

From Cafeteria Catholicism to Biblical Christianity

By
Ryan Zink

My father is an atheist; my mother is a Christian. I was born in Kansas in 1978, and I cannot remember ever seriously doubting the existence of God.



As a child, my spiritual influences were my mother and her parents. I remember my mother, quietly reading her Bible in her recliner, and as the spiritual leader of our home; she took her children to church regularly. We attended a Presbyterian Church, non-denominational churches, and Sacred Heart Catholic Church where, without fail, my maternal grandparents attended. Outwardly embracing Catholicism, they placed statues of Jesus & Mary throughout their home and garden, and they repeatedly encouraged me to find a “nice Catholic girl.”



A Child of Rome

During elementary school, my family moved from Kansas to Texas. While living there, we attended various Protestant churches before moving back to Kansas a few years later. After returning to Kansas, my sister, younger brother, and I began attending Sacred Heart Catholic School. We were baptized into the Roman Catholic Church when I was nine years old. Soon after, I received first communion and reluctantly made the first of a handful of confessions, never once opting to go on my own.



My brother and I became regular servers, and I especially enjoyed serving at the Easter Vigil. I loved the ritual of the Mass and it was impressing to serve when all of the priests of



our diocese gathered at our parish. I admired our priest, Charles Mazouch, and also Bishop Stan who made periodic visits to our parish and school. For many children, bishops are like friendly grandfathers. I viewed the priesthood as a noble calling, but as a Catholic you have to choose between being a priest and having a family. I

pictured myself growing up to be a family man, so I never seriously considered becoming a priest.

Sowing Scriptural Seed

My mother personifies the meek and quiet witness, rather than a soap box evangelist; but I did inherit a few of her doubts about certain Roman Catholic doctrines—such as praying to Mary and the saints. Why should I pray to them when I can pray directly to God? Ignorant of the Scripture, until many years later, my mother had given me a glimpse of the Truth which says, “*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*” (1 Timothy 2:5) These “minor” doubts prevented me from becoming a devout Catholic child.

Regarding spiritual things, my Catholic school education was ineffective because, at the end of it, I still lacked a good overview of church doctrine, in spite of daily religion class and attending Mass twice a week. However, I do recall constant reminders of priest shortages and the importance of Vocations. I had no concept of true salvation, despite having an intellectual belief that God existed. I thought I was “pretty good” and could avoid hell by staying out of trouble. If I could just behave, I could earn my way into heaven. I had never heard Jesus Christ’s teaching that, “*...there is none good but one, that is, God.*” (Mark 10:18)



Regardless, I continued on at Sacred Heart School through junior high. My favorite memories during those years were Catholic League basketball games and being out of school on Holy Days when my public school friends had class.

The Blind Leading the Blind



As a high school student, I continued attending Wednesday night CCD until my Confirmation at the age of sixteen. After Confirmation, I taught kindergarten CCD for my last two years of high school. I remember skipping the workbook lesson that introduced six year olds to the Church teachings about Mary. My conscience, personal doubts, and confusion concerning Marian doctrine made me do it. Regardless, after turning 18, I joined the Knights of Columbus.

A Child of Christ

One evening, in September, a friend and I went to the Kansas State Fair. Among the diverse booths and vendors in the grandstand was a local Christian church that invited us over to visit. It was then, for the first time, that my heart was opened, and I heard Jesus Christ's Gospel of grace about which is written, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*" (Ephesians 2:8-9) My attempts at self-righteous justification through good works ended when I realized that I was spiritually bankrupt and received Christ as my Savior.



Divine Providence



God performed two great miracles during my senior year of high school. The first one happened on October 26, 1996 when a fully loaded grain truck ran a stop sign on a county road. I hit him in the gas tank at nearly 60 miles per hour. The impact dented the steel I-beams under the bed of the truck six inches and tore the gas tank off. Incredibly, the tank was empty and the engine was running on the fuel from the other side of the truck. I miraculously walked away.

The second miracle occurred while staying alone at my paternal grandparents' house after their deaths, prior to my family moving in. I woke one morning, got ready, and headed to school. Less than an hour later my dad entered the house, which was now filled with gas fumes from a pilot light that had blown out shortly after I had left. Either of these accidents could have easily ended my life, but God protected me in both instances. He surely protected my dad in the second event.

Christ Leads My Mother & Brother

My mother attended Bible College and earned a ministry degree the same month that I graduated from high school. Heretical teachings were rampant in the Diocese of Dodge City, and after many discussions with the priest and nuns at Sacred Heart, along with the knowledge of the new parish priests' widely reported inappropriate relationships, my mother was led to start attending a new Christian church in our hometown. Additionally, my older brother had become a Christian, and his family had started attending this same Christian church.

