suggest that grace conferred at baptism/confirmation will supernaturally work to correct those who later stray. Rome, with her semi-Pelagianism, has no doctrine of perseverance in that sense.

But the fact is, Beckwith's apostasy to Rome has served as a huge trophy for Roman Catholic apologists and defenders. How much of a bigger fish could you catch that a man who is considered a Protestant scholar and who is the president of the Evangelical Theological Society, a group of 4500 biblical scholars including some of the very best? At least on the surface, this was a huge promotion for Rome and Pope Benedict ought to give Beckwith a plenary indulgence for doing what a million dollars in paid advertising could not accomplish.

But it is also noteworthy that while Beckwith calls himself a former Protestant, the evidence appears to be that he always remained in sympathy with Rome. He also possessed no formal education in theology or biblical exegesis. He was and is a philosopher and his training/degrees have been in non-theological schools.

[iii] 1 Peter 3:15?

Regardless, Beckwith cites **1 Peter 3:15** in stating that he has a responsibility to "give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope - thus the reason for the book.

[iv] Temptations He Hopes His Catholic and Protestant Readers Will Avoid

[a] His Catholic Readers Will Avoid Temptations Toward Triumphalism

Beckwith states that he believes "that Catholicism is in fact true in all its dogmatic theology, including its views of scripture, ethics, church authority, ecumenical councils, etc." [12]

He then criticizes the early post-Vatican II American church for its failure to "adequately catechize their young people with a clear and defensible presentation of the Catholic faith."

TAB: I'm seeing again and again the tendency of Beckwith to focus on external propositions, in this case 'catechism,' as a means toward ethical renewal. In other words, the problem is that we haven't instructed our young people well enough and if we were better educators, and if they learn more about the history and theology of the church, they will be better Christians (as if regeneration comes by accepting certain facts). While facts are important, no one is saved apart from assensus and fiducia.

*** But Beckwith Sees Things Getting Better in America**

He claims that the inspiring pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI have resulted in "a new evangelism in the Catholic Church, especially in the United States" and he lauds the young men who are now entering the priesthood for their being "more serious and theologically orthodox" than those from the late 60s and 1970s.

TAB: I'm sure that Beckwith has placed his head in the sand on the continued issue of homosexuals and pedophiles in the priesthood, a scandal that is epidemic and has bankrupted some dioceses

through the lawsuits that have been filed by former victims. I'm sure he also knows that the number of priests has dwindled tremendously and that churches are closing by the hundreds, if not thousands, across America.

[b] Protestants May Face a Temptation Not Toward Triumphalism - But Toward Trying to Find "Some Subrational" Reason as to Why He Returned to Rome

Beckwith cites a May 2007 radio program in which a seminary president discussed his move to Rome with one of the school's theologians. Then one of them states his amazement that someone "with my intelligence could become Catholic" [13]

TAB: Nowhere are we told that regeneration is grounded in personal intelligence. Quite the contrary, it isn't "the wise . . ." (1 Cor. 1:26-30). There exists the danger within "Christian academia" to give mental assent to the lowest common denominator of Christianity, just be sure to keep it scholarly. I fear that there is a fraternity of scholars who have academic credentials but haven't been born again. Since they are not partakers in the Gospel they are not very worried about defending it, at least not beyond the bounds of Christianity broadly defined in its "various traditions."

*** Then Beckwith Makes This Statement:**

"But that's a road down which no Evangelical Protestant should go, unless he's willing to hold his own theological tradition and its converts and former members to the same level of scrutiny. After all, for every well-known pastor, scholar, or writer who as a young Catholic was drawn to the love of Jesus he or she found in Evangelical Protestant communities, there is a Protestant scholar, pastor or writer who, after years of study and reflection, was compelled to convert to Catholicism." [13-14]

TAB: In Beckwith's case, it wasn't "years of study" but less than six months. This is one of his more ludicrous statements that he makes in the book. What proof does he offer? He footnotes his evidence as:

"Among those who have taken this trek are the Rt. Rev. Jeffrey N. Steenson (former Episcopalian Bishop of the Rio Grande), theologian Scott Hahn (Franciscan University, Steubenville), former Lutheran pastor Richard John Neuhaus (First Things), theologian R.R. Reno (Creighton University), and philosophers Robert C. Koons (University of Texas, Austin), J. Budziszewski (University of Texas, Austin), Alasdair MacIntyre (University of Notre Dame), and Paul J. Griffiths (Duke University)." [footnote 3]

Earlier, in footnote three, Beckwith cites as those who converted from Roman Catholicism to Evangelicalism:

". . . mega-church pastor Rick Warren (Saddleback Church), popular apologist Gregory P. Koukl (Stand to Reason), biblical scholar Thomas R. Schreiner (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), and theologian David Gushee (Mercer University). There are many others . . . "

Arguments like these are a red herring.

[v] Beckwith Admits That He Must Be Aware of a Third Temptation Warned Against by Paul in Colossians 2:8-9

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (KJV).

He then states:

"This passage reminds me of how important it is for one to remain true to the Gospel and to be diligent in recognizing the alluring temptation of being impressed by, and for that reason, more easily deceived by, one's own philosophical speculations and professional accomplishments." [15]

TAB: But nowhere does Beckwith give us a glimpse into what he really believes the Gospel to be! Can one find the "good news" apart from the Roman Catholic Church? As a true Roman Catholic his answer has to be "no."

[vi] Beckwith's Purpose in Writing his Book:

"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 I embraced* during most of my adult life and what I've come to think of as my Catholic constitution, *which I have to believe had always been there*. 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*. I do indeed explain how and why my mind change, but with respect and admiration for the Evangelical Protestants whom the Holy Spirit used to deepen my devotion to Christ, which I carry with gratitude into the Catholic Church." [15-16, emphasis mine]

TAB: Again, intellectual assent to a theological system, not a conviction as it relates to the Gospel.

[a] Can You Have Your Cake and Eat It Too?

TAB: Note that his "Catholic constitution" by his own admission, was likely there all along. The former Catholics I know who clearly have come to embrace the Gospel could never look deep in their hearts and say, "Well, there is still some element of Romanism left in me." No, we who left cannot go back! But Beckwith wants us to be all one happy family:

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.

So there are forms of Christianity that are Protestant and Roman Catholic? Are there forms of the Gospel that are Protestant and Catholic?

Apparently, as Beckwith also 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." [16]

I. Confession on the Brazos (page 17)

Beckwith relates his reconciliation with Rome on a spring TX afternoon. It was on April 28, 2007, when he arrived at St. Jerome's Catholic Church in Waco, TX not far from Baylor University. He goes to confession, his first in over 30 years: "[And at the completion of the sacrament I would be in full communion with the Catholic Church.](#)" [Page 17].

He writes on page 18:

["Upon entering the confessional, I sat face-to-face with he priest. I said, 'Father, forgive me, for I have sinned. It has been over 30 years since my last confession.' Then I said, 'I'm not sure I can remember all of my sins.' In his thick, East Indian accent, he replied, 'That is all right. God knows them all.' I responded, 'I was afraid of that.' The priest then heard my confession and granted me absolution. I found my way to the main sanctuary, where I did my penance, which consisted of one 'Our Father' and one 'Hail Mary.' \[18\]](#)

He relates his dilemma regarding his position as president of ETS and how he originally planed to wait until his term as ETS president ended in November, 2007. He adds:

["I wanted to make sure that my return to the Catholic church brought as little attention to ETS as possible." \[18\]](#)

TAB: Makes me wonder, then, why he permitted the publisher to place on the front cover, in large letters, "Why the President of the Evangelical Theological Society Left his Post and Returned to the Catholic church."

But other friends told him to go ahead and announce his decision as waiting might ["play to prejudices that some Protestants have about 'secretive Jesuit conspiracies' and the like"](#) [19]

TAB: We all know that there are Jesuit conspiracy theorists lurking everywhere who are waiting for a reason to jump on this issue. By not waiting Beckwith foiled their plans. Right!

A. Prayerful Confirmation (19)

1. Beckwith claims that he received his answer on what to do after visiting his parents in Washington DC:

His cell phone rang and it was his 16 year old nephew who asked if Beckwith would be his sponsor when he received the sacrament of Confirmation.

Beckwith states that several months earlier he had written a letter explaining the importance of his nephew affirming his Christian baptism at his confirmation. The letter was dated March 6, 2007:

"I'm writing to offer you my encouragement as you partake in the sacrament of confirmation. I am sure you were taught much in your catechism about the meaning of confirmation and its significance in affirming in public your commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and your desire to be one of our Lord's followers. . . . I want to focus in this letter of encouragement on the spiritual and intellectual tradition in which you find yourself. It is a tradition that includes some of the wisest, smartest, holiest, and influential minds in the history of humanity. To quote the author of Hebrews, 'we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses . . .' (Heb. 12:1).

Let us begin at the beginning. Jesus of Nazareth is the smartest and wisest man who ever lived. No one can compare with his insights, his deft combination of love, tenderness, tough-mindedness, and mercy. His life and his ideas reshaped the ancient world and changed the trajectory of history itself. You are one of his followers. What an amazing privilege.

Either Jesus was who he said he was--the Son of God--or he was a liar, or he was a lunatic [as C.S. Lewis once put it]. These are the only options. Yet, the picture of Jesus that we receive is one of a psychologically balanced individual who had incredible wisdom concerning our duties to others and our relationship to God. He was willing to die, which means he believed himself to be who he said he was. . . . A liar may do many things, but he does not march to his death for what he knows to be false. Thus, Jesus was either a lunatic--he sincerely believed himself to be the Son of God even though he was not--or he was Lord--he sincerely believed himself to be the Son of God because he was the Son of God. As the Cambridge scholar C.S. Lewis has pointed out, many people believe that Jesus was a great moral teacher. But if he was, it is unlikely that he was a lunatic. Great moral teachers are typically balanced, mature people possessing intestinal fortitude and personal integrity. Do you think the picture of Jesus we get from history and the New Testament is that of a lunatic, a David Koresh or Osama Bin Laden, bent on a single idea that is self-defeating? It does not seem that way to me. It seems to me that Jesus was neither a liar nor a lunatic. But that means that he was Lord. These are the only options. Know that you confess Jesus as Lord. But it's always good to remind ourselves about Jesus and why he stands out in history and why we measure history by his birth.

There are certain core-facts about Jesus' death that virtually all scholars agree on: 1) Jesus died by crucifixion; 2) His tomb was found empty three days later; 3) His followers (the apostles and other disciples) believed that they had had experiences with Christ after his death; 4) His followers were willing to suffer death for their belief that they had met the risen Christ. These facts, which are not even disputed by most unbelieving scholars, are difficult to account for apart from Jesus actually rising from the dead.

Although it is common for those who doubt the resurrection to say that the early church made up the story, this theory fails to account for the church itself (not to mention having no evidence in its favor). That is, Jesus' resurrection makes sense as the cause of the early church, a body of believers who personally knew Jesus and would have recanted their belief if they knew that the resurrection was a fabrication. But not one of Jesus' early disciples who believed that they had met Jesus after the resurrection ever recanted. In fact, many of them (including 11 of the 12 apostles) suffered

horrible torture and death for their beliefs, something that does not make sense if they had made up the whole thing. Granted, people die for false beliefs. But rarely if ever does anyone die for a belief they know is false. These are some of the earliest witnesses that form the cloud that surrounds us.

Under the leadership of St. Peter and St. Paul, the church grew from a small band of believers to an international phenomenon that through its message slowly but eventually dismantled the spiritual infrastructure of the greatest empire the world had ever known, the Roman Empire. As the church moved through history, it began to reflect on its own theology and produce some of the clearest creeds ever penned, such as the Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed. But that is not all. The church's finest minds were willing to wrestle with and respond to the non-Christian challenges of their day, to follow St. Paul's instruction to take 'every thought captive to the obedience of Christ' (2 Cor. 10:5). Throughout church history, and even to this present day, gifted Christians became well versed in their philosophy, literature, sciences, and arts of their day. For they believed, as we all should believe, that all truth is God's truth, that the Christian worldview illuminates our understanding of the world and the order and nature of things. The enormity of Christian influence in the shaping of Western civilization boggles the mind. Ideas about human nature, economics, the sciences, the arts, ethics, architecture, music, mathematics, and politics flourished. under the direction of Christian intellectuals and leaders. According to my Baylor colleague, Professor Rodney Stark [in his book *For The Glory of God* / Princeton University Press, 2002], without Christianity's understanding of God and nature, much of what we take for granted today--including our legal system, our understanding of truth, and the success of the sciences--would have never come to be.

TAB: Yet much of the progress in the arts, sciences, and education that we see today came as a result of the Reformation. Rome impeded progress in education and science. Galileo anyone?

You, indeed we, stand on the shoulders of predecessors whose beliefs about God, man, and nature--derived explicitly from their Christian faith--furnished the cultural infrastructure that gave rise to the knowledge, wealth, and liberties that make it possible for us today to freely worship God and to study his world.

The Lord has given you many gifts. Use them wisely. But do not ever forget that you now stand with that great cloud of witnesses." [19-22]

TAB: One remarkable thing about Beckwith's letter to his nephew is the lack of any reference to regeneration or the Gospel. Much about evidential apologetics, the church's contributions to history, and the Person of Christ. But what about His work?

Beckwith concludes:

"But in order for me to be his confirmation sponsor I would have to be in full communion with the Catholic Church. Because I had received the sacraments of Baptism, Communion, and

Confirmation all before the age of fourteen, I needed only to go to confession, request forgiveness for my sins, ask to be received back into the Church, and receive absolution. And that is what I did on that spring day in Texas, April 28, 2007. The next day I was publically received back into the Catholic Church at the 11:00 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Bellmead, Texas. My wife, standing beside me, was accepted as a candidate for full communion. She was received into the Church on August 18, 2007, at the culmination of her catechesis." [22]

B. My Christian Vocation (22)

1. Another Glimpse into Beckwith's Ecumenicism:

"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 abortion, natural theology and natural moral law--*positions held by many other non-Catholic Christians as well*." [22-23, emphasis mine]

2. Beckwith's Worldview Defended

He worked as co-editor of the book (with J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig) entitled, *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview*. He also co-authored the introduction which includes the following definition of the Christian worldview:

"What do we mean when we say that Christianity is a *worldview*? What we mean is that the Christian faith is a philosophical tapestry of interdependent ideas, principles, and metaphysical claims that are derived from the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures as well as the creeds, theologies, communities, ethical norms, and institutions that have flourished under the authority of these writings. These beliefs are not mere utterances of private religious devotion, but are propositions whose proponents claim accurately instruct us on the nature of the universe, human persons, our relationship with God, human communities, and the moral life. The following is a summary of some of these beliefs.

First, there exists an eternally self-existing moral agent named God, who created the universe *ex nihilo*. The universe is completely and absolutely contingent upon God for its beginning as well as its continued existence. He is, among other things, personal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, perfectly good, necessary, and infinitely wise. . . .

Second, God create human beings in his image. A human being is not merely a collection of physical parts but has an underlying unity or soul. A human being's life is sacred from the moment that human being comes into existence; the value of a human being is not something acquired when he or she reaches a certain level of physical complexity, as many secular thinkers maintain. Because human beings are moral agents, they have the capacity to make decisions and judgments

within the larger framework of family and community. Thus, for the Christian worldview, marriage, government, and church are not merely social constructions that can be shaped in any way consistent with some utopian vision of justice, but rather, are natural institutions in which and by which human beings ought to learn what is good, true and beautiful. . . .

Third, God reveals himself both in special revelation (2 Tim. 3:14-17), the Bible, as well as general revelation. Concerning the former, if the Bible is truly God's word then it must be inerrant, for God himself is perfect (Mark 10:18; Heb. 6:18), and it follows logically that his Word must be as well. The Bible provides us with (1) an account of humanity's genesis and fall, (2) a history of God chosen people, (3) the institution of the law of Moses and its inadequacy to redeem, (4) prophecy, prayer, wisdom and poetry, and (5) the good news and story of the first coming of the Messiah and the establishing of his church on earth.

The latter is the cornerstone of Christian faith. According to the Bible, human beings have violated the moral law of God and need to be made right with Him. That is, human beings are in need of salvation but are powerless to achieve this on their own. This is why God become a human being in Jesus of Nazareth so that he may pay the sacrifice necessary to atone for our sins, his own death on the cross. Christians believe that Jesus rose bodily from the grave three days after his death and 40 days later ascended into heaven. Shortly after that Jesus's apostles and disciples established His church, a body of believers that continues to grow to this very day. . . .

According to scripture, God has not left himself without a witness among the unbelievers (Acts 14:17). This is called general revelation, since it is something that all people have the capacity to access through observation, reason, and reflection apart from the Bible." [23-25, emphasis mine]

Beckwith adds this because:

"At the time I published the above in 2004, I was a firmly committed Evangelical Protestant. Yet, there is nothing in these paragraphs that I do not believe as a Catholic. This is why it does not seem peculiar to me to think of myself as both Evangelical and Catholic, though I am fully aware that some have and will continue to dispute this self-understanding." [25]

TAB: Beckwith has placed himself in a logical conundrum. There is little in the above statement defining a Christian worldview with which anyone within even the broadest scope of Christianity, as the world would define it, would disagree (save his implied natural theology/Thomism). This is because not only does he not touch upon the foundational reality of who God is in His Triunity (although I'm certain he presupposes it), he does not touch on how a sinner is to appropriate the "salvation [they] are powerless to achieve . . . on their own." The "Gospel" is practically absent here, as is the subject of epistemology.

Compare the simplicity of John 1:1-18 and Acts 16:30-31, Romans 5:1 ff., passages which Beckwith would have a difficult time reconciling with the "gospel according to Rome," not to mention the impossibility of assurance that is built into Rome's soteriological framework.

3. The Church's Formulation of Doctrine and Scripture

"This Church plays an integral part in the formation and fixation of Christian doctrine and scripture as well as our understanding of how the Christian faith illuminates and enhances our knowledge of every aspect of life including the academic disciplines." [25]

II. Viva Las Vegas (page 27)

Beckwith begins by saying that he was born in Brooklyn, NY in 1960 to an Italian-American Roman Catholic mother and a father of English descent, an Episcopalian with Roman Catholic roots. His other was one of the 1000s of Italian-Catholic immigrants that passed through Ellis Island in the late 19th c.

A. What Happens in Vegas . . . (27)

1. Las Vegas

The Beckwith family moved to Las Vegas in 1967 where his dad worked as an accountant and internal auditor for a number of hotels (including The Dunes, Caesar's Palace, The Stardust).

They initially moved so that his father could be an accountant for his uncle's business which was a Chinese restaurant and a bar. The uncle was Beckwith's Uncle Fiore "Jimmy" Casella, who died of a drug overdose in 1976.

a. Beckwith's Aunt Becomes a Christian

"Needless to say, my Uncle Fiore was not a practicing Catholic or Christian of any sort. However, his wife, my Aunt Doris, became a committed Christian a few years before her husband's 1976 death, though she never returned to the Catholic Church of her Baptism. Several of their children have had born-again experiences." [28]

His cousins follow suit including one who became a Pentecostal pastor for a sort time in the 1980s. Beckwith talks about how this particular cousin had remarkable transformation from being a pimp and drug user to an outspoken Christian and how he had come to faith at a Christian concert in 1979. It was at that concert that it was announced that Bob Dylan had made a profession of faith in Christ.

2. A Bob Dylan Concert in 1979

It was in 1979 that Beckwith went to a Dylan concert in San Francisco. There Dylan only did songs from his Christian album, "Slow Train Coming." According to Beckwith the audience was half-pot smoking heads and half Christians and when Dylan finished up without doing any of his classics, the latter group began to boo and swear at him, while others left in disgust demanding their money back.

But the entire experience left an imprint on Beckwith for decades: The sounds, smells, voices, words, and what he calls a clear Christian message. It made so great an impact that 25 years later he wrote what he calls "a philosophical essay" entitled, "Busy being Born Again: Bob Dylan's Christian Philosophy." [footnote 2]

3. Back to his Childhood...

At this point Beckwith returns to talking about his childhood. His parents put the family through Catholic schools for 12 years and took them to Mass each Sunday (he was the eldest of 4 children) - each of them received the sacraments of Baptism, Communion, and Confirmation

He claims that the family lived a normal life and that his parents were very charitable, something he attributes to ["the Church and its teachings."](#) He goes to talk about how his parents reached out to other family members, had guests over for Sunday dinner.

TAB: I find it puzzling why Beckwith would attribute his parent's being charitable to the Roman Catholic Church. Certainly, being charitable and demonstrating family love is something that even pagans engage in. Vile Hollywood stars are often "charitable." This seems to be another attempt to give some credit to the Roman Catholic Church that is unsupported as it relates to either the influence of Rome or its truthfulness.

a. Politics

Beckwith describes how he was trained to be a good citizen and be knowledgeable in politics. How he watched Bobby Kennedy on TV the day he was assassinated and how his parents cried when his death was announced later on TV. And he relates to how his mother intently watched the Watergate hearings. He describes his parents as "tolerant and open" and calls that "exemplary." He and his father grew more conservative over the years, while his mother remains a "moderate Democrat." Beckwith believes that the role of government "is to protect the little guy" and that the liberals have forgotten the "littlest guy of all, the unborn."

b. The Event That Left a Lasting Impression on Him as a Child

He was a little league catcher that could not hit. So his mom bought him a book on hitting written by Ted Williams and he and his dad read the book together and went to the batting cages each night for a week to practice. By the end of the week Beckwith was hitting 60 MPH fastballs with ease. At his next game he came to bat with the bases loaded, two outs in the bottom of the 9th. They were down by 2 runs and he hit a line drive over the head of the 3rd baseman who was just able to jump high enough to catch it. The rest of the season Beckwith hit around .400. He learned through this and from his parents was ["the importance of doing well and doing so patiently and carefully with deliberate determination."](#) [32]

B. Property of Jesus (32)

1. Beckwith was Baptized Roman Catholic and Received the "Sacrament" of Confirmation in May, 1973

Soon after he became fascinated with the person of Jesus. He describes a dream he had of Jesus sitting there talking with him.

"Over thirty years later, I cannot honestly recall the words he uttered. But I do remember waking up the next morning with the sense that I had experienced a reality that was unlike any dream I had ever had." [33]

Beckwith states that "coincidentally" it was at this time that his father was visited by a friend who was involved in the Catholic Charismatic Movement. The friend left a copy of "Good News for Modern Man" and Beckwith read it with great interest not even knowing it was a Bible.

It left an impression on him and he tried to emulate what he was reading about Jesus and the things He taught, even to the point of allowing a bully at school to punch him while he offered up the other cheek (to the bully's chagrin).

The next time the friend visited Beckwith asked him about the Bible and the man's faith. The man asked Beckwith to join him in the services of a small "Jesus People" church in downtown Las Vegas. It was run by hippies (mid-1970s) and was part of the Jesus Movement of the 60s and 70s.

It was here that Beckwith:

". . . learned Scripture, heard dynamic teachings, sang freely of our faith, and were introduced to books and tapes by a variety of writers and speakers who seemed to have real insight into theological matters. Some of the earlier folks I read and listened to included the 'Bible Answer Man' Walter R. Martin, Lutheran theologian John Warwick Montgomery . . . Pentecostal evangelist David Wilkerson, Chinese missionary and mystic Watchman Nee, Calvary Chapel founder, Chuck Smith, and dispensationalists Hal Lindsay and Salem Kirban, both of whom were precursors to the 'Left Behind' book craze. It seemed to me that the people at Maranatha House were serious about their commitment to Christ. Except for my experience in the Catholic Charismatic Movement soon after visiting Maranatha house, I had seen nothing like it in the Catholic Church." [33-34]

The same year, 1973, found a thirteen year old Beckwith becoming somewhat of a Bible know-it-all around his family and schoolmates.

C. Leaving the Catholic Church (page 34)

1. Post Vatican II

Being born in 1960 made Beckwith part of the first generation of American Roman Catholic's who had no knowledge of what the church was like before Vatican II. A consequence of Vatican II was that the churches were trying all sorts of new innovations. But that wasn't justified, according to Beckwith, as they were misinterpreting the reforms of Vatican II:

"The problem was the implementation of its reforms and the way in which some Catholics misinterpreted its documents due to the influence of widely held cultural views that were in some ways antithetical to a mature Christian faith." [34-35]

As a result, the folk-mass movement resulted in a removal of the sacredness of the church. Some parishes used guitars and sang folk songs such as "Michael Row Your Boat Ashore" and "Kumbaya." While others removed of the kneelers from the pews, along with the crucifixes and statues. Churches being built with modern architectural designs.

"Thus, when you walked into some churches, you had an immediate sense of minimalism and spiritual barrenness, and not the majesty of God. The Blessed Sacrament was nowhere to be found. And if you were lucky, there would be a confessional, but it was rarely used." [35]

Beckwith served as an altar boy at scores of these Masses until the end of his 8th grade year.

Meanwhile, the Church had lost a sense of its own theology and Beckwith relates how unqualified and unlearned his religion teachers were and relates a story about how one of them taught things that were not the official teaching of the church (such as how when you die God weighs your good against your bad on a set of scales and that determined where you spend eternity).

"It was as if this teacher had learned about Catholic theology from Protestant fundamentalist evangelistic tracts rather than from the works of her own theologians." [page 38]

2. The Influence of the Roman Catholic Charismatic Movement on Beckwith

TAB: It is evident that the post-Vatican II atmosphere and the false Roman Catholic charismatic movement led by men such as David DuPlisses which opened the door to ecumenicism as Roman Catholic's who spoke in tongues were deemed regenerate regardless of what they specifically believed as to the Gospel. That Beckwith has been influenced by this no doubt plays a big part in his apostasy.

As he writes on page 38:

"Looking back, I believe that the Catholic Church's weakness was presenting the renewal movements like the charismatic movement as something new and not part of the Church's theological traditions."

TAB: This is a puzzling statement and I'm not even sure how to respond other than it is more evidence of Beckwith's ecumenicism in desiring that the trans-denominational charismatic renewal movement be adopted as part of the church's "theological tradition?"

3. Why Were So Many Leaving Rome?

"Combine that [shallow Roman Catholicism of his youth] with a watered-down and intellectually vapid presentation of the Gospel, and is it any wonder that many of us made a mad dash to where we saw Christ lifted up in Evangelical Protestantism?" [38]

TAB: Francis, can you tell us what a "intellectually vapid presentation of the Gospel" is? The Oxford University Dictionary defines "vapid" as: "offering nothing that is stimulating or challenging" orig. in sense 'lacking in flavor': from L. vapidus). It seems to be that the problem isn't presenting a stimulating Gospel, but an accurate one. It's evident that Beckwith doesn't know exactly what a concise definition of the Gospel is.

Again, more of the solution according to Beckwith (and again no understanding of regeneration):

"Instead of playing to its strengths [the Roman Catholic Church] --historical continuity with the early church, theological sophistication, a high view of Scripture, a true counter-cultural understanding of the human person and social justice, and profound and life changing spiritual practices and tradition--the American church offered to the young people of my day lousy pop music, a gutted Mass, theological shallowness, and 'social justice' pabulum that was a proxy for far left politics." [38]

TAB: He goes on to criticize the post-Vatican II's attempts to be "relevant" and claims that this was something that the Protestant churches had - authenticity - yet he neglects to say how the pre-Vatican II church was any better. Latin Mass anyone? The reason why he found such vibrancy in the Evangelical churches he visited was because the Gospel was no doubt being preached there.

Here is another factor that relates to Beckwith's conversion: the emptiness of the dumbed-down folk masses that he witnessed in the Roman Catholic Church and the equally vacuous spirituality of modern-day evangelicalism. While he gives lip service to Reformational theology, never does one get the impression that he had actually experienced it. Quite to the contrary, his experiences within Evangelicalism appear to be of the "altar call / sinner's prayer" and "seeker church" variety.

4. Ecumenicism

Contrary to most Roman Catholic apologists, Beckwith appears to see the unity that *sola Scriptura* brought about:

"This belief united non-Catholic Christians from a variety of Protestant denominations. For this reason, it would not be unusual for me to attend a service . . . and hear a teaching by a Methodist minister, while a the next two services hear sermons by Episcopalian and Baptist clergy." [39]

5. Beckwith the Teenage Agnostic

Beckwith attended a Roman Catholic High School, "Bishop Gormon." He stopped going to Protestant church services altogether and became an agnostic, though he still went to mass with his parents out of respect for them.

His religion classes were of no help to him due to the lack of qualifications and knowledge by those who taught them.

B. Tangled Up in Blue (40)

1. Depression

Beckwith became very depressed his senior year. He was involved in sports but wasn't a great student due to being "bored and lazy."

a. His Unhappiness Was Due to his Skepticism about God

He denies, however, that his skepticism was sincere:

Rather, he "conjured it up because [he] arrogantly thought that the burden of belief could be lifted by a mere act of [his] will. This is why," he continues, "I believe I never abandoned God or Christ. I thought I could avert the eyes of God by averting mine. It did not work." [41]

2. He "Recommits" His Life to God

"During one afternoon in February 1978 I knelt down next to my bed and asked God to help me in my apparent unbelief. On my dresser behind me an FM radio blared a classic rock song. (I was, after all, a seventeen year old.) All of a sudden, moments after I had made my petition to God, the music on the radio seemed slowly to turn into white noise. As the white noise faded into the background I began to hear the voice of a disk jockey on the local Christian radio station. He was saying something about committing one's life to Christ. This was really spooky to me. So, I walked over to the radio to see what was going on. It was indeed tuned to the rock station, but the Christian station was overtaking the rock station, with white noise subtly fading in and out. I later learned from a friend that what happened to my FM radio is a naturally explicable phenomenon that sometimes occurs. But given the timing and content of my prayer, the radio stations, involved, and the DJ's message, I have never ceased to think of that incident as a gentle tap on my shoulder from the Lord who knew that I had never really stopped believing in him." [41]

He visited with an Evangelical public school teacher who prayed with him so that he could "ask the Lord back into my life." Beckwith footnotes this statement with:

"For my Catholic readers, this occurs often among Evangelical Protestants. It is sometimes called 'rededicating your life to the Lord.' In a weird way it is the Protestant version of the sacrament of reconciliation. It's almost as if by nature we human beings need something like that, and for that

reason Evangelical Protestants have developed a practice that Catholics have practiced more formally for centuries." [footnote 6, page 132]

TAB: In fact, the contemporary cliché, "rededicate your life to the Lord," has more in common with yesterday's camp-meeting evangelicalism and the legacy of Charles Finney than it does with historic reformational teaching, or the Bible for that matter. As the Reformers taught, the entirety of our lives is to be lived in repentance. So Beckwith's parallel here is quite misleading and inaccurate.

3. More Ecumenicism

From this point, Beckwith's "rededication," he began attending a Foursquare Church (another connection to charismatic theology). It was 1979 (he was 19 years old). He also attended lectures by the late Walter R. Martin (popular Christian apologist and host of the Bible Answer Man program - also author of the book, Kingdom of the Cults). Beckwith was quite impressed with Martin's abilities.

Beckwith then shares the following story which is relevant to his ecumenicism:

"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. (Interestingly enough, I have served on the same editorial board since 1987, and continue to serve, at the request of the editor Elliot Miller, even though I have become Catholic.) 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.'" [42-43]

During the lecture Martin challenged the audience to consider if God was calling anyone there to a ministry of apologetics - a call that Beckwith answered

He talks about a good friend who later became a Calvinist and he writes:

"This, however, does not surprise me. For my experience has been that most very intelligent Christians who had come to a deeper walk with Christ in independent Evangelical and/or non-liturgical churches often gravitate toward a theological and/or ecclesiastical tradition that has strong historical roots, such as Calvinism, Lutheranism, Catholicism, or Eastern Orthodoxy." [page 44]

Beckwith ends the chapter with this:

"I would be remiss if I did not point out that virtually every Evangelical Protestant I knew during this time was a former Catholic. And I know that my story is not an isolated one in that regard, for I have met hundreds of former Catholics around the United States who are now (or were, until they returned to the Church) committed Evangelical Protestants trying to follow Christ the best they can. In light of this, the American Catholic Church has to ask itself a serious and painful question: is there anything that we did that helped facilitate the departure of these talented and devoted people from our communion?" [end of chapter 3, page 45]

TAB: The reason is because the apostate Roman Catholic Church will not, and cannot, reform itself in any sense related to the truth of the Gospel. Councils of Trent, to Vatican I and II has painted the church into a corner where to do so would be to say that she was not infallible after all. There is no life-saving Gospel that regenerates the soul making a new creation in Christ. Again, the Roman Catholic Church has religion, but doesn't have regeneration. God calls his elect out from the midst of the Roman Catholic Church by way of the true Gospel of Christ. They could not have stayed within the stench of dead religiosity.

III. Summa Apologia (page 47)

Beckwith says that he graduated from UNLV in 1983. He had switched his major two years earlier from journalism to philosophy. He says he did so because , "I became interested in studying theology more formally in graduate school." [47]

TAB: I'm a bit confused here. Beckwith has no degree in theology or formal studies in theology that I know of. Perhaps he is claiming for himself the title "philosopher of religion" and believes that this makes him a theologian. See below...

He goes on to champion the study of philosophy and makes a distinction between a theologian and a philosopher of religion:

"The theologian is best suited to answer questions concerning religious history, biblical theology, or dogmatics. On the other hand, the *philosopher of religion* seeks to find answers to questions such as, 'Is it rational to believe in God?' 'Are God's attributes logically coherent?' 'Are miracles possible?'" [48]

A. Simon Greenleaf (48)

1. Dinner with Walter Martin

In 1983 Walter Martin was back in Las Vegas and Beckwith had an opportunity to have dinner with him. It was then that Martin told him about a new school in S. Calif. - Simon Greenleaf School of Law - primarily a law school but did have an MA program in Christian apologetics.

Beckwith applied and was accepted into the program (The school, which he describes as "broadly ecumenical," was founded in 1980 and didn't have regional accreditation at the time the Beckwith enrolled).

2. John Warwick Montgomery

The school's founding dean and faculty member was John Warwick Montgomery (JWK) and Beckwith speaks of JWK's influence on him.

JWK was a Lutheran who was Evangelical, yet ecumenical. He was a mix of liberalism and conservatism, liberal on social issues and conservative on moral/ethical issues. He criticized both the religious right and left.

Beckwith claims that it was here that he first studied the Reformation. He also had to write an MA dissertation and defend it. He calls it "an extended and detailed work of scholarship that exceeded anything [he] had ever written before." [50]

It was here that he was introduced to the writings of G.K. Chesterton:

"Chesterton, I later found out, was a Catholic convert from Anglicanism. But unlike some Protestant Evangelicals who have a visceral reaction to anything Catholic, I thought nothing of Chesterton's Catholicism. After all, given my already budding commitment to the philosophical work of the great doctor of the Catholic Church, Thomas Aquinas . . . I had no doubt that a Protestant could gain real theological insights from Catholic authors." [51]

B. Fordham and Grandma Guido (51)

1. Beckwith Applies to Fordham University

Convinced that he needed to earn a Ph.d., Beckwith followed his mother's advice and applied to Fordham University, a Roman Catholic Jesuit school in New York City. (He was impressed with their philosophy department.)

He was accepted and moved to NYC in August, 1984.

2. Grandmother Frances

In NYC he stayed with his grandmother Frances Guido whom he describes as an Italian-American and devout Catholic (and an amazing woman).

She was widowed in 1952 and never remarried. She worked as a seamstress and provided for each of her four children with 12 years of Catholic school education.

a. His Grandmother's "Catholic Christianity"

"I one asked my grandmother why she never remarried. Her answer initially seemed stunning to me, though, given her beliefs and convictions, it made perfect sense. She said, 'How can I bring a strange man into a home with two young daughters?' What an amazing (and politically incorrect) answer. Her first thought was not of herself and what she should have wanted. It was about what advanced the common good, and in this case, the good of her family and her young children. What my grandmother's understanding manifested was the incarnational faith of which Jesus spoke when he told his disciples that 'whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel will save it'" (Mark 8:35). [52, emphasis mine]

TAB: File this one under the heading of, "You've got to be kidding!" Certainly, this woman's sacrifices are commendable. But it is a logical error to say that since A happened the cause is B. This alone is no proof that his grandmother was a Christian. In fact, Beckwith's recollections about his Grandma Guido remind me of my Roman Catholic Italian great-grandmother. She was kind, charitable, never would say a bad word about anyone, could cry at the drop of a hat, always worked to serve others. This is not an a priori indication of regeneration. Many people from various

backgrounds could testify of having a relative like that. Does that mean they have "incarnational faith in Jesus?" Of course not! It means that as those created in the image of God they yet reflect that image, even though it has been marred by the fall. But "good" people go to hell because from God's perspective, "all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory." The question is, "is this person in Christ? Are they regenerate?"

Beckwith notes his grandmother's religious devotion and her charity (her hospitality; attendance at Mass every morning; her "works of mercy" in her local parish). Yet her grandmother was politically liberal.

3. Beckwith Lists Some of the Professors Under Whom he Studied on Pages 54-55

"Although my time at Fordham did not result in my return to the Catholic Church, it is fair to say that because I studied under some of the finest philosophical minds American Catholicism had to offer, I acquired a deeper appreciation of the philosophical underpinnings of Catholic theology and its relationship to the histories of philosophy and Christian thought. This understanding helped form and shape my views on God's nature, the human person, and the natural moral law. But none of these views seemed to me at the time inconsistent with Protestant theology . . ." [54]

4. Edith Schaeffer

In 1986 Beckwith meets Edith Schaeffer (ES) the widow of Francis Schaeffer (FS). She was at a book-signing event in Midtown Manhattan. When Beckwith arrived the crowds had dissipated and he found her alone at a table and approached her.

"I introduced myself to her and told her about her late husband's influence on me. She seemed sincerely interested in my story. She then kindly asked if I wanted her to sign one of her books. I said, "yes," and handed her a copy of *Common Sense Christian Living*. She then opened up the book to the first blank page and proceeded to draw a sketch of the Swiss Alps, with birds flying between the mountains and a small flower at the base. (For years, she and her husband lived in Switzerland where they founded the ministry L'Abri). She then wrote in large letters:

April 29, 1986

To Francis with love, Edith Schaeffer. I've written many notes to another Francis--I do pray your life may be as significant in History.

It was only when I reread Mrs. Schaeffer's inscription while writing this book that I realized that the day of her written prayer for me is the same day that in 2007 I was publicly received back into the Catholic Church, April 29. This is one of those 'coincidences' that really spooks me, but in a good way." [55-56]

TAB: I must say that this also "spooks me," but not in a good way. It is the height of hubris for Beckwith to think that his life may be as significant in history as that of Francis Schaeffer. I think it's safe to say that if Schaeffer were alive today, he would consider Beckwith an apostate (although I'm sure that his son, Frankie, is proud).

5. Francis meets Frankie

Beckwith lived with his grandmother for three years between August 1984 and May 1987 returning home for one "eventful" spring break in March, 1985 - it was here that he met his future wife, Frankie. He met her through her sister who's husband "was instrumental in helping to lead Frankie to Christ at Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa on July 11, 1982." [56]

Then he adds,

". . . July 11 It is our wedding anniversary as well as the feast day of St. Benedict, the namesake of the Pope under whose papacy Frankie joined, and I returned to the Catholic Church." [56]

6. Back to Vegas

Beckwith returned to Las Vegas in 1985 to where he and his future wife, "Frankie," attended Vineyard Christian Fellowship where he taught an adult Sunday School class on Christian apologetics.

He subsequently fell in love with Frankie, and after her initial disinterest they were married in July 1987.

C. New Friends and Influences (page 57)

1. Friends With Scholars

Beckwith speaks of several friendships he made with various scholars along the way. Men such as Michael Bauman (professor at Northeastern Bible College in NJ), now at Hillsdale College in MI. Bauman was a 1983 Fordham graduate in theology and literature as well as the book review editor of JETS.

"Even though Mike remains a committed Protestant, and behind the scenes asked me some serious though fair questions about my return to the Catholic Church soon after it took place, our friendship and shared devotion to the Christian faith continues without hiccup or pause." [58]

TAB: It has become evident by this point that Beckwith views Rome vs. Protestant as a denominational shift, a major one akin to Methodism vs. Presbyterianism, but a denominational shift within Christianity none-the-less.

Other friends include William Lane Craig, Gary Habermas, Norman Geisler, J.P. Moreland.

2. Thomism

Beckwith's "Thomistic" leanings and his discussion on "Reformed Epistemology" (pages 58-59).

"While I have never embraced Reformed epistemology whole hog, I have learned much from these Reformed thinkers about why it is important to critically assess philosophical views that are inconsistent with the foundations of Christian belief that some Christians may be tempted to assimilate, without realizing how these views(though in some cases seemingly benign) may have the effect of undermining Christian belief. For this reason, serious Catholic philosophers, including Thomists, have much to contribute to the goal of Reformed epistemology, namely, to dismantle a narrow view of 'rationality' that not only squeezes out Christian belief, but also has deep philosophical flaws." [59-60]

3. Creedal Authority

Beckwith claims that the "combined influence" of Montgomery, Reformed theology, and his Fordham professors convinced him that the "Catholic creeds" (Apostle's Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed) and the "deliverances of the first six ecumenical councils," as well as the Synod of Orange (529) were "authoritative renderings of Christian doctrine." But he attributes this to thinking that they were no more than a result of biblical exegesis and not through the authority of Rome.

He states that he had studied the works of "quasi-Christian groups" like Mormons who denied the veracity of the Creeds because "they were extra-biblical." But he "was driven to a deep respect and appreciation" for these "Catholic creeds."

TAB: I'm confused by the connections Beckwith is trying to make here. First, I don't know of any Mormons who would deny something that is "extra-biblical" since this would mean a denial of their own, authoritative extra-biblical writings (such as the Book of Mormon). But this opens the door for his anachronism of attributing these creeds and decisions to the Roman Catholic Church. He also says that these are considered "normative by most Protestants" (page 60). The implications are obvious.

"I read these creeds and councils with 'Protestant eyes,' and thus I missed much of their carefully crafted language, what they assumed and asserted ecclesiastically, and when they occurred historically, all of which would play a part in establishing a first premise in an internal conversation that led to my return to the Catholic church nearly two decades later." [60]

IV. No Direction Home (page 61)

Beckwith relates how he gained a faculty appointment in the philosophy dept. at UNLV in 1989. It was there that he met William F. Buckley Jr. whom he describes as a "Roman Catholic intellectual."

Beckwith told him that he had recently published a book, *Politically Correct Death: Answering the Arguments for Abortion Rights*.

TAB: More culture-war connections to Rome

A. Southern California (62)

1. Leaving Vegas

Beckwith and his wife left Vegas in the summer of 1996 for a faculty appointment at Whittier College. Six months later he then received an offer to join Trinity International University's faculty at their new CA campus to teach in their MA program on faith and culture - an offer he accepted.

2. Beckwith Goes Episcopalian

"In fall 1997, Trinity's comptroller, John Hughes (who has since, like me, returned to the Catholic Church of his baptism), invited Frankie and me to attend church with him and his family at St. Luke's Reformed Episcopal Church, in Santa Ana. I had told John that we were having a difficult time finding a good Evangelical church in which we would fit. When Frankie and I walked in the building, she turned to me and said, 'This almost seems Catholic.' And sure enough, St. Luke's followed the liturgy found in the Book of Common Prayer, which is similar to the Catholic liturgy. It was my first experience in a Protestant church with a seriously liturgical service.

Because we liked St. Luke's and its Sunday service, I became interested in studying more deeply the history of Episcopalianism and its beliefs." [63]

It was then that they started attending St. James Episcopal Church, a congregation in full communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury. This became their home church until they went to Princeton in 2002.

The church's rector at that time was a staunch conservative who was at the fore of defending traditional Anglicanism against the liberalism of USA Episcopalianism.

TAB: More connections on the fighting against liberalism front. The American Episcopal church is to Rome what marijuana is to heroin. It serves as a nice stepping stone to a greater evil.

3. "Why Aren't We Catholic?"

"It was during this time that my wife, Frankie, asked me: 'why aren't we Catholic?' For her the Anglican liturgy and solemnity of worship seemed nearly indistinguishable from the Masses we attended with my family. Frankie was also drawn by, and became quite interested in, the spirit of Christ she observed in Pope John Paul II. 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 (and seemed to be gaining a foothold in America), I had too many theological problems with Catholicism. My reasons included the Church's views on justification, the Eucharist, and the papacy. She said, 'I guess you're the theologian in the family. So I'll trust your judgment.' (O ye of little faith!)" [64]

TAB: The 'spirit of Christ' in Pope John Paul II? He was a full-blown ecumenicist who on the one hand embraced all religious comers, and on the other devoted his life to Mary the Mediatrix. It's telling that Beckwith 'respected the Pope,' again for his fight against liberalism. Beckwith never thought of the Roman Catholic Church (or the pope) as proponents of a false, damning gospel.

4. Washington School of Law and Beyond

Beckwith takes a sabbatical from Trinity and studies law at the Washington School of Law where he earns a Master of Juridical Studies. Afterward he teaches at Trinity for a year and then is offered a visiting full time faculty appointment at Princeton for the 2002-03 school year.

5. Why Are you Catholic?

It was while at Princeton that a Jewish friend asks him, "Why are you a Protestant rather than a Catholic?" Beckwith states that this was the first time someone outside of his immediate family asked such a question, but it would not be the last.

B. Baylor (65)

1. Moving to Texas

After Princeton, the Beckwith's moved to central Texas as he accepted a position at Baylor as an Assoc. Professor of Church-State Studies and Assoc Director of the J.M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies.

Objections to his hiring are raised by Baylor alumni due to his differences in philosophy over church-state issues.

2. Baylor and (more) Ecumenicism

The Baylor president who had been influence by John Henry Cardinal Newman's book *Idea of a University*.

"The incoming provost [at Baylor] . . . who participated in my interview for the position . . . began the interview with this question, 'Frank, we know you believe in the Apostle's Creed. But my question to you is this: are those who don't believe the Apostle's Creed mistaken?' I thought to myself, 'This guy gets it.' The issue is *not* what I believe; the issue is whether I think my beliefs are *true*." [66]

Friends come to Beckwith's defense and he is granted full professorship at Baylor in 2008.

"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." [68]

C. Frankie's Father (68)

1. A Death in the Family.

It was soon after Beckwith received tenure at Baylor that his wife's father died.

"In the weeks that followed Joe's death, we discovered, among his personal items, a St. Christopher medal, inscribed 'Bishop Choi to JD.' It is our understanding that the bishop gave St. Christopher medals to pilots in the Pacific during World War II. Soon after the war, Joe, a pilot, joined the ROTC faculty at Fordham University. Impressed by the Jesuits there including the seriousness of their faith, Joe wanted to become Catholic, but my mother-in-law discouraged him. She told Joe that his parents would be devastated if he were to join the Catholic Church. So, Joe acquiesced to his wife and, as far as we know, never made a Christian commitment of any sort, though, ironically, he lived the Christian virtues better than most Christians. This is why when Frankie was received into the Catholic Church on August 18, 2007, she took the name 'Joseph' as her Confirmation name, in honor of her father and his unfilled desire to become Catholic." [68]

a. Here's Where the Tale Takes a Very Telling Turn

"In June 2006 while Frankie and I were attending an academic conference at a Hilton Hotel in Alexandria, Virginia, we noticed that my Baptist colleague Ralph C. Wood and his wife, Suzanne were there as well. They greeted us at one of the elevators and we exchanged pleasantries. Ralph immediately noticed that something was wrong with Frankie. He inquired about her state of mind and soul. She took him aside and told him about the doubts she was experiencing about her father's posthumous fate. Ralph offered to Frankie a theological case for why he believed that her father would not be condemned to eternal separation from God. He told Frankie that her father's initial desire for full communion with the Catholic Church was an act of faith that God would honor. The Church calls such an act 'the baptism of desire.' And given the Christian manner in which Joe had conducted his life since that time, as someone seemingly touched by God's grace, Ralph had no

doubt that Joe is destined for an eternity with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This gave Frankie much comfort."

After I had been received back into the Catholic Church and Frankie had become a candidate for reception, Ralph wrote the following to us in a May 7, 2007, email:

'Dear Frankie & Frank:

I wanted to add my own strong affirmation of your decision to be received into (and, in Frank's case returned to) the Roman Catholic Church.

I'm sure you won't remember it, but at our very first meeting at a reception in President Sloan's home, I asked about Frank's upbringing. When you told me that you had been raised a Catholic, I immediately asked why you would leave a tradition so rich and deep? You replied that it had meant little to you as a youth and that your Christianity had come alive only through evangelical churches. I thus see your move, not as repudiating your evangelicalism but rather as returning to its Catholic form. . . .

And as for you, dear Frankie, you were special to me from the beginning of our friendship, and you have remained so ever since. Our conversations last summer about your father's death remain quite vivid to me, as I there learned that your Christian faith runs very deep indeed. As with Frank, I see this more as a further deepening of your witness. . . . ' [69-70]

TAB: This section leaves me absolutely speechless. Here is a man that is saved by his good intentions and desire to be Roman Catholic, not his desire for peace with God through Jesus Christ. His desire for an institutional church has saved him? No suffering in purgatory? Or has that nasty picture been removed from the Roman Catholic playbook? The terrors of purgatory did well to bring money to the church in the middle-ages, but I guess things have changed. Purgatory has been elevated to a celestial green room where one awaits the opening of the show.

For Ralph C. Wood to give the advice he did and further applaud Beckwith's move? Just shows that he has not an inkling of what the Gospel is all about and what Rome really stands for. He might as well swim across the river himself as it appears he is already half-way there!

BTW - Beckwith footnotes his father's "baptism of desire" to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1260.

TAB: I will add the following text from said Catechism:

"Since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partakers, in a way known to God, of the Paschal mystery." Every man who is ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of his Church, but seeks the truth and does the will of God in accordance with his

understanding of it, can be saved. It may be supposed that such persons would have desired Baptism explicitly if they had known its necessity." [1260]

b. More Signs From above?

Several months after receiving this above Email something strange happened. Beckwith was 700 miles apart from his wife. On Saturday, Sept. 22, 2007, his wife attended 6:00 PM Mass in Waco, TX. As the people were beginning to receive communion, she closed her eyes and "saw Jesus at the table with his disciples at the Last Supper." But it wasn't the DaVinci painting.

"In Frankie's vision, Jesus was in motion. She saw him talking and moving. Then all of a sudden, his beard and his features became bright and expanded over the image in her mind's eye until everything was a bright white light." [70]

Afterward, she had an image-type thought of her dad as a man in his 50s or 60s, teeing off at a golf course.

"And then she was flooded with a series of rapid thoughts, the realization, the clear impression, that the reason her Dad never went to the Protestant church with her Mom (and their four little girls) was because if he was going to go to church, it was going to be the Catholic Church or no place at all." [70]

That same evening, Sept. 22, 2007, Beckwith was in Alabama at a Catholic Charismatic conference at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church in the city of Homewood. He was there to speak on his return to Rome. After his last lecture he sat down in the church library. Around 6:40 PM a woman, a deacon's wife, whom he had met earlier in the day comes into the library, asking him if would like to have a piece of "'blessed bread.'" He asks her, "'What is 'blessed bread?'" She replied that in her Eastern Rite Catholic Church the priest leaves a portion of the loaf unconsecrated and blesses it for later consumption. Beckwith takes a piece and eats it. He told the woman about how his wife's concern for her father's soul and how he had wanted to become a Catholic in the late 1940s. At this point the lady's eyes welled up with tears and she says that she believed that because God is good and merciful he would honor his father in law's desire.

"About an hour later, my wife and I talked on the cell phone. She told me about the vision that she had at St. Jerome's that evening. She told me that the images were vivid and the message was clear. Seeing the deacons' wife in the church parking lot heading for her car, I stopped her and shared with her what my wife had just told me over the phone. She again began to well up with tears and told me that above the altar where the bread was blessed at her church is a huge mural of the Last Supper, the same image seen in my wife's vision. So, while my wife had a vision of the Last Supper followed by vivid images of her father that conveyed to her a clear message of his desire to become Catholic, I had partaken of the very bread that had been blessed under the mural of the Last Supper which was followed by the assurance of a deacon's wife that God would honor

my father-in-laws' desire. I cannot help but believe that his provides us with hope that there is truly a communion of saints that includes my father-in-law." [71]

TAB: Note the following:

2 Cor. 11:13-14 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.¹

Gal 1:8-9 But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

Deut. 13:1-5 1 "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 "You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. 5 "But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you.

Acts 17:11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, {to see} whether these things were so.

1 Timothy 4:1-3 1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, 3 men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.

1 John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

There indeed is a commonality of "visions" and "signs" that so often follow those that are so grossly misled. This has been true in the history of Rome (cf. Fatima, Lourdes).

V. Wisdom of My Ancestors (page 73)

¹Unless otherwise noted, Scripture passages are taken from the New American Standard Bible.

1. The Phone Rings on a Spring Evening in 2005

It's Beckwith's eight year old niece Darby who asks him:

"We were praying for you and Aunt Frankie at the dinner table this evening, and I was surprised to learn that you are not Catholic. That makes me very sad. Why aren't you and Aunt Frankie Catholic?" [74]

He goes on to tell her that he had great respect for the Pope and that he has learned much from the Church's great thinkers and agreed with the Roman Catholic Church on most everything concerning God and Jesus, but disagreed with other things such as the nature of the sacraments and the authority of the Church.

*TAB: Interestingly, I have a seven year old daughter that is concerned that people she knows, friends and relatives, be *Christians* not members of some institutional church. This reminds me of my early experiences with door to door evangelism and the many dour faces that rebuffed our desire to tell them about Christ: "We're not interested; we're Catholic."*

Beckwith's brother is a Knights of Columbus Catholic who teaches Natural Family Planning. Of him he writes:

"On several occasions prior to my return to the Church, Patrick would have The Coming Home Network (a group dedicated to bringing ex-Catholics and Protestants into full communion with the Church) send me a nice card with a drawing of the Vatican on the front and an inscription that said something like, 'You're always welcome in the Catholic Church.'" [75]

"This encounter with my niece marked the first step in our movement toward the Catholic Church. . . . Can I give a convincing account as to why I should permanently abandon the Church of my baptism?"

TAB: No. Not if you're not regenerate. In that case it really doesn't matter.

A. Slouching Toward Rome (75)

1. 2006 Conference on John Paul II at Boston College

The next event that helped propel Beckwith to Rome was a Feb 2006 conference on John Paul II and Philosophy held at Boston College. Several months earlier Beckwith had published an article "Vatican Bible School: What John Paul II Can Teach Evangelicals."

Beckwith argues that Protestants who don't believe creeds are necessary (no creed but Christ) do in fact accept creeds since they see the necessity of fundamental doctrines that they believe are non-negotiable.

After delivering his paper he was asked a question by Laura Garcia (a BC philosophy professor and a former Evangelical who converted to Catholicism while at Notre Dame):

"Your paper seems to imply the necessity of creeds in the first centuries of the Church. But that assumes the necessity of a Magisterium that has the authority to issue such creeds and declare them normative for all Christians. So, why aren't you a Catholic?" [76]

Beckwith states that his answer ran along the lines of affirming that the Reformers were Spirit-led correctives that reached back into the past to correct what Rome had lost:

"By doing this, I tried to account for a church's continuity as being connected to the Reformers and their descendants as well as their orthodox predecessors in the Catholic Church. In this way, I could defend the Catholic creeds as Spirit-directed without conceding the present authority of Rome on these matters." [76-77]

Beckwith goes on to say that since becoming Catholic himself he sees that:

". . . the task of proper restoration fell to thoughtful Catholic reformers that led to the Council of Trent and its successors." [77]

TAB: How can an infallible church be subject to "restoration?" Has Beckwith ever read the Council of Trent?

2. Church History

All of this led to his deciding to study the creeds and early church history. He read books by Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict) as well as David Currie's *Born Fundamentalist, Born Again Catholic*.

These raised questions about the Early Church Fathers and the Roman Catholic doctrines of the Eucharist and Infant Baptism.

He was especially intrigued with Ratzinger's book, *Truth and Tolerance*. Beckwith found that he was in agreement with the philosophical and theological statements of Ratzinger regarding truth.

He reads a section to J.P. Moreland without telling him who the author was - when Moreland was told it was the Pope he declares, "He's one of us!" (cf. page 78)

B. I Hear Ancient Footsteps (78)

1. The Influence of J. Budziszewski

In October Beckwith was asked to reply to a plenary lecture by J. Budziszewski whom had been received into the Roman Catholic Church three years earlier. The morning after the lectures Beckwith and his wife got together with J. and his wife for breakfast. Beckwith and his wife asked all sorts of questions regarding the Roman Catholic Church (though his wife was more interested and animated in seeking answers).

2. Questions on Certain Theological Issues that Seemed insurmountable:

1) The doctrine of justification; 2) The Real Presence in the Eucharist; 3) The teaching authority of the Church (including apostolic succession and the primacy of the Pope).

Tellingly,

"The other issues that most Protestants find to be stumbling blocks--the Marian doctrines and Purgatory--were not a big deal to me. That was because I reasoned that if the Catholic views on Church authority, justification, the communion of the saints, and the sacraments were defensible, then these other so-called 'stumbling blocks' withered away, since the Catholic Church would in fact be God' authoritative instrument in the development of Christian doctrine." [79]

TAB: So Rome is the de facto authority that comes to the rescue? And since they are the authority one must "drink the Cool Aid" if she so requires.

a. Sola Scriptura?

Beckwith asks where the Protestant doctrine of sola scriptura factored in all of this

"To be blunt, it didn't, primarily because over the years I could not find an understanding or definition of *sola scriptura* convincing enough that it did not have to be so qualified that it seemed to be more a slogan than a standard." [79]

TAB: So he never really understood; he was not convinced? How then did he come to an infallible decision as to the veracity of Rome apart from his own reasoning? He then makes an infallible decision using private judgment in order to join what he believes to be an infallible church, apart from what the infallible Scriptures say.

Beckwith cites the Westminster Confession on sola scriptura and then seems to imply that Protestants believe in **solō** scriptura (even though he does note the difference in a footnote).

"The whole idea that, according to the Westminster Confession, one may deduce necessary doctrines from 'scripture' treats theology as if it were a branch of mathematics." [80]

TAB: So does Beckwith hold to the "partum-partum" view of authority rather than that of "material sufficiency?"

"But as I slowly and unconsciously moved toward Catholicism in the early 2000s, I began to even find the *sola scriptura* of the Magisterial Reformation not entirely satisfactory. It seemed to me to subtly and unconsciously incorporate into its theological framework all the doctrines that *sola scriptura*, without a settled canon or authoritative creedal tradition, could never have produced. out of whole cloth without the of a Holy Spirit-directed ecclesiastical infrastructure." [80]

Beckwith then goes on to the well-worn argument of Protestants having a fallible list of infallible books (although he does not use that exact language) and thus relying on the Roman Catholic Church's authority for the canon while rejecting the rest of Rome's authority.

"Many of the contemporary Evangelical Protestants I read offered understandings of *sola scriptura* that were based on less than convincing biblical exegesis, or implicitly or explicitly relied on extra-scriptural support to justify either the scope of the biblical canon or essential doctrines that are not easily derived from scripture without the necessary assistance of philosophical and theological categories arrived at through the development of doctrine that arose alongside and in accordance with the formation of the canon." [80]

TAB: He says "many." Does that mean that "some" did give convincing biblical exegesis? What would he consider to be "convincing?" Why does truth depend on his being convinced? The doctrines of grace ensure that it is not my own "reasoning" that leads me into the truth. This is a work of God, all of grace. What if the church, by God's providence and with aid of the Holy Spirit, recognized those books which were inspired? Does that mean that the church is infallible or that God has led infallibly? This would be the same as with the Jewish canon. Israel was used of God to record, recognize and preserve His Word. The church (not the Roman Catholic Church) was there to record, recognize and preserve His Word. Why is Rome the "de facto" authority?

b. The Trinity and Sola Scriptura

Beckwith uses the doctrine of the Trinity as an example of a doctrine that came through history and tradition and not the Bible (*sola scriptura*). He quotes John Henry Cardinal Newman:

"Is this to be considered as a mere peculiarity or no? Apparently a peculiarity; for on the one hand it is not held by all Protestants, and next, it is not brought out in form in Scripture. First, the word Trinity is not in Scripture. Next, I ask, *How* many of the verses of the Athanasian Creed are distinctly set down in Scripture? And further, take particular portions of the doctrine, viz., that Christ is co-eternal with the Father, that the Holy Ghost is God, or that the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and consider the kind of texts and the modes of using them, which the proof is built up. Yet is there a more sacred, a more vital doctrine in the circle of the articles of faith than that of the Holy Trinity." [81]

TAB: Beckwith and Newman play right into the hands of the cultists here in their assertion that the Trinity is not a doctrine that one would arrive at apart from extra-biblical tradition. However, the doctrine of the Trinity was held long before the Athanasian Creed.

The Letter of Barnabas, dated to the /early 2nd c. affirms “a Trinity of God the Father, Christ the preexisting Lord and Judge, and the Holy Spirit who prepares hearts for salvation.” [cited in Lewis and Demarest, Integrative Theology, 255]

Athenagoras (c. 177) who defended the doctrine as an essential part of the faith of the church.

The Didache, a document discovered in the late 1800s in Constantinople indicates that the church believed in a Triune God. [cited in Lewis, 255]

The 2nd c. theologian, Theophilus, was the first to use the term “Trinity” (trias) of the Godhead. [cited in Lewis, 255]

Irenaeus (c. 190) wrote against the heresy of the Gnostics and claimed that the one Creator and Redeemer God subsists as Father, Son, and Spirit.

Tertullian (c. 200) wrote extensively on the Trinity. He claimed that God is a unity of substance, with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit distinct divine persons within the substance of the one God. [cited in Lewis, 255]

That the church came together and affirmed and defined a doctrine that was considered an essential teaching of Scripture (doing so under the providence of God) is no surprise. Statements as to truth arise when that truth is threatened by error. This is the legacy of the early creeds. So this hardly supports Beckwith's point.

c. Beckwith's Definition of Sola Scriptura

He admits that he "for some time accepted a weak form of sola scriptura" defined by him as follows:

*"... any doctrine or practice inconsistent with scripture must be rejected, though it does not follow that any doctrine or practice not explicitly stated in scripture must suffer the same fate, for the doctrine or practice may be essential to Christian orthodoxy. This seemed to me to be the only defensible understanding of *sola scriptura*, though it certainly left much to be desired." [81]*

TAB: I think Beckwith's definition of sola scriptura leaves much to be desired. There are no doctrines or practices that are essential to Christian orthodoxy that are not revealed in the Bible. Even the examples he gives in a footnote later are not good examples. Again, he is setting up straw men.

3. An Exhortation to Read the Fathers and the Catechism

His Roman Catholic friend J. Budziszewski encourages him to explore the church fathers as well as the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

TAB: Beckwith claims that he took his friend up on this advice, but it took him "several months to do so." [81]. This was in October of 2006. It was in March of 2007 that he sought to rejoin the Roman Catholic Church. That leaves only a scant few months for him to do his "research" including that of the church fathers.

B. Ancient Footprints Everywhere (82)

1. Beckwith was Elected 58th President of the ETS on November 17, 2006

He claims that he accepted the position while "fully embracing a Protestant understanding on the four key issues . . . justification, the Real Presence . . . the teaching authority of the church (including apostolic succession and the primacy of the Pope), and Penance." [82]

A friend greets him at a conference on Nov. 14 and asks him about the paper he was to deliver to ETS: "Faith, Reason, and the Christian University: What John Paul II Can Teach Evangelicals."

"Mark said, 'When are you going to become Catholic?' I jokingly replied, 'When my term as ETS president is over,' though not seriously thinking I would ever return to the Catholic Church. I did share with Mark that I was very much attracted to Catholic views on faith and reason, moral theology, and the nature of the human person, but that there were some issues that were real deal breakers *I told Mark that it would probably take me many years to work these out, if I ever worked them out at all.*" [82, italics mine]

TAB: Many years? More like a few weeks! This is ridiculous. Anyone carefully reading the book can see that Beckwith never really left Rome in the first place and that he wanted to embrace Romanism. All he needed was some "evidence" to do so, evidence that would justify his belief. As I've said many times, people will believe what they want to believe.

2. Three Books

While in Washington DC he picked up three small books at a local bookstore - all written by Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI).

1) Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures (2006); 2) In the Beginning (1995); 3) Values in a Time of Upheaval (2006).

"In early 2007 . . . I began reading the early Church fathers, focusing on those issues that were key for me. I also dove into the Catechism of the Catholic Church. . . ." [83]

3. He also Reads Mark Noll's *Is the Reformation Over? An Evangelical Assessment of Contemporary Roman Catholicism*

"Included among other works I consulted was *Is the Reformation Over? An Evangelical Assessment of Contemporary Roman Catholicism*, authored by . . . Mark A. Noll and journalist Carolyn Nystrom." [83]

a. Carl R. Trueman's Review

Beckwith states that he read several reviews of Noll's book, including one that was written by Carl R. Trueman, professor of Historical Theology and Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary. Beckwith claims that the concluding paragraph "rocked me to the core:"

"When I finished reading the book, I have to confess that I agreed with the authors, in that it does indeed seem that the Reformation is over for large tracts of evangelicalism; yet the authors themselves do not draw the obvious conclusion from their own arguments. Every year I tell my Reformation history class that Roman Catholicism is, at least in the West, the default position. Rome has a better claim to historical continuity and institutional unity than any Protestant denomination, let alone the strange hybrid that is evangelicalism; in light of the facts, therefore, we need good, solid reasons for not being Catholic; not being a Catholic should, in other words, be a positive act of will and commitment, something we need to get out of bed determined to do each and every day. It would seem, however, that if Noll and Nystrom are correct, many who call themselves evangelical really lack any good reason for such an act of will; and the obvious conclusion, therefore, should be that they do the decent thing and rejoin the Roman Catholic Church. I cannot go down that path myself, primarily because of my view of justification by faith and because of my ecclesiology; but those who reject the former and lack the latter have no real basis upon which to perpetuate what is, in effect, an act of schism on their part. For such, the Reformation is over; for me, the fat lady has yet to sing; in fact, I am not sure at this time that she has even left her dressing room." [83]

So Beckwith writes:

"Professor Trueman's reasoning would serve as a catalyst for reorienting my sense of whether the Catholic Church or I had the burden in justifying the schism in which I had remained for over thirty years." [83]

TAB: Interesting that it would not be "The Gospel" that would drive Beckwith, but fear of being part of a "schism." As I have both re-read Trueman's quote above, and researched what others have said about Beckwith's use of the quote, I get the sense that he has read more into what Trueman was trying to convey. I would, however, like to delve into this further if time permits. Questions remain such as "What was Trueman's overall review of the book like?" - "What would Trueman's response be to how Beckwith took his quote?"

Beyond that it is obvious that Beckwith has set his face to Rome and is looking for affirmation to justify his journey.

4. Forensic Justification? A Theological Novelty?

a. Beckwith's claim to have "consulted the sources"

Beckwith claims that he consulted "numerous other sources" including Geisler and MacKenzie's *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences*. In this book Beckwith picks up on their statement that:

"Although the forensic aspect of justification stressed by Reformation theology is scarcely found prior to the Reformation, there is continuity between medieval Catholicism and the Reformers."
[84]

Beckwith takes this quote, claims that forensic justification "was a theological innovation," and adds the next quote by Alister McGrath:

"The essential feature of the Reformation doctrines of justification is that a deliberate and systematic distinction is made between *justification and regeneration*. Although it must be emphasized that this distinction is purely notional [i.e. hypothetical], in that it is impossible to separate the two within the context of the *ordo salutis*, the essential point is that the notional distinction is made where none had been acknowledged before in the history of Christian doctrine. A fundamental discontinuity was introduced into western theological tradition where none had ever existed, or have been contemplated, before. The Reformation understanding of the nature of justification—as opposed to its *mode*—must therefore be regarded as a genuine theological *novum*."
[page 84. The quote is from McGrath's *Iustia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd ed, 217.]

Then Beckwith claims on the very next page:

"*Sanctification*, or as McGrath calls it, *regeneration*, is a consequence of one's conversion, the internal work of the Holy Spirit in one's Christian journey. . . . Although McGrath maintains that the Reformed distinction between justification and regeneration is only notional, it is the understanding of justification as exclusively forensic that requires this notional distinction. Thus, even if the distinction is merely notional, the idea that required it, 'the Reformed understanding of the nature of justification' (i.e. forensic justification), is, according to McGrath, 'a genuine theological *novum*.'" [85]

*TAB: McGrath is referring to a distinction between justification and regeneration, not justification and sanctification. Although Beckwith takes the quote and claims that McGrath is using the term regeneration synonymously with sanctification. **I'm quite puzzled by this.***

Compare the post on "Triablogue" ==>

[<http://triablogue.blogspot.com/2008/11/beckwith-in-retreat.html#comments>]

"What happened in the interim? He received a critical comment by Gene Bridges. And what did Bridges do? Beckwith cited McGrath in alleged support of his contention that sola fide was a theological innovation. Gene merely corrected Beckwith's citation by giving a verbatim quotation of McGrath's actual position. . . ."

b. Beckwith Misrepresents the Reformed Position on Justification

He writes on page 84 that the Reformed doctrine of forensic justification is that -

"One is justified at the moment one accepts Christ at conversion."

TAB: That is a misleading statement and theologically inaccurate. This is not a good definition of the "reformed doctrine of forensic justification." For one thing, what does it mean to "accept Christ?" The emphasis in the N.T. is on faith. Beckwith sounds more like the pop-evangelicalism of Campus Crusade than a scholar who has rubbed shoulders with good theologians. A better definition would be that "One is justified when he believes in the person of Christ and His work on the sinner's behalf; that belief itself being a consequence of regeneration wrought by the Holy Spirit." (At least Beckwith adds the work of the Holy Spirit as a post-script to his definition.)

He also writes that, for the Reformed:

"But the grace one receives is legal or forensic. This means that grace is not real stuff that changes nature, but merely the name given to God's graciousness by legally accounting to us Christ's righteousness." [84-85]

TAB: This is misleading. Certainly the grace of justification is legal. But that doesn't mean that there is no grace that follows in sanctification. In fact, where there is justification there will be sanctification. That sanctifying grace is "the real stuff that changes nature." Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17-21.

I find it thought-provoking that Beckwith interacts with the "Reformed position" while he never was reformed himself and seems rather ignorant of the nuances of reformational theology.

Now that the straw-man has been erected:

"When I got around to reading the Church Fathers, the Reformation doctrine of justification was just not there, as Geisler, McKenzie, and McGrath candidly admit. . . . But what was present was a profound understanding of how saving faith was not a singular event that took place 'on a Sunday,' to quote a famous Gospel song. Rather, saving faith, entirely the consequence of God's grace, begins with one's initial conversion, which incorporates one into the family of God. But at that point the journey is just beginning. For one then exercises one's faith, itself a gift of God's grace, in acts of charity, the spiritual disciplines, and prayer as well as in the partaking of the sacraments—all this in order to commune with God to receive his unmerited grace to conform one into the image of Christ. According to this view, justification refers not only to the Christian's

initial entrance into the family of God at baptism—which is administered for the remission of sins—but to the intrinsic work of both the infusion of that grace at baptism and all the subsequent graces that work in concert to transform the Christian from the inside out. It is in and through this ongoing transformation that one is made *justified*, in the same sense of being made righteous or rightly-ordered, and thus gifted to share in the divine life of Christ. Consequently, justification and sanctification are not different events, one extrinsic and the other intrinsic, as the Reformers taught. Rather 'sanctification' is the ongoing intrinsic work of justifying, or making rightly-ordered, the Christian by means of God's grace, the same grace that intrinsically changed the believer at the moment of her initial 'justification' (i.e. at baptism) into an adopted child of the Father." [85-86, emphasis mine]

TAB: I don't know what Beckwith means by saving faith as "a singular event that took place on a Sunday." Certainly regeneration that results in saving faith is an instantaneous thing, at least from God's perspective. But that saving faith continues (1 Peter 1:5-9).

Also, according to Rome faith is not "entirely the consequence of God's grace" for it is synergistic in the Catholic scheme of things. But I suppose that could be word-shopped to mean that God is gracious in allowing some to express faith in and through the Church. It comes down to the same old spin: "Salvation is all of grace because God is gracious in enabling man to merit salvation."

How is one intrinsically changed at the moment of initial justification at baptism? A baptism that is almost always conferred upon infants? Roman Catholics, as a group, demonstrate an outward religion apart from any inward transformation.

Beckwith footnotes the Catholic Catechism (footnote 21). I will just cite part that demonstrates the synergism of Rome:

"Justification establishes cooperation between God's grace and man's freedom. On Man's part is it expressed by the assent of faith to the Word of God, which invites him to conversion, and in the cooperation of charity with the prompting of the Holy Spirit who precedes and preserves his assent."

5. Beckwith Cites the Fathers Against Themselves

a. Quotes that Beckwith Claims Could be Understood as "Reformed"

(1) St. Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 140-ca. - 202 AD):

"Vain, too, is [the effort of] Marcion and his followers when they [seek to] exclude Abraham from the inheritance, to whom the Spirit through many men, and now by Paul, bears witness, that "he believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." [Against Heresies, taken from Beckwith's own citation, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103408.htm>]

TAB: Here's the entire quote:

"Vain, too, is [the effort of] Marcion and his followers when they [seek to] exclude Abraham from the inheritance, to whom the Spirit through many men, and now by Paul, bears witness, that "he believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." And the Lord [also bears witness to him,] in the first place, indeed, by raising up children to him from the stones, and making his seed as the stars of heaven, saying, "They shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall recline with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven;" and then again by saying to the Jews, "When you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of heaven, but you yourselves cast out." This, then, is a clear point, that those who disallow his salvation, and frame the idea of another God besides Him who made the promise to Abraham, are outside the kingdom of God, and are disinherited from [the gift of] incorruption, setting at naught and blaspheming God, who introduces, through Jesus Christ, Abraham to the kingdom of heaven, and his seed, that is, the Church, upon which also is conferred the adoption and the inheritance promised to Abraham."

(2) St. Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 318-386 AD)

"For as a writing-reed or a dart has need of one to use it, so grace also has need of believing minds. . . . [I]t is God's to grant grace, but thine to receive and guard it. treasure it devoutly." [Catechetical Lecture 1, taken from Beckwith's own citation, www.newadvent.org/fathers/310101.htm]

TAB: Here's the entire section (from a baptismal ceremony - emphasis mine):

Catechetical Lecture 1 - To those who are to be Enlightened, delivered extempore at Jerusalem, as an Introductory Lecture to those who had come forward for Baptism: With a reading from Isaiah: Wash you, make you clean; put away your iniquities from your souls, from before my eyes, and the rest Isaiah 1:16 .

1. Disciples of the New Testament and partakers of the mysteries of Christ, as yet by calling only, but ere long by grace also, make you a new heart and a new spirit, that there may be gladness among the inhabitants of heaven: for if over one sinner that repents there is joy, according to the Gospel, how much more shall the salvation of so many souls move the inhabitants of heaven to gladness. As you have entered upon a good and most glorious path, run with reverence the race of godliness. For the Only-begotten Son of God is present here most ready to redeem you, saying, Come unto Me all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. You that are clothed with the rough garment of your offences, who are holden with the cords of your own sins, hear the voice of the Prophet saying, Wash you, make you clean, put away your iniquities from before My eyes: that the choir of Angels may chant over you, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered . You who have just lighted the torches of faith, guard them carefully in your hands unquenched; that He, who erewhile on this all-holy Golgotha opened Paradise to the robber on account of his faith, may grant to you to sing the bridal song.

2. *If any here is a slave of sin, let him promptly prepare himself through faith for the new birth into freedom and adoption; and having put off the miserable bondage of his sins, and taken on him the most blessed bondage of the Lord, so may he be counted worthy to inherit the kingdom of heaven. Put off, by confession, the old man, which waxes corrupt after the lusts of deceit, that you may put on the new man, which is renewed according to knowledge of Him that created him. Get you the earnest of the Holy Spirit through faith, that you may be able to be received into the everlasting habitations. Come for the mystical Seal, that you may be easily recognised by the Master; be ye numbered among the holy and spiritual flock of Christ, to be set apart on His right hand, and inherit the life prepared for you. For they to whom the rough garment of their sins still clings are found on the left hand, because they came not to the grace of God which is given through Christ at the new birth of Baptism: new birth I mean not of bodies, but the spiritual new birth of the soul. For our bodies are begotten by parents who are seen, but our souls are begotten anew through faith: for the Spirit blows where it lists: and then, if thou be found worthy, you may hear, Well done, good and faithful servant, when you are found to have no defilement of hypocrisy in your conscience.*

3. *For if any of those who are present should think to tempt God's grace, he deceives himself, and knows not its power. Keep your soul free from hypocrisy, O man, because of Him who searches hearts and reins. For as those who are going to make a levy for war examine the ages and the bodies of those who are taking service, so also the Lord in enlisting souls examines their purpose: and if any has a secret hypocrisy, He rejects the man as unfit for His true service; but if He finds one worthy, to him He readily gives His grace. He gives not holy things to the dogs but where He discerns the good conscience, there He gives the Seal of salvation, that wondrous Seal, which devils tremble at, and Angels recognise; that the one may be driven to flight, and the others may watch around it as kindred to themselves. Those therefore who receive this spiritual and saving Seal, have need also of the disposition akin to it. For as a writing-reed or a dart has need of one to use it, so grace also has need of believing minds.*

4. *You are receiving not a perishable but a spiritual shield. Henceforth you are planted in the invisible Paradise. Thou receivest a new name, which you had not before. Heretofore you were a Catechumen, but now you will be called a Believer. You are transplanted henceforth among the spiritual olive-trees, being grafted from the wild into the good olive-tree from sins into righteousness, from pollutions into purity. You are made partaker of the Holy Vine. Well then, if thou abide in the Vine, you grow as a fruitful branch; but if thou abide not, you will be consumed by the fire. Let us therefore bear fruit worthily. God forbid that in us should be done what befell that barren fig-tree, that Jesus come not even now and curse us for our barrenness. But may all be able to use that other saying, But I am like a fruitful olive-tree in the house of God: I have trusted in the mercy of God for ever -an olive-tree not to be perceived by sense, but by the mind, and full of light. As then it is His part to plant and to water, so it is thine to bear fruit: it is God's to grant grace, but thine to receive and guard it. Despise not the grace because it is freely given, but receive and treasure it devoutly.*

5. *The present is the season of confession: confess what you have done in word or in deed, by night or by day; confess in an acceptable time, and in the day of salvation receive the heavenly treasure. Devote your time to the Exorcisms: be assiduous at the Catechisings, and remember the things that shall be spoken, for they are spoken not for your ears only, but that by faith you may seal them up in the memory. Blot out from your mind all earthly care: for you are running for your soul. You are utterly forsaking the things of the world: little are the things which you are forsaking, great what the Lord is giving. Forsake things present, and put your trust in things to come. Have you run so many circles of the years busied in vain about the world, and have you not forty days to be free (for prayer), for your own soul's sake? Be still , and know that I am God, says the Scripture. Excuse yourself from talking many idle words: neither backbite, nor lend a willing ear to backbiters; but rather be prompt to prayer. Show in ascetic exercise that your heart is nerved . Cleanse your vessel, that you may receive grace more abundantly. For though remission of sins is given equally to all, the communion of the Holy Ghost is bestowed in proportion to each man's faith. If you have laboured little, you receive little; but if you have wrought much, the reward is great. You are running for yourself, see to your own interest.*

6. *If you have anything against any man, forgive it: you come here to receive forgiveness of sins, and thou also must forgive him that has sinned against you. Else with what face will you say to the Lord, Forgive me my many sins, if you have not yourself forgiven your fellow-servant even his little sins. Attend diligently the Church assemblies ; not only now when diligent attendance is required of you by the Clergy, but also after you have received the grace. For if, before you have received it, the practice is good, is it not also good after the bestowal? If before thou be grafted in, it is a safe course to be watered and tended, is it not far better after the planting? Wrestle for your own soul, especially in such days as these. Nourish your soul with sacred readings; for the Lord has prepared for you a spiritual table; therefore say thou also after the Psalmist, The Lord is my shepherd, and I shall lack nothing: in a place of grass, there has He made me rest; He has fed me beside the waters of comfort, He has converted my soul :- that Angels also may share your joy, and Christ Himself the great High Priest, having accepted your resolve, may present you all to the Father, saying, Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me . May He keep you all well-pleasing in His sight! To whom be the glory, and the power unto the endless ages of eternity. Amen.*

(3) St. John Chrysostom (inter AD 344/354-407 AD)

"In order then that the greatness of the benefits bestowed may not raise you too high, observe how he brings you down: "by grace you have been saved," says he, 'Through faith;' Then, that, on the other hand, our free-will be not impaired, he adds also our part in the work, and yet again cancels it, and adds, 'And that not of ourselves.'" [Homilies on Ephesians, taken from Beckwith's own citation, www.newadvent.org/fathers/230104.htm]

"But this he calls God's righteousness, that from faith, because it comes entirely from the grace from above, and because men are justified in this case, not by labors, but by the gift of God."

[Homilies on Romans taken from Beckwith's own citation, www.newadvent.org/fathers/210217.htm]

TAB: The greater part of the first citation from Ephesians (emphasis mine):

Ver. 8. "For by grace," says he "have you been saved." In order then that the greatness of the benefits bestowed may not raise you too high, observe how he brings you down: "by grace you have been saved," says he,

"Through faith;" Then, that, on the other hand, our free-will be not impaired, he adds also our part in the work, and yet again cancels it, and adds,

"And that not of ourselves." Neither is faith, he means, "of ourselves." Because had He not come, had He not called us, how had we been able to believe? for "how," says he, "shall they believe, unless they hear?" (Rom. x. 14.) So that the work of faith itself is not our own.

"It is the gift," said he, "of God," it is "not of works." Was faith then, you will say, enough to save us? No; but God, says he, has required this, lest He should save us, barren and without work at all. His expression is, that faith saves, but it is because God so wills, that faith saves. Since, how, tell me, does faith save, without works? This itself is the gift of God.

Ver. 9. "That no man should glory." That he may excite in us proper feeling touching this gift of grace. "What then?" says a man, "Hath He Himself hindered our being justified by works?" By no means. But no one, he says, is justified by works, in order that the grace and loving-kindness of God may be shown. He did not reject us as having works, but as abandoned of works He has saved us by grace; so that no man henceforth may have whereof to boast. And then, lest when you hear that the whole work is accomplished not of works but by faith, you should become idle, observe how he continues,

Ver. 10. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." Observe the words he uses. He here alludes to the regeneration, which is in reality a second creation. We have been brought from non-existence into being. As to what we were before, that is, the old man, we are dead. What we are now become, before, we were not. Truly then is this work a creation, yea, and more noble than the first; for from that one, we have our being; but from this last, we have, over and above, our well being.

"For good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." Not merely that we should begin, but that we should walk in them, for we need a virtue which shall last throughout, and be extended on to our dying day. If we had to travel a road leading to a royal city, and then when we had passed over the greater part of it, were to flag and sit down near the very close, it were of no use to us. This is the hope of our calling; for "for good works" he says. Otherwise it would profit us nothing.

(4) St. Augustine of Hippo (ca. 354-430 AD)

"[Grace] is bestowed on us, not because we have done good works, but that we may be able to do them,- in other words, not because we have fulfilled the law, but in order that we may be able to fulfil the law." [Augustine, Retractions, taken from Beckwith's own citation, www.newadvent.org/fathers/1502.htm]

TAB: Note chapter 22 (found on the same page as above):

"Now, having duly considered and weighed all these circumstances and testimonies, we conclude that a man is not justified by the precepts of a holy life, but by faith in Jesus Christ,- in a word, not by the law of works, but by the law of faith; not by the letter, but by the spirit; not by the merits of deeds, but by free grace."

Beckwith claims that these quotes could support the Reformed position, if that's all of the Fathers we have read. But we need to read all of the Fathers on the matter to see that they are consistent with Roman Catholic theology.

TAB: In other words, the Fathers contradict themselves, but we ignore those quotes that don't seem to fit our presupposition while we elevate those that do. Is this not a doctrinal conundrum?

b. Quotes by the Same Fathers that Beckwith Claims Demonstrates their Catholicity

(1) St. Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 140-202 AD)

"This able wrestler, therefore, exhorts us to the struggle for immortality, that we may be crowned, and may deem the crown precious, namely, that which is acquired by our struggle, but which does not encircle us of its own accord. And the harder we strive, so much is it the more valuable; while so much the more valuable it is, so much the more should we esteem it. And indeed those things are not esteemed so highly which come spontaneously, as those which are reached by much anxious care." [Taken from Beckwith's own citation, www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103437.htm]

TAB: The entire paragraph taken from the same webpage:

7. On this account, too, did the Lord assert that the kingdom of heaven was the portion of "the violent;" and He says, "The violent take it by force;" that is, those who by strength and earnest striving are on the watch to snatch it away on the moment. On this account also Paul the Apostle says to the Corinthians, "Do you not know, that they who run in a racecourse, do all indeed run, but one receives the prize? So run, that you may obtain. Every one also who engages in the contest is temperate in all things: now these men [do it] that they may obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. But I so run, not as uncertainty; I fight, not as one beating the air; but I make my body livid, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when preaching to others, I may myself be rendered a castaway." This able wrestler, therefore, exhorts us to the struggle for immortality,

that we may be crowned, and may deem the crown precious, namely, that which is acquired by our struggle, but which does not encircle us of its own accord. And the harder we strive, so much is it the more valuable; while so much the more valuable it is, so much the more should we esteem it. And indeed those things are not esteemed so highly which come spontaneously, as those which are reached by much anxious care. Since, then, this power has been conferred upon us, both the Lord has taught and the apostle has enjoined us the more to love God, that we may reach this [prize] for ourselves by striving after it. For otherwise, no doubt, this our good would be [virtually] irrational, because not the result of trial. Moreover, the faculty of seeing would not appear to be so desirable, unless we had known what a loss it were to be devoid of sight; and health, too, is rendered all the more estimable by an acquaintance with disease; light, also, by contrasting it with darkness; and life with death. Just in the same way is the heavenly kingdom honourable to those who have known the earthly one. But in proportion as it is more honourable, so much the more do we prize it; and if we have prized it more, we shall be the more glorious in the presence of God. The Lord has therefore endured all these things on our behalf, in order that we, having been instructed by means of them all, may be in all respects circumspect for the time to come, and that, having been rationally taught to love God, we may continue in His perfect love: for God has displayed long-suffering in the case of man's apostasy; while man has been instructed by means of it, as also the prophet says, "Your own apostasy shall heal you;" God thus determining all things beforehand for the bringing of man to perfection, for his edification, and for the revelation of His dispensations, that goodness may both be made apparent, and righteousness perfected, and that the Church may be fashioned after the image of His Son, and that man may finally be brought to maturity at some future time, becoming ripe through such privileges to see and comprehend God.

TAB: There is nothing unacceptable in this quote that cannot be reconciled in light of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. In fact, note what Irenaeus says towards the end of the quote: "God thus determining all things beforehand for the bringing of man to perfection, for his edification, and for the revelation of His dispensations, that goodness may both be made apparent, and righteousness perfected, and that the Church may be fashioned after the image of His Son, and that man may finally be brought to maturity at some future time, becoming ripe through such privileges to see and comprehend God."

(2) St. Cyril of Jerusalem (318-886 AD)

"For as a writing-reed or a dart has need of one to use it, so grace also has need of believing minds. You are receiving not a perishable but a spiritual shield. Henceforth you are planted in the invisible Paradise. Thou receivest a new name, which you had not before. Heretofore you were a Catechumen, but now you will be called a Believer. You are transplanted henceforth among the spiritual olive-trees, being grafted from the wild into the good olive-tree from sins into righteousness, from pollutions into purity. You are made partaker of the Holy Vine. Well then, if thou abide in the Vine, you grow as a fruitful branch; but if thou abide not, you will be consumed by the fire. Let us therefore bear fruit worthily. God forbid that in us should be done what befell that barren fig-tree, that Jesus come not even now and curse us for our barrenness. But may all be

able to use that other saying, But I am like a fruitful olive-tree in the house of God: I have trusted in the mercy of God for ever -an olive-tree not to be perceived by sense, but by the mind , and full of light. As then it is His part to plant and to water , so it is thine to bear fruit: it is God's to grant grace, but thine to receive and guard it. Despise not the grace because it is freely given, but receive and treasure it devoutly." [Taken from Beckwith's own citation, www.newadvent.org/fathers/3101/1.htm]

(a) Beckwith Adds to this Quote From a Different Location:

"Then, we pray [in the anaphora] for the holy fathers and bishops who have fallen asleep, and in general for all who have fallen asleep before us, in the belief that it is a great benefit to the souls on whose behalf the supplication is offered, while the holy and tremendous Victim is present. . . . By offering to God our supplications for those who have fallen asleep, if they have sinned, we . . . offer Christ sacrificed for the sins of all, and so render favorable, for them and for us, the God who loves man." [Beckwith cites the Catechism, 1371. The Catechism cites St. Cyril's Mysteries, 5.9.10]

TAB: I was only able to find the following in Cyril's Mysteries. I don't know where the rest of the hybrid quote came from.

9. Then we commemorate also those who have fallen asleep before us, first Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, that at their prayers and intercessions God would receive our petition . Then on behalf also of the Holy Fathers and Bishops who have fallen asleep before us, and in a word of all who in past years have fallen asleep among us, believing that it will be a very great benefit to the souls , for whom the supplication is put up, while that holy and most awful sacrifice is set forth.

(3) St. John Chrysostom (inter AD 344/354-407 AD)

"Let us then give them aid and perform commemoration for them. For if the children of Job were purged by the sacrifice of their father, why do you doubt that when we too offer for the departed, some consolation arises to them? since God is wont to grant the petitions of those who ask for others. And this Paul signified saying, "that in a manifold Person your gift towards us bestowed by many may be acknowledged with thanksgiving on your behalf." Let us not then be weary in giving aid to the departed, both by offering on their behalf and obtaining prayers for them: for the common Expiation of the world is even before us." [Taken from Beckwith's citation at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/220141.htm>]

"Mourn for those who have died in wealth, and did not from their wealth think of any solace for their soul, who had power to wash away their sins and would not. Let us all weep for these in private and in public, but with propriety, with gravity, not so as to make exhibitions of ourselves; let us weep for these, not one day, or two, but all our life. Such tears spring not from senseless passion, but from true affection. The other sort are of senseless passion. For this cause they are quickly quenched, whereas if they spring from the fear of God, they always abide with us. Let us

weep for these; let us assist them according to our power; let us think of some assistance for them, small though it be, yet still let us assist them. How and in what way? By praying and entreating others to make prayers for them, by continually giving to the poor on their behalf." [Homily 3 on Philipians, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/220203.htm>]

TAB: The second quote of Chrysostom's is interesting in that he is talking about praying and interceding for pagans who have died, for unbelievers. The greater context follows:

Let us then not make wailings for the dead simply, but for those who have died in sins. They deserve wailing; they deserve beating of the breast and tears. For tell me what hope is there, when our sins accompany us thither, where there is no putting off sins? As long as they were here, perchance there was great expectation that they would change, that they would become better; but when they are gone to Hades, where nought can be gained from repentance (for it is written, "In Sheol who shall give you thanks?") (Ps. vi. 5.), are they not worthy of our lamentation? Let us wail for those who depart hence in such sort; let us wail, I hinder you not; yet in no unseemly way, not in tearing our hair, or baring our arms, or lacerating our face, or wearing black apparel, but only in soul, shedding in quiet the bitter tear. For we may weep bitterly without all that display. And not as in sport only. For the laments which many make differ not from sport. Those public mournings do not proceed from sympathy, but from display, from emulation and vainglory. Many women do this as of their craft. Weep bitterly; moan at home, when no one sees you; this is the part of true sympathy; by this you profit yourself too. For he who laments another in such sort, will be much the more earnest never to fall into the same sins. Sin henceforth will be an object of dread to you. Weep for the unbelievers; weep for those who differ in nowise from them, those who depart hence without the illumination, without the seal! they indeed deserve our wailing, they deserve our groans; they are outside the Palace, with the culprits, with the condemned: for, "Verily I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven." Mourn for those who have died in wealth, and did not from their wealth think of any solace for their soul, who had power to wash away their sins and would not. Let us all weep for these in private and in public, but with propriety, with gravity, not so as to make exhibitions of ourselves; let us weep for these, not one day, or two, but all our life. Such tears spring not from senseless passion, but from true affection. The other sort are of senseless passion. For this cause they are quickly quenched, whereas if they spring from the fear of God, they always abide with us. Let us weep for these; let us assist them according to our power; let us think of some assistance for them, small though it be, yet still let us assist them. How and in what way? By praying and entreating others to make prayers for them, by continually giving to the poor on their behalf. This deed has some consolation; for hear the words of God Himself, when He says, "I will defend this city for My own sake, and for My servant David's sake." (2 Kings xx. 6.) If the remembrance only of a just man had so great power when deeds are done for one, how great power will it not have? Not in vain did the Apostles order that remembrance should be made of the dead in the dreadful Mysteries. They know that great gain results to them, great benefit; for when the whole people stands with uplifted hands, a priestly assembly, and that awful Sacrifice lies displayed, how shall we not prevail with God by our entreaties for them? And this we do for those who have departed in faith, while the catechumens are not thought worthy even of this consolation, but are deprived of all

means of help save one. And what is this? We may give to the poor on their behalf. This deed in a certain way refreshes them. For God wills that we should be mutually assisted; else why has He ordered us to pray for peace and the good estate of the world? why on behalf of all men? since in this number are included robbers, violaters of tombs, thieves, men laden with untold crimes; and yet we pray on behalf of all; perchance they may turn. As then we pray for those living, who differ not from the dead, so too we may pray for them. Job offered sacrifice for his children, and freed them from their sins. "It may be," said he, "that they have renounced God in their hearts." (Job i. 5.) Thus does one provide for one's children! He said not, as many do nowadays, I will leave them property; he said not, I will procure them honor; he said not, I will purchase an office; he said not, I will buy them land; but, "it may be that they have renounced God in their hearts." For what profit is there in those things? None at all, in those that remain here. I will make the King of all things favorable to them, and then they will no more want any thing. "The Lord," says one, "is my Shepherd, I shall not want." (Ps. xxiii. 4.) This is great wealth, this is treasure. If we have the fear of God, we want nothing; if we have not this, though we have royalty itself, we are the poorest of all men. Nothing is like the man that fears the Lord. For "the fear of the Lord," it is said, "surpasses all things." (Ecclus. xxv. 11.) This let us procure; let us do all things for its sake. If need be that we lay down our lives, if our body must be mangled, let us not spare them; let us do all, to obtain this fear. For thus shall we abound above all men; and shall obtain those good things to come in Christ Jesus our Lord."

These instructions by Chrysostom which are cited by Beckwith in support of the Catechism are in fact contradictory to the Catechism which states that:

"1371 The Eucharistic sacrifice is also offered for the faithful departed who "have died in Christ but are not yet wholly purified,"so that they may be able to enter into the light and peace of Christ:" [emphasis mind]

The prayers and sacrifices are for the faithful departed, not for unbelievers.

Note that in the footnote (#35) the appeal is made to the teaching of the prayers for the dead being found in "the Scriptures" (citing 2 Macc. 12:46).

(4) St. Augustine of Hippo (ca. 354-430 AD)

"We run, therefore, whenever we make advance; and our wholeness runs with us in our advance (just as a sore is said to run when the wound is in process of a sound and careful treatment), in order that we may be in every respect perfect, without any infirmity of sin whatever,- a result which God not only wishes, but even causes and helps us to accomplish. And this God's grace does, in co-operation with ourselves, through Jesus Christ our Lord, as well by commandments, sacraments, and examples, as by His Holy Spirit also; through whom there is hiddenly shed abroad in our hearts that love, 'which makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered,' until wholeness and salvation be perfected in us, and God be manifested to us as He will be seen in His eternal truth. [Taken from Beckwith's source, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1504.htm>]

TAB: The entire quote from "On Man's Perfection in Righteousness" - Augustine to his holy brethren and fellow-bishops Eutropius and Paulus (taken from the same source as above):

(43) *No Man is Assisted Unless He Does Himself Also Work. Our Course is a Constant Progress*

But what is the import of the last statement which he has made: "If any one say, 'May it possibly be that a man sin not even in word?' then the answer," says he, "which must be given is, 'Quite possible, if God so will; and God does so will, therefore it is possible.'" See how unwilling he was to say, "If God give His help, then it would be possible;" and yet the Psalmist thus addresses God: "Be Thou my helper, forsake me not;" where of course help is not sought for procuring bodily advantages and avoiding bodily evils, but for practising and fulfilling righteousness. Hence it is that we say: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Matthew 6:13 Now no man is assisted unless he also himself does something; assisted, however, he is, if he prays, if he believes, if he is "called according to God's purpose;" Romans 8:28 for "whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Romans 8:29-30 We run, therefore, whenever we make advance; and our wholeness runs with us in our advance (just as a sore is said to run when the wound is in process of a sound and careful treatment), in order that we may be in every respect perfect, without any infirmity of sin whatever, - a result which God not only wishes, but even causes and helps us to accomplish. And this God's grace does, in co-operation with ourselves, through Jesus Christ our Lord, as well by commandments, sacraments, and examples, as by His Holy Spirit also; through whom there is hiddenly shed abroad in our hearts that love, "which makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered," until wholeness and salvation be perfected in us, and God be manifested to us as He will be seen in His eternal truth.

Again, this quote is not contradictory to a reformed understanding of perseverance, as Augustine's appeal to Romans 8:29-30 makes clear.

5. Beckwith Then Claims that This Proves His Point

"For a Catholic, these two sets of quotations from the Fathers are perfectly consistent with each other, since an inconsistency only arises if one first embraces a Reformed view of imputed righteousness as well as its distinction between justification and sanctification." [90]

TAB: No, there is only an inconsistency if you do not understand correctly reformed soteriology. Besides, these quotations prove nothing anyway since, as it has been demonstrated over and over, it is easy to cite Father against Father. The "consensus" idea is a myth.

a. Purgatory?

Beckwith then notes Chrysostom's "praying for the dead" and calls this an extension of the doctrine of sanctification, what the Church calls "purgatory." He adds in a footnote (note 35, page 137):

"As a Baptist colleague of mine said in an email to me in May 2008: "[M]any things essential to Christian belief and practice are not mentioned in Scripture—for example, prohibitions of euthanasia, abortion, pedophilia, necrophilia. Hence [is] the wisdom of the Catholic Church in regarding tradition, not as a contradiction but as an extension of Scripture[, such as] in its formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, etc. Purgatory is therefore to be understood as an extension of the biblical doctrine of sanctification, for no one is permitted (or would want) to enter God's presence without being fully cleansed of all sin and thus to be fully sanctified."

TAB: I'm not sure if the fact that Beckwith attributes the entire quote to his "Baptist colleague" is a typo. But the statement is certainly weak. All of the things that the "colleague" mentions as proof can be derived as being wrong from Scripture. But the ending statement on purgatory is clearly an affront to Scripture. How Beckwith can go from claiming that things like pedophilia are not spelled out in the Bible to justifying purgatory as "an extension of the biblical doctrine of sanctification" is beyond me!

b. Cyril and John 15

"Cyril explains justification by the metaphor of being grafted onto a vine, bearing fruit, and continuing to abide in the vine, though he warns of the possibility of our ceasing to abide and being 'consumed by the fire.' And yet, Cyril clearly affirms that one's abiding is the result of grace 'freely given' and that one should 'receive and guard it' and 'treasure it devoutly,' which implies the believers lifelong cooperation with justification." [91, emphasis mine]

TAB: Au contraire! No where does Cyril in the quote given mention the word "justification." He is talking about John 15:1-7 and what he writes is consistent with that passage. It is the result of grace freely given, because we are justified by grace, but lifelong cooperation is with sanctification. Again we have Beckwith not understanding the doctrine of perseverance.

Why would we pray for the dead anyway? That would imply that the satisfaction Christ rendered was not sufficient.

Footnote 37 - Beckwith states that prayers for the dead are inscribed on the 1st - 5th century catacombs (citing P.J. Toner, "Prayers for the Dead" in The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume IV).

He then adds this statement which does not prove or necessarily relate to his above mention of the catacombs:

"According to Robert Louis Wilken . . . 'Early in the church's history Christians gathered at the tombs of martyrs to pray and celebrate the Eucharist. The faithful of one generation were united

to the faithful of former times, not by a set of ideas or teachings (though this was assumed), but by the community that remembered their names. . . . The communion of the saints was a living presence in every celebration of the Eucharist."

In footnote 38 Beckwith continues with another quote by Wilken (who apparently is a Roman Catholic). Wilken states that the dead were commemorated in liturgies universally. He gives what he calls "a typical example" from a Syriac Liturgy of St. James:

". . . we commemorate all the faithful dead who have died in the true faith. . . . We ask, we entreat, we pray that Christ our God, who took their souls and spirits to Himself, that by His many compassions He will make them worthy of the pardon of their faults and the remission of their sins."

TAB: I don't know what date this is from, but I assume it is not within the first 2 or 3 centuries. Also, this is a commemoration of those who were faithful and died in the true faith. The prayer recognizes that such were already gathered to Christ. I just don't see an expiatory prayer here.

Then Beckwith has the audacity to pull all of these loose strings together and say that they are "elegantly tied together in the Catechism of the Catholic Church!" [91]

"The merit of man before God in the Christian life arises from the fact that *God has freely chosen to associate man in the work of his grace*. The fatherly action of God is first on his own initiative, and then follows man's free acting through his collaboration, so that the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God, then to the faithful. Man's merit, moreover, itself is due to God, for his good actions proceed in Christ, from the predispositions and assistance given by the Holy Spirit." [Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2008]

6. The Council of Orange (529 AD) and Pelagianism

a. Surprisingly - Beckwith Accuses the Reformers of Pelagianism!

"My study of the Fathers led me to examine the Canons of the Council of Orange (AD 529), which, with papal sanction, rejected as heretical Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism." [91]

"By the means of Baptism God's unmerited grace is infused for the remission of sins. Then the Christian's sanctification continues throughout his lifetime, entirely the work of the infusion of grace with which the Christian cooperates. . . . Even though Protestant thinkers sometimes portray the Council of Orange as a sort of paleo-Reformed document, it is the Reformation notion of imputed righteousness that, ironically, puts the Reformers partially in the Pelagian camp. This is because the Reformers agree that Gods *infused* grace is not necessary for justification." [92]

TAB: This is another one of Beckwith's unguarded statements. One wonders if he has heard of Zosimus, Bishop of Rome, who rejected the earlier decisions of Carthage in 412 and 418 and thus

opened the door to the semi-Pelagianism of later Roman Catholic theology? Clearly, the soteriology of Rome is semi-Pelagian while that of the Reformers (and Scripture) follows Augustine in the doctrine of unconditional election.

7. Beckwith Concedes that Some Church Fathers Disagreed with each Other

But he qualifies that by contending that their disagreements were not over the issues that divide Catholics and Protestants: 1) The Real Presence of the Eucharist; 2) Apostolic Succession; 3) Prayers for and to the dead; 4) Penance; 5) Infusion of grace.

Beckwith states that:

"... one does not find in the Fathers warring camps with one "risking an ecumenical council's judgment of heresy, as in the Arian and Pelagian controversies. In fact, for the Fathers the correctness of the 'Catholic' doctrines and practices seem conspicuously uncontroversial." [92]

He then cites the issue of the sacraments operating *ex opere operato* (but seems to misrepresent the scope of that debate). He claims that Augustine adopted the *ex opere operato* doctrine, which is that of Rome today. But the Donatists of the 4th c. were arguing about the efficaciousness of the sacraments given by bad ministers. The issue transcended that in the time of the Reformation to whether they were efficacious to the recipient *if he had no faith*. The church in Luther's day stated that they did while Luther and the other reformers correctly rejected that notion.

He also states that:

"But what is not in dispute is that none of the Fathers either denies apostolic succession or unequivocally affirms a Free Church understanding of church government." [92-93]

TAB: As far as church government is concerned, from the time of Constantine the church-state relationship was on. Therefore, the bulk of the Fathers would not have recognized a free church government. Neither did the Reformers, for the most part.

As far as apostolic succession, the Fathers did not recognize a succession coming from Peter based on Matthew 16. Even a Jesuit like Peter de Rosa has affirmed this.

"When I ceased reading the Fathers anachronistically, what I began to notice was the far more important fact that Church Fathers X and Y agree that without apostolic succession there is no Church, and that no Father implies or affirms that apostolic succession is a non-Christian view." [93]

TAB: I like what one reviewer had to say about this statement:

But this would only be an "important fact" on the prior assumption that the opinion of the church fathers is important. And that only follows if you presume a Catholic view of patristic authority to begin with. So, once again, Beckwith is reasoning in a vicious little circle. Why would we attach any unique importance to what a church father says unless we attach a unique importance to the church which confers on him the status of a church father?

By the way, I don't object to considering the testimony of the church fathers. I do object to considering their testimony because they're church fathers—as if their official position is what makes them worth a respectful hearing. That begs the question in favor of Catholic (or Orthodox) ecclesiology. . . . it's not as if the Roman Catholic church has an exclusive contract with the church fathers. What about the Eastern Orthodox or the Oriental Orthodox? What makes Beckwith think that patristic testimony singles out the Roman Catholic communion?" [Steve Hays, Triablogue, <http://triablogue.blogspot.com/2008/11/mommas-boy.html>]

Or, as Michael Haykin said in his short review:

"[I]f Evangelical Protestantism is wrong, why is Rome the only answer? Why not Constantinople or Moscow or any of the other varieties of Orthodoxy? Some of them are equally as old as Rome—actually older in my opinion."

VI. Every Little Word a Branch (page 95)

TAB: About the only good thing is this chapter is Beckwith's quote of the Reformer Martin Luther at the head of it:

"For some years now I have read through the Bible twice every year. If you picture the Bible to be a mighty tree and every word a little branch, I have shaken every one of these branches because I wanted to know what it was and what it meant." [Martin Luther, 1532]

A. What the Scriptures Tell (page 96)

1. Beckwith Appeals to His Judgment of the Scripture!

"Although it had become clear to me that the Church Fathers were far more Roman Catholic than they were Protestant, I needed to be convinced that their views on justification were consistent with scripture. I also had to be convinced that the 'Catholic practices' that were impediments for me—the Real Presence in the Eucharist, the teaching authority of the church (including apostolic succession and the primacy of the Pope), and penance—were legitimate Christian beliefs and practices with long orthodox histories. It did not take me long to be persuaded." [96]

"So, I will offer a brief account of how I became convinced that the Catholic position has the most explanatory power to account for all of the New Testament's presentations of salvation. Of course, I know that some of my readers will not see these passages the way I have come to see them. But my purpose is not to offer a sophisticated apologetic for the Catholic view. Rather, I am just trying to communicate, as best I can, the internal deliberations that convinced me that I ought to embrace it." [97]

TAB: Note on page 96-97 how often he appeals to his being convinced or unconvinced, that truth rests upon his judgment, even though he concedes that others will disagree. This is why we defer to the presupposition that it is the Holy Spirit that leads one to truth. It's not about "private judgment" per se, or about a fallible judgment to recognize any so-called "infallible church." It's about Christ seeking and saving those whom he purchased by His blood. The Father has elected them, the Son has paid the price for them, and the Holy Spirit will draw them.

B. The Teachings of Jesus (page 97)

Beckwith claims that the teaching of Jesus doesn't square with Protestantism. Here's where he seems to borrow from the New Perspective on Paul.

"Once I ceased approaching the biblical text with methodological Protestantism, it was nearly impossible for me to get forensic justification from the teaching of Jesus." [97]

1. Last judgment - sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46) - works judgment

Beckwith makes the following (poor) analogy: "It would be absurd . . . for a judge in a court of law to tell a guilty defendant that his guilt was not based on the defendant's actual deeds for which he was being prosecuted, but rather because the deeds are evidence of the guilt he had before he had actually engaged in the deeds." [97]

TAB: In some ways this isn't as absurd as it sounds since we are not talking about guilt before men as in a court of law, but guilt before God - a guilt we are born into. So, yes, before we ever engaged in such deeds we were nonetheless guilty. Beyond this, Beckwith engages in a classic apples vs. oranges false comparison.

2. Matthew 16:27

"For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds."

3. Revelation 22:11-12

11 "Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and let the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and let the one who is holy, still keep himself holy." 12 Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done."

4. Matthew 19 - Rich Young Ruler

TAB: Here is a total misunderstanding of what Jesus was trying to teach the young ruler. Jesus was employing the "Second Use of the Law" to show the man his utter sinfulness. He wasn't steering him to works - are we to assume that he if gave his possessions away he would inherit eternal life?! Then must we all give away our possessions to "merit" eternal life?

5. Matthew 7:17-27

17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.' 24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock.

26 And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."

Beckwith writes:

"It is the bearing of fruit, the hearing and *acting* on Christ's words, the doing of *the will of his Father* that constitute the life of faith, a life likened by Jesus to a house that *could fall* if not adequately constructed to withstand severe adversity." [98]

TAB: Jesus points to the nature of the tree as being key. A bad tree cannot produce good fruit and vice-versa. The emphasis is on the nature of the individual (a new nature or an old corrupt nature).

6. John 14:20-21

20 "In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him."

7. Mark 8:34-35

34 "And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 35 For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it."

TAB: These passages do not argue in Beckwith's favor...

8. Mark 4:16-17

16 "And in a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; 17 and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away."

TAB: Beckwith misunderstands the nature of this parable. The key is the ground, the soil, or the heart. Those whom Beckwith would cite as "falling away" were never regenerate in the first place.

And, so he has the audacity to derive from the above passages that:

"Mere imputed righteousness seems like the furthest idea from what one finds in these and other sayings of Jesus. What one finds is an active faith . . . and therefore there is a responsibility of obedience on our part to remain faithful, bear fruit, practice charity, and persevere." [99]

TAB: Beckwith has obviously never studied the doctrine of Perseverance. And he then cites Matthew 7 - a passage that refutes what he's trying to affirm! So he takes everything and anything that has to do with good works or a changed life and places that in the category of works salvation.

C. The Journey of Justification (page 99)

1. Beckwith cites Romans 4:1-8 as a passage cited by Protestants as "the definitive verse establishing the forensic doctrine of justification:"

TAB: He goes on to deny that the totality of justification is "mere imputed righteousness." He uses that phrase more than once "mere imputed righteousness." For one thing, it's not "mere" which is a demeaning adjective.

- a. Beckwith claims that Romans 4 makes no definitive statement that Abraham's justification was a once-for-all definitive act

He goes on to cite James 2:21-24 as "proof" that Abraham was justified later and Hebrews 11:8 that he was justified earlier, hence multiple (or progressive) justification.

He then cites Roman Catholic Richard A. White: ". . . Justification, though momentary when one first receives it through Baptism, is also progressive. . . ." [101]

TAB: Abraham "believed" - where is the role of faith for Beckwith and others at a baptism that is generally conveyed upon infants? Aside from the fact that Beckwith misuses/misunderstands the arguments by Paul (in Romans) and James/Hebrews.

"Thus, it seemed clear to me that in order for it to be unreasonable for one to dispute the Protestant interpretation of Romans, the text would have to unequivocally state that Abraham was reckoned righteous at one decisive moment *and yet remained* inherently unrighteous, which is the Protestant doctrine of forensic justification. But it does not say that. Consider this example. If a jury declared Fred not guilty, it would not logically follow that it was also declaring Fred is inherently innocent, though he in fact *may be* inherently innocent. Nothing, therefore, about a defendant's inner state of being (whether he is in *reality* innocent) follows from the legal declaration of his innocence. Thus, if Fred were to become inherently righteous as a consequence of an intrinsic change in him because of God's infused grace, a just God would have warrant to also legally *declare* him righteous.

So, then, the real question is whether Paul and the other non-Gospel New Testament authors teach that *the entirety of justification is mere imputed righteousness that occurs once and for all*. The answer that which I arrived was 'no.'" [101]

TAB: What is Beckwith talking about here? Why would the text have to state that Abraham was justified and "yet remained inherently unrighteous"? Yes, we are righteous, yet sinful, but that

doesn't mean sanctification is optional. In fact, that is James' point. If there is no sanctification there has been no justification. Beckwith's example of "Fred" misses the point entirely. It doesn't work for at least two reasons. First, we are talking about an infinitely holy God, not a sinful judge in a fallible courtroom that is part of an equally fallible justice system. Second, since God's standard is perfection, no amount of "infused grace" can make a man perfectly righteous. The Roman Catholic system acknowledges this, at least in part, with its doctrine of purgatory. The simple fact of the Gospel is that when a sinner believes he is credited with Christ's perfect righteousness. That righteousness imputed results in an imparted righteousness. But no amount of imparted righteousness can by itself serve as the foundation of one's standing before God. It can, however, serve as evidence, spiritual DNA, that I am His child. This is James' point in his epistle.

To turn Beckwith's example on its head: Say Fred was guilty of murder. The judge declares him guilty. But Fred is sorry and he asks that he make it up to the court. So the judge lets him go and Fred spends the rest of his life doing good works, serving the community, in an effort to make himself innocent. Yet nothing that Fred can do can erase his guilt. He cannot infuse enough righteousness to his account to acquit himself. If he could, how much would it take? There has to be a perfect payment. Christ has made that perfect payment.

2. Beckwith addresses the ontological character of man from Romans 5

"In Romans 5:19, Paul writes, 'For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.' If Adam's sin had real ontological consequences for human nature--many were made sinners--as this passage clearly indicates, then Jesus' death and resurrection has real ontological consequences as well, --'many will be made righteous.' It seems then that original sin and infused righteousness are a package deal." [101-02]

"But if one . . . opens oneself to the Catholic view--that justification is the result of infused rather than imputed grace--then one need not think of 'works' as activities by which one earns heaven as if one were appealing a creditor in a debtor's prison. Rather, a Christian's good works are performed in order that the grace that God has given us may be lived out so that we may become more like Christ. As I have said, the purpose of 'good works' for the Catholic is not to get you into heaven, but to get heaven into you." [105]

TAB: Unless you twist what Beckwith is saying, this is not Roman Catholic teaching on justification, it's double-talk. Roman Catholic teaching is clearly that our good works merit us eternal life, if they are done under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church.

What in the world does Beckwith mean when he says that the works are not to get one into heaven, but to get heaven into the individual? I think he's saying that we need to be infused with grace and one way we do that is to perform good works so that we may be "more graced." But the goal of this is to attempt to find peace with God and enter the kingdom, so the purpose is clearly soteriological in Romanism.

3. Justification past, present and future?

Beckwith states that justification is portrayed as a past event, but also as a present and future one. He cites the following passages.

a. Past:

Rom. 5:1-2 Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

Rom. 5:9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

Rom. 8:24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees?

1 Cor. 6:11 And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

b. Present:

1 Cor. 1:18 For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Cor. 15:2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

2 Cor. 2:15 For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;

c. Future:

Rom. 2:13 for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

Gal. 5:5 For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

1 Cor. 3:15 If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

1 Cor. 5:5 I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

1 Tim. 2:15 But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

2 Tim. 4:8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

2 Tim. 4:18 The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

TAB: The passages that Beckwith cites are puzzling to me in that they don't prove his point. They are explained grammatically and /or in the context of perseverance and the hope of glorification.

4. Romans 2 -

"Moreover, works done in faith by God's grace contribute to our inward transformation and eventual justification" [102]

5. Colossians 1:22-23

TAB: This is speaking of the believer's perseverance. Note the first class condition (εἴ γε ἐπιμένετε).

6. Philippians 2:12-13; Gal. 6:8; 2 Tim. 4:7-8

"Thus, one does not find in Paul the sharp distinction between justification and sanctification that one finds among Reformed writers. In fact, the passages we have covered seem to indicate that justification *includes* sanctification." [103]

TAB: Beckwith is apparently ignorant of reformed theology and the distinction/connection between justification and sanctification.

He goes on to cite 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Thess. 2:13; and Romans 8:3-4; Titus 3:5-8; Rom. 6:19-23 as "proof" that "justification includes sanctification" (apparently attempting to defend Rome's blended view):

1 COR. 6:11 And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

2 Thess. 2:13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

Rom. 8:3-4 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Titus 3:5-8 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.

Rom. 6:19-23 19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further

lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. 22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

7. James Chapter 2

a. Beckwith makes this statement:

"In James 2 we are told that justification is *not* by faith alone once and for all . . ." [104]

b. Beckwith cites "Baptist New Testament scholar Paul Rainbow:

"In vain do we search James 2:14-26 for any statement of a causal relationship between faith and works or between righteousness and obedience. What jumps out from the material is a thrice-stated avowal of the instrumentality of justification, that is 'by works' . . ." [104, The book Beckwith cites is The Way of Salvation published in 2005]

TAB: The following book review on Amazon was helpful:

By Nathan Hitchcock (Sioux Falls, SD United States)

"There is no end to the writing of books on justification, but this volume merits special attention. The Way of Salvation, returning to the Augustinian perspective on double justification and the place of works in the life of faith, tackles soteriology with a rare confidence and holism. Its synthesis risks offending most branches of the Christian communion, but forcefully advocates a biblical and ecumenical option.

"Dr. Paul Rainbow writes primarily to a Protestant audience, sifting through the mountainous corpus of the Pauline writings and the tumultuous history of the Reformation. He claims that Protestant churches have swallowed whole the doctrine of sola fide, salvation by faith alone, which historically too often includes an antinomian corollary. By separating justification and sanctification into two exclusive movements of grace, faith and works were put at odds with each other (James be damned). Sanctification supposedly had no bearing on justification, despite the abundance of biblical texts teaching that we all will be judged for our works (Isa 66:18, Mt 25:31ff., Rom 2:13, 2 Cor 5:10, Rev 22:12, etc.). Luther, Calvin and others wanted to protect the imputation of Christ's righteousness, keeping Christians from enslavement to the Law. Says Rainbow, "This was correct as far as it went, though it created an artificial hiatus between righteousness (forensic) and deeds (ethical) which impaired understanding of the Christian walk following conversion" (175). Such division "runs afoul of the biblical data," and "champions the complete reality of the universal [formal righteousness found in Christ] apart from particulars" (229). In contrast,

Rainbow proposes that Christians see sanctification as a subset of justification, a movement of God's grace that results in our ultimate declaration of righteousness. Just as justification begins the life of deeds done in the power of the Spirit, so this sanctification factors into our final justification. In his words: "If, then, inaugural justification clears the way for regeneration to take place and the process of sanctification to begin, final justification will set a seal on all that grace has achieved in transforming the believer" (238). Though overly critical of Calvin, Rainbow rightly challenges the tendency of Protestantism to abrogate the full spectrum of salvation, and this spectrum's interpenetration with justification.

The Way of Salvation pushes hard for this reconstruction of the ordo salutis. Most Protestants will find themselves uncomfortable with the lengths the book goes to argue this. In a bold move, the author claims that the epistle of James takes exegetical priority, being a clearer text than the Pauline writings. He therefore accuses Luther and Calvin of either dismissing the epistle or subjugating it under theological predispositions. This hardly seems equitable, as Rainbow admits that James is responding to abuses of the Pauline evangel, and later interprets James 2:17's dismissal of "faith alone" to be understood under the complex dialectic of "essence and existence" (226). How is this plainer than Paul? The Way of Salvation's careful (and enormous) compilation of biblical texts, however, is difficult to do away with. Justification and sanctification must relate, and not superficially.

This is not to say that Rainbow is willing to throw himself in with Tridentine soteriologists. He appreciates the Augustinian perspective, but finds Roman Catholic emphasis on "infused righteousness" dangerously lopsided. Rome's myopic attention to infusion of love into the heart of particular saints suffers from Aristotelian presuppositions, unable to appreciate the general righteousness found in Christ. The Council of Trent tragically "rule[d] out imputation outright" (229), a debilitating decision for future soteriology.

Is the idea of "future justification" really all that much of a threat to sola fide? Having read Rainbow's take on it, I generally think not. Protestants too often get entrapped by the phrase, "the finished work of Christ," which places undue focus on the past, objectified moment of his crucifixion. That the Christian faith revolves more fundamentally around Christ's resurrection and ongoing life helps to free from past-oriented interpretations of sola fide. The eschatological program in The Way of Salvation permits the broader perspective of salvation in the context of the "here but not yet." Rainbow at his best says, "Imputation puts believers on a sure course to final justification and eternal life, provided that the very God whose will it was to find in sinners' favour at the cross also wills to refashion them after the image of his Son" (211). But later Rainbow equivocates on Christian assurance (ch.19), which makes the idea of faithful-works-based future justification unpalatable. If God does not guarantee the workings of his own Spirit in our hearts until the final Day, are we not in some key sense left with a reliance on ourselves? The book's theology is not sufficiently purged of its synergistic temperament. I found myself challenged and inspired - but troubled. Is The Way of Salvation really portraying a righteousness that "originates and terminates in faith" (Rom 1:17)?

Rainbow, while taking an unpopular position in Protestantism, is not alone. "Justification by evangelical obedience" may only show glimmers in the likes of Calvin and Edwards, but Melancthon, George Major, Bucer, Richard Hooker, and John Wesley promote the doctrine more overtly. Not least, this was the sentiment of the joint statement on justification at Regensburg (1541), which Rainbow calls all Christians to re-entertain. . . ."

c. Beckwith calls the traditional Protestant view of James -

". . . an implausible reading, since James' focus is clearly on God's justification of the Christian and not on public displays of righteousness. After all, the story of Abraham and Isaac occurred in a place isolated from the general public. Rainbow correctly points out that 'the drift of the passage is to present human beings before God in good favor.'" [105]

TAB: This is irrelevant. God intended it as a test of Abraham's faith and Abraham's perseverance (noted in his offering of Isaac) demonstrated the reality of his faith - that it wasn't only lip-service, dead faith. That God would use the event for posterity was part of His ordained plan. James' focus is on salvation over against justification. Salvation is a general doctrine that includes regeneration, justification, perseverance, and glorification. James is focusing on salvation-perseverance; Paul (in Romans 4, for example) focuses on justification.

*"It seems to me that James is indeed a problem if one maintains a forensic view of justification. But if one brackets that view and opens himself up to the Catholic view—that justification is the result of infused rather than imputed grace—then one need not think of 'works' as activities by which one earns heaven as if one were appealing a creditor in a debtors prison. Rather, a Christian's good works are performed in order that the grace that God has given us may be lived out so that we may become more like Christ. . . . The Catholic already believes that he or she is an adopted child of God wholly by God's grace. For the practicing Catholic, good works, including participation in the sacraments, works of charity, and prayer, are *not* for the purpose of earning heaven. For good works are not meant to pay off a debt in the Catholic scheme of things. Rather, good works prepare us for heaven by shaping our character and keeping us in communion with God so that we may be 'holy and blameless and irreproachable before him' (Col. 1:22)." [105]*

TAB: First of all, what kind of adoption hinges on one's "performance?" The relationship with God is tenuous and always in flux according to Romanism. Standing is lost through mortal sin and gained through penance. Salvation must be maintained by sacraments and obedience. And in the end sin is never finally dealt with so the hope one has is not as a child who can fall into his fathers arms but one who has to 'purged' for an unknown period of time(?) in a divine woodshed called "Purgatory" (itself a middle ages invention to control people and raise money for the church). How can good works prepare us for heaven when we still are sinful and can never measure up to God in his perfect holiness?

Second, let's look at the passage Beckwith quotes in context:

Colossians 1:20-23 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. 21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— 23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

Genuine believes have been reconciled (aorist active indicative - ἀποκατήλλαξεν - "to reconcile completely") by the sufficient blood of Christ's cross. God did this; it's His work, not ours. And where genuine justification occurs, sanctification will follow (hence the warning in verse 23 which is itself a first class condition indicating that Paul was confident that they would continue).

8. [Mis] quoting Paul

Beckwith claims that Paul is the most systematized of the N.T. authors when it comes to salvation. And Beckwith believes that Paul's teaching is consistent with James, as he understands James.

Beckwith presents the following passages as "evidence:"

Phil. 2:12-13 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Hebrews 10:10-14 10 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; 12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. 14 For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

Hebrews 13:12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

Acts 26:15-18 15 "And I said, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 'But arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; 17 delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, 18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

1 Peter 1:1-4 1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born

again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

TAB: The passages Beckwith cites here only do harm to his own case. The 1 Peter passage, where he emphasizes obedience, shows that he has not studied the text in order to see that the obedience there is the obedience of faith, that is, a synonym for belief. It is not obedience as part of works contributing to justification. Cf. 1:6-7

9. Methodological Protestantism

a. On page 97 Beckwith stated:

"Once I ceased approaching the biblical text with methodological Protestantism, it was nearly impossible for me to get forensic justification from the teaching of Jesus." [97]

b. One pages 106-07 he again states:

"Once I abandoned methodological Protestantism, I could not find the substance of the Reformed view of justification in my reading of the New Testament without artificially forcing the text into Protestant categories. To be sure, I was fully aware how Protestant theologians made their case, and I was capable of following their reasoning. But I no longer found their case convincing. Moreover, the Reformed distinction between justification and sanctification, though seemingly defensible in light of certain biblical texts when isolated and explained by Reformed theologians just could not be sustained in light of the entirety of the New Testament canon." [106-07, emphasis mine]

TAB: Note again, Beckwith is his own authority. He also does not understand the distinction/connection between justification and sanctification according to biblical, reformed soteriology.

10. Beckwith cites the Catechism

He writes, ". . . the Catholic view has more explanatory power in accounting for what I found both in the Bible and in the Early Church:" [107]

a. Here are the articles that he cites (I have added the paragraph numbers):

The first work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is conversion, effecting justification in accordance with Jesus' proclamation at the beginning of the Gospel: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, thus accepting forgiveness and righteousness from on high. "Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man." [1989]

Justification detaches man from sin which contradicts the love of God, and purifies his heart of sin. Justification follows upon God's merciful initiative of offering forgiveness. It reconciles man with God. It frees from the enslavement to sin, and it heals. [1990]

Justification is at the same time the acceptance of God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. Righteousness (or "justice") here means the rectitude of divine love. With justification, faith, hope, and charity are poured into our hearts, and obedience to the divine will is granted us. [1991]

Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ who offered himself on the cross as a living victim, holy and pleasing to God, and whose blood has become the instrument of atonement for the sins of all men. Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy. Its purpose is the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus. [1992]

TAB: Note 1992 that "justification is conferred in Baptism." Roman Catholic theology confuses baptism in water, baptism by the Spirit, regeneration, and justification.

D. Who Really Bears the Burden (page 108)

1. The "misunderstood" Catholic view of justification

“Over the many months of study and prayer that proceeded my return to Catholicism, I slowly began to understand why for so many years I did not understand why for so many years I didn't, and many of my closest Protestants (sic) friends still do not, seem to get the Catholic view of justification.” [108]

TAB: From Beckwith's own testimony in the book his "many months" were about three.

a. Assurance?

“. . . the believer's subjective certitude of an afterlife in heaven as the sine que non of justification.” [108]

After citing a paragraph from Grek Koukl on the Roman Catholic and assurance, Beckwith tries to turn the tables and asks:

“. . . it seems that one can present the Reformed view in such a way that 'works' are as much a necessary condition for justification as they are for the Catholic view. Remember, the Reformed view asserts that good works follow from true conversion and are part of one's post-justification sanctification. Presumably, if one claims to have been converted to Christ, i.e. justified, and no good works follow, then one was not ever really justified. This means that for the Protestant view of justification, *good works are a necessary condition for true justification*. The fact that the good works occur chronologically after conversion does not change their logical character as a necessary condition for justification." [109]

TAB: Beckwith continues to demonstrate that he knows very little of evangelical theology. There are no conditions for justification. Evidences are not conditions. Using his faulty logic, one could say, "According to Hebrews 12:6 God disciplines every true child of His. Therefore, God's discipline is a condition of justification." This, of course, is ludicrous. One must not confound specific categories as Beckwith does!

"And neither view is better at establishing for the believer subjective certitude of heaven. For example, the Protestant, who said the sinner's prayer or answered an altar call, but shows no evidence of justification, is likely to have less certitude about his eternal fate than the faithful Catholic who, confident in God's promises, regularly attends Mass, receives the sacraments, engages in spiritual disciplines, and tries to obey the commands of Christ." [109-110]

TAB: Here is the Council of Trent on assurance:

Canon XV: If any one shall say, that a man, who is born again and justified, is bound of faith to believe that he is assuredly in the number of the predestined; let him be anathema.

Canon XVI: If any one shall say, that he will of certain, of an absolute and infallible certainty, have that great gift of perseverance unto the end, unless that he have learnt this by a special revelation; let him be anathema.

b. Synergism and Category Errors

"Because my friend begins with the Reformed belief that justification is forensic—that is merely a matter of Christ's righteousness being imputed to us—he thinks that a Christian's cooperation with God's grace in the process of justification, as the Catholic understands it, is forensic as well. So, his error, it seems to me, rests in his understanding of grace, that it has no ontological status, that it is not a divine quality that can change nature over time in the soul of the believer who cooperates with God's free gift of grace. For my friend as well as many others, the 'grace' the Christian acquires at his initial conversion (and/or baptism) is just the name the Bible attributes to the legal declaration that we are no longer considered guilty in the eyes of God for our sins because Christ

took our punishment on the cross. Catholics, of course, do not deny that Christ died for all our sins or that he 'offered his life to his Father through the Holy Spirit in reparation for our disobedience,' or that 'by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.' But again, for Catholics the gift of grace is far more than a legal declaration. 'It,' in the words of the *Catechism*, 'conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy.'" [110]

TAB: Beckwith's synergism is evident here. Note the "Christian's cooperation with the grace of God in the process of justification," and "the soul of the believer who cooperates with God's free gift of grace." I also don't have a clue what he is accusing Greg Koukl of here: "So, his error, it seems to me, rests in his understanding of grace, that it has no ontological status, that it is not a divine quality that can change nature over time in the soul of the believer who cooperates with God's free gift of grace." Certainly, the reformed view of God's justifying grace has "ontological status."

But Beckwith also makes several category errors in saying that justification, "has no ontological status, that it is not a divine quality that can change nature over time in the soul of the believer who cooperates with God's free gift of grace. For my friend as well as many others, the 'grace' the Christian acquires at his initial conversion (and/or baptism) is just the name the Bible attributes to the legal declaration that we are no longer considered guilty in the eyes of God for our sins because Christ took our punishment on the cross. . . . But again, for Catholics the gift of grace is far more than a legal declaration."

*I don't know how many times I can reference this, but Beckwith does not understand reformed soteriology and the nuanced relationship between justification and sanctification. Justification leads to sanctification as part of the entire *ordo salutis*, but justification is not to be confounded with sanctification. In saying that "for Catholics the gift of grace is far more than a legal declaration" Beckwith sets up another straw man. I agree that the gift of God's grace is more than a legal declaration, but that's because I understand God's grace as encompassing not only my justification, but my sanctification and glorification, as well.*

Beckwith likes to use the word "merely" as if this somehow demeans what he's talking about. Merely a matter of Christ's righteousness being imputed to us? How can one demean the righteousness of Christ? It is the bountiful, saving, magnificent, praise-worthy, unspeakable righteousness of Jesus Christ! It cannot be reduced to something that is "mere."

(1) Mere Christianity?

So far, just in the quotes I have compiled in this paper, Beckwith uses the adjective "merely" in the following places:

- "But the grace one receives is legal or forensic. This means that grace is not real stuff that changes nature, but *merely* the name given to God's graciousness by legally accounting to us Christ's righteousness." [84-85, emphasis mine]

- "*Mere* imputed righteousness seems like the furthest idea from what one finds in these and other sayings of Jesus. What one finds is an active faith . . . and therefore there is a responsibility of obedience on our part to remain faithful, bear fruit, practice charity, and persevere." [99, emphasis mine]
- So, then, the real question is whether Paul and the other non-Gospel New Testament authors teach that *the entirety of justification is mere imputed righteousness that occurs once and for all*. The answer that which I arrived was 'no.'" [101]
- "Because my friend begins with the Reformed belief that justification is forensic—that is *merely* a matter of Christ's righteousness being imputed to us—he thinks that a Christian's cooperation with God's grace in the process of justification, as the Catholic understands it, is forensic as well." [110, emphasis mine]
- "I am Catholic insofar as I believe that the Church is universal and that its continuity is maintained through history by the whole if its membership, the Body of Christ, and not *merely* as a collection of isolated individuals in personal relationship with Jesus." [128, emphasis mine]

2. Blame it on Nominalism

"The view my friend holds, the Reformed doctrine of imputation, and its attendant understanding of grace, has its roots in a late medieval school of thought called *nominalism*, which comes from the Latin word for 'name.' According to this view, there are no natures or essences that living beings actually possess. The natures we ascribe to living beings are merely names (or 'nominal essences') that are shorthand ways to label beings that have roughly similar characteristics. For this reason, nominalists were also voluntarists when it comes to God's moral law. Because God himself does not have a nature (for, they reasoned, to have a nature would limit God), then his moral law must be based exclusively on his will and not constrained by any intrinsically good nature. So, God could be capricious and arbitrary. Unfortunately, as many historical theologians have argued, nominalism shaped the thought of Luther and Calvin. This is why Reformed thinking fully embraces the forensic view of justification." [110-11]

TAB: This is a straw man. No major reformed thinker denied the nature of God. And to simply describe a school of thought and attribute the entire movement to such is simplistic. If it was so dominant, why did the Roman Catholic Church not fall prey to its influence?

Beckwith cites "English theologian E.L. Mascall:"

"Now, by the end of the Middle Ages, nominalism was in the ascendant in philosophy and theology alike. . . . The consequence was that the reality of an object tended to be identified entirely with its observable characteristics. Each object was a separate bundle of sensible particulars; there were no real relations between things, and in each individual being there was nothing but its observable behavior. . . . How, then, is somebody whose whole mentality has been cast in the mold of

nominalism to conceive the activity of justifying grace? He cannot think of it as consisting in a supernatural transformation of a man's being in its ontological depths *beneath* the observable level; for on nominalist principles there is nothing beneath the observable level to transform. On the other hand, if justifying grace were to consist of a transformation *on* the observable level, the man would be simply justified by his works; for on nominalistic principles a man's observable behavior is neither more nor less than his total activity. What, then, was there left for Luther to say, being convinced, as he rightly was by St Paul, that a man cannot be justified by his works? Only this: that there is no real change in the man at all, but God treats him as if there was. By a sheer gratuitous act of his love God *imputes* to the man the merits of Christ; God treats him *as if* he were as sinless as Christ himself, while leaving him the sinner that he was." [111]

*TAB: Again, it is an error to accuse Luther or anyone of the reformers of contending that "there is no real change in the man at all," or that God leaves "him the sinner that he was." **Iustus et peccator** must be understood in its correct context.*

3. Forensic justification in history?

"But the question that . . . has struck many of us, is this: why does one not find a full-blown doctrine of forensic justification prior to the Reformation era? . . . What does one find? One finds a view of grace and faith that is deeply biblical but conspicuously non-Reformed." [112]

TAB: I don't know what Beckwith expects by "full blown," but there is most certainly evidence of forensic justification prior to the 16th c. But, again, much of the error of misunderstanding justification may be traced to the Latin Vulgate's translation of the word.

"For the Early Church, God became a human being so that human beings may become godly." [112]

TAB: What in the world does that mean?

4. God's Sovereignty?

Beckwith cites the semi-Pelagian stance of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* "Justification establishes *cooperation between God's grace and man's freedom*," and yet, "man's merit . . . itself is due to God. . . . To think that God's sovereignty is diminished by our cooperation is no different from thinking that Jesus was less divine because he took on a human nature." [112, underlining mine]

TAB: Double-talk. Deconstructed this means: "Salvation is synergistic and man must cooperate with God who will not violate his free-will in bringing salvation to him. However, it is all by grace because God is gracious in allowing man to merit his salvation." The last statement (the one I underlined) is a false comparison.

E. The "Catholic" Practices (page 114)

1. Did the Church Fathers affirm these things?

"I found that the Church Fathers affirmed, very early on, the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, infant baptism, penance and confession, an ordained priesthood, and an episcopal ecclesiology and apostolic succession (as well as other 'Catholic' doctrines including prayers for the dead and purgatory)." [114]

Beckwith footnotes this section with J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1978, 189-220. He also cites Jaroslav Pelikan:

"[I]t does seem 'express and clear' that no orthodox father of the second or third century of whom we have record either declared the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist to be no more than symbolic (though Clement and Origen came close to doing so) or specified a process of substantial change by which the presence was effected (although Ignatius and Justin came close to doing so)."

a. Beckwith then puts it in negative terms:

"But what was surprising to me is that one *never finds* in the Church Fathers' claims that the 'Catholic' doctrines—for example, purgatory, apostolic succession, Real Presence in the Eucharist, infant baptism, penance—are 'unbiblical,' 'heretical,' 'apostate,' or 'not Christian.' So, at worst, I thought, the Catholic doctrines were considered legitimate options early on in church history. And this by the men who were disciples by the Apostles and/or the Apostles' disciples and/or the direct successors. At best, the Catholic doctrines are part of the deposit of faith passed on to the successors of the Apostles and preserve by the teaching authority of the Catholic Church." [114]

TAB: This is an "argument from silence" fallacy. If many of these practices, as Roman Catholics now understand and teach them, were not around during the time of the Fathers, then one would not expect them to repudiate them. More historical anachronism (see "The Birth of Purgatory" by Jacques Le Goff).

b. Reading Rome back into Church History:

"After all I had read and studied, this is what I concluded by mid-March 2007. It is his Apostles from which Jesus began his Church. From its infancy in the book of Acts, it was the Church that first testified to the Lordship of Christ and called people to follow him, which meant that one could, through repentance and baptism, become assimilated into that Body. Its earliest members produced the twenty-seven books we call the New Testament. Those books were promulgated and gradually recognized as scripture while the Church's theology and liturgy began to develop. In fact, many of these books, including some that did not make the final New Testament canon that was fixed at the end of the fourth century, were an integral part of Christian worship and included their

public recitation. And it was in those local churches that the practices of confession and penance, belief in and celebration of the Real Presence of the Eucharist, prayers for and to the dead, and the idea of an ordained priesthood under the leadership of bishops, the Apostles' successors, took root, flourished, and developed throughout the Christian world." [115]

F. The Decision (page 115)

1. Big Decision or Big Risk?

"After all, if I return to the Church and participate in the Sacraments, I lose nothing, since I would still be a follower of Jesus and believe everything that the Catholic creeds teach, as I have always believed. But if the Church is right about itself and the Sacraments, I acquire graces I would have not otherwise received.." [116]

TAB: Note again the creedalism, salvation by affirming the early creeds that dealt with the person of the Godhead and not as much the work of the Godhead. More evidence that there is no apprehension of a doctrine of regeneration.

VII. Evangelical and Catholic (page 117)

Beckwith states that the reason why he waited six days after his April 29 public reception into the Catholic Church to resign from ETS was that he didn't feel his new beliefs were inconsistent with the ETS doctrinal statement. He also did not want to "cause needless offense to my brothers and sisters in Christ from whom I have learned so much in my over three decades in the Protestant world.." [118]

A. The ETS Executive Committee Responds (page 119)

1. The ETS issues a gracious press release in response to Beckwith's resignation
 - a. ETS was founded in 1949 and has grown to some 4500 members

Beckwith claims there are (to his knowledge) "some Anglo-Catholic and Eastern Orthodox members, though they keep a low profile." [120]

2. The reasoning of the ETS (the letter is quoted in its entirety on page 120)
 - a. The doctrinal standard on the Bible alone
 - b. The view that Roman Catholics have a "more expansive view of verbal, infallible revelation"
 - c. The canon of Scripture and the problem of the papacy and magisterium

B. A Response to the Executive Committee (page 121)

1. Beckwith argues from the doctrine of the Trinity and addresses the issue of the canon

Since the ETS holds to the Triunity of God as a core of its doctrinal beliefs, they must have gotten this belief apart from the Bible (Nicene Creed). This isn't a revelation of natural theology. Therefore, this means the ETS does accept a more expansive view of verbal, infallible revelation.

Beckwith claims that the extent of the canon should not be an issue as "most Christians in the world, both East and West, belong to communions that accept the Catholic canon, which was the canon recognized by the local councils of Hippo (AD 393) and Carthage III (AD 397). . . . [N]o synod, council, or body within Western or Eastern Christendom explicitly rejected these books as non-canonical prior to the Reformers doing so in the sixteenth century." [122]

TAB: This does not square with what I know of Jerome and the early church in regard to their consideration of the deuterocanonical books as being secondary and not on the same level as the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

2. Beckwith refers to the ETS adopting the 1978 Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

He criticizes the ETS for the fact that the Chicago Statement does not provide a list of the canonical books.

"But this, ironically, means that the ETS is implicitly showing sympathies for the *Catholic canon!* For, as J.N.D. Kelly points out,

'It should be observed that the Old Testament thus admitted as authoritative by the Church was somewhat bulkier and more comprehensive than . . . the Hebrew Bible of Palestinian Judaism . . . It always included, though with varying degrees of recognition, the so-called Apocryphal or deuterocanonical books. The reason for this is that the Old Testament which passed in the first instance into the hands of Christians was not the original Hebrew version, but the Greek translation known as the Septuagint. . . . In the first centuries at any rate the Church seems to have accepted all, or most of, these additional books as inspired and treated them without question as Scripture.' [123]

3. Beckwith appeals to the old "fallible list of infallible books" argument

". . . because the list of canonical books is itself not found in scripture—as one can find the Ten Commandments or the names of Christ's Apostles—any such list, whether Protestant or Catholic, would be an item of extra-biblical theological knowledge." [123]

He goes on:

"But the belief that the Bible consists only of 66 books is not a claim of scripture—since one cannot find the list in it—but a claim *about* scripture as a whole. That is, the whole has a property—'consisting of 66 books'—that is not found in any of the parts. In other words, if the 66 books are the supreme authority on matters of belief, and the number of books is a belief, and one cannot find that belief in any of the books, then the belief that scripture consists of 66 particular books is an extra-biblical belief."

"Thus, if the list of canonical books and the ETS statement as a whole (the statement on scripture and the statement on the Trinity) are themselves items of inerrant theological knowledge—which the ETS must accept in order to ward off the charge of incoherency—then, again, the ETS accepts 'a more expansive view of verbal infallible revelation' than the ETS claims to accept. For this means that the ETS, according to the executive committee's letter, requires that its members accept at least three truths as items of theological knowledge, the first two of which are clearly extra-biblical: (1) the list of canonical books, (2) its formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, and (3) the statement on biblical inerrancy." [124]

TAB: Here is Beckwith at the height of his sophistry. The church recognized the canon, it did not make the canon. As far as the Trinity is concerned, the doctrine is reflected in the Bible. It is foolish

to assert that the church made up the doctrine. Certainly, there is nothing wrong with the church formulating doctrinal statements about various issues. Evangelicals do this all the time and have done so throughout history. But those statements always get their authority from Scripture. In that regard, I see my own appeal to the Chicago Statement as reflective of my belief in inerrancy to be no more or less authoritative than my belief in the Nicene formulation or that of Chalcedon in 451.

4. Citing Vatican II (*Dei Verbum*) and Vatican I (session 3, chapter 2)

"Moreover, the Catholic Church does not hold, contrary to what the ETS press release claims, that the infallibility of the Magisterium and the ex-cathedra papal pronouncements are of the same nature as the Word of God written. As *Dei Verbum* states (as translated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*): 'Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith' (emphasis added)." [125]

TAB: Another case of a Catholic apologist claiming Material Sufficiency but in the end having to return to the Partim-Partim view of authority.

5. Doctrinal Innovation?

"Consequently, the Catholic Church and its leadership are far more constrained from doctrinal innovation than either the ETS or the typical Evangelical megachurch pastor.

For example, Gregory Boyd, a Baptist theologian and pastor of a Minneapolis congregation, denies that God knows the future, and bases this denial on a literal reading of scripture. . . . Yet, in contrast to Pastor Boyd, Pope Benedict XVI has far less power to steer his Church's doctrine in any direction he may find consistent with his own professional theological project. For the Pope is constrained by settled doctrine—including scripture, ecumenical councils, and prior ex cathedra papal pronouncements. Pastors and theologians like Boyd . . . are constrained only by 'inerrancy' and 'the Trinity,' which means (at least theoretically) that they could embrace any one of a variety of heresies condemned by the ancient Church and yet still remain an ETS member in good standing: Nestorianism, Monophysitism, Pelagianism, semi-Pelagianism, or the denial of Christ's eternal sonship."

TAB: This is wishful thinking on Beckwith's part. The Roman Catholic Church and its 'popes' have had wide varieties of views. Popes themselves have been condemned as heretics. Pope John Paul spend much of his time advancing his ecumenical views and was practically universalistic.

Beckwith cites on the last point, eternal sonship, John MacArthur, in a footnote on page 143:

"For example, Dr. John MacArthur, Pastor of Grace Bible church, for years remained an ETS member in good standing while denying that the Second Person of the Trinity was eternally the Son of God. According to Pastor MacArthur, the Second Person only became 'the Son' when he was incarnated as Jesus of Nazareth. He has since changed his views on this matter. . . . He now conforms to the deliverances of the First Council of Nicea (AD 325), which had condemned the denial of Christ's eternal sonship nearly seventeen centuries ago."

TAB: To my knowledge (Phil Johnson concurs) John MacArthur has never been a member of the ETS. Secondly, he is pastor of Grace Community Church, not Grace Bible Church. Thirdly, his denial wasn't related to the deity of Christ, but to the unique Father-Son relationship. His prior view wasn't damning, since he wasn't denying Christ's deity. Lastly, I believe the Council of Nicea is correct on this issue—and not because it was given to me by Rome (which it wasn't) but because it reflects well the teaching of Scripture.

"What's more, Augustine, whose genius helped rid the Church of the Pelagian and semi-Pelagian heresies, would not be welcomed in ETS or as a faculty member at virtually any evangelical seminary, because the Bishop of Hippo accepted the deuterocanonical books as part of the Old Testament canon, the deposit of sacred tradition, apostolic succession, the gracious efficacy of the Sacraments, the Real Presence of the Eucharist, baptismal regeneration, and the infusion of God's grace for justification." [126]

TAB: Huh? The Roman Catholic Church is rid of semi-Pelagianism? As far as the rest, the views of Augustine on these issues are not the same as modern-day Romanism and I would venture that on some of them it is quite to the contrary.

C. Evangelical and Catholic (page 127)

1. Beckwith argues that Roman Catholics in the ETS would be good "cross-pollination"

Note Beckwith's mention of the "emergent church" and men such as J.P. Moreland as evidence of a growing interest in Catholic and Orthodox traditions (and ecumenicism) on the bottom of page 127.

"Put in terms of specific traditions, if the term 'Evangelical' is broad enough to include high-church Anglicans, low-church anti-creedal Baptists Presbyterians, Methodists, the Evangelical Free Church, Arminians, Calvinists, Disciples of Christ, Pentecostals, Seventh-Day Adventists, open theist, atemporal theists, social Trinitarians, substantial Trinitarians, nominalists, realists, eternal security supporters and opponents, temporal theists, dispensationalists, theologians, church-state separationists, church-state accommodationists, cessationists, non-cessationists, kenotic theorists, covenant theologians, paedobaptists, Anabaptists, and Dooyeweerdians, then there should be room for an Evangelical Catholic." [128]

D. Pressing On (page 128)

1. The quote that explains the subtitle of the book:

"At the end of the day, I am an Evangelical Catholic because I believe in the Evangel, the Gospel, the Good News, and that it is a gift of God that ought to be embraced and lived by everyone. As an Evangelical, indeed as a Christian, I have an obligation to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. I am Catholic insofar as I believe that the Church is universal and that its continuity is maintained through history by the whole of its membership, the Body of Christ, and not merely as a collection of isolated individuals in personal relationship with Jesus. I also believe that this Catholic Church is under the direction of the Holy Spirit working through the Church's Magisterium, the Apostle's successors." [128, underlining mine]

2. Perhaps the most telling statement in the entire book:

"Although it may be difficult to detect from much of what I have written in this book, my return to the Catholic Church had as much to do with a yearning for a deeper spiritual life as it did with theological reasoning." [129]

a. What kind of a deeper spiritual life?

"Since becoming Catholic, I have become much more prayerful, I read the Bible far more often, and I am increasingly more aware and appreciative of the grace God has given me to live a virtuous life. I sometimes find myself silently praying a 'Hail Mary' or an 'Our Father' while driving or working out. I am not averse to asking particular saints to pray for me, or to recite the prayers of some of my favorite saints, such as Thomas Aquinas. When doing this I gain a greater sense of that of which I am a part, the wonderful Body of Christ that transcends time, space and death itself. Since becoming Catholic I have participated in such practices as praying the rosary and praying the Stations of the Cross. These practices are rich and good, but the sacrament of reconciliation (or confession) has been the most liberating aspect of my Catholic experience so far. Although many Catholics acquire a deeper walk with God through the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, I have found confession to be the place in which I experience the gratuitous charity of our Lord at its fullest." [129, underlining mine]

Beckwith concludes with a quote from the 19th century convert from Anglicanism to Catholicism, John Henry Cardinal Newman.

TAB: The very last words of the book are "Soli Deo Gloria" which I find amusing if not a little unsavory.