Off to College

In the fall of 1997, I started school at the University of Kansas. As a young Christian, I still occasionally attended Mass at St. Lawrence Catholic Church where I enjoyed my conversations

with the priest, Vince Krische. I also met Christians on campus that I fellowshiped with, but I remained immature in my faith and did not join any community of true believers that would have given focus to my spiritual life. It was a blessing, though, when my sister and younger brother joined me at the same university. My sister was confirmed at St. Lawrence Catholic Church in 2006.

While at college, the Diocese of Dodge City formally invited me to explore the possibility of the priesthood. A parishioner from my hometown had given the diocese my name as a good candidate. I respectfully declined since I enjoyed architecture school and looked forward to being a father one day. My “cafeteria” style Catholicism concerning certain doctrines made the decision even easier.

Down the Rough Road I Go

I began dating a girl who grew up in the Baptist church, but had never become a Christian. She was indifferent toward spiritual matters. We married before I graduated from college, and we started off on a marriage that did not focus on Christ. We occasionally attended a local Christian church in northeast Kansas, but I let her lukewarm attitude toward church override my inner desire to get more involved.

Her infidelity, love of worldly pursuits, and overall lack of commitment to our marriage, drove her to leave after three years. I felt some sense of failure, but also relief in knowing that great continued suffering was avoided by her abandonment of the marriage.

God’s Sovereignty on Display



Incredibly, through all of this, God was patiently working out His will and performed a third great miracle in my life when I started dating again. The very first woman I met was to become my beautiful bride, Amanda. Similarly, she had also suffered through divorce caused by serial infidelity from an uncommitted husband. Although I had been on a several year hiatus from active church involvement, and Amanda was as of yet unsaved, God’s plan was in motion for two broken people who had been betrayed and seemingly abandoned by this world. It was love from the start, and we married four short months after we met. We wanted to start a family right away, but two doctors told Amanda that she would never have children of her own, so we began discussing adoption.

We Were Good Catholics

We started listening to Christian preaching and music on the radio, which led us to a decision in 2006 to start attending church together for the first time. Amanda was born, baptized, and raised as a “Christmas and Easter Catholic,” and she did not understand Roman Catholicism. Our

knee-jerk reaction was to start attending the Catholic Church near our home in suburban Kansas City. To us, and other casual observers, Catholicism was just another denomination, and the choice of a church was not that important. Amanda's parents changed parishes at the same time and started attending the same church. The young parish of 1,300 families had grown rapidly since its establishment in 1979.

We loved everything about our new church and immediately volunteered to serve on the Publicity Committee, which led to Amanda's desire for Confirmation. Bishop Robert at the cathedral in downtown Kansas City confirmed her that summer.



This resulted in a request for us to start teaching a Confirmation group of teenagers for two years in our own parish. After one year in the church, we were teaching Confirmation and still very involved in the parish publicity. I became a charter member of our new Knights of Columbus Council, a member of Deacon Rich's Peace & Social Justice Committee, and was also elected to serve as one of twelve members of the Pastoral Council that made all the major leadership decisions for our enormous parish.



We had our non-Catholic marriage blessed and made "official" by our priest, and I even wondered if I might be ordained as a deacon someday.

We appeared to be good Catholics despite not agreeing with every church teaching. Out of fairness, I could not think of a single Catholic who believed every doctrine of the Church except some of the priests and perhaps a few folks who had seriously considered the priesthood. In my experience, the typical "good" Catholic tries to make it to Mass; cherry picks the beliefs within the church, and almost never opens their Bible.

The Miracle of the Second Birth

During all of this, Amanda recognized the source of the suffering she had endured before He brought the two of us together. She came to understand that her pain resulted from her own sinful nature and that it did not originate from God. She recognized her inability to atone for her own sins and then the fourth major miracle in my life happened, Amanda trusted Jesus Christ as her Savior. *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost"* (Titus 3:5). Still spiritually naïve, I made a recommitment to follow the Lord wherever He would lead.

God's Word Becomes My Guide

I continued listening to the preaching on Bott Radio Network on KCCV, which fed a spiritual hunger left unsatisfied by the monotonous ritual of the Catholic Mass. The array of programming and topics sparked a fascination with Christian apologetics and a desire to have

solid discussion points when talking about the hope that I had been carrying within me for years. I wanted to be equipped for the day when family and friends would start asking tough, pointed questions in search of answers. The Words of God through Peter became my guide, “...*sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*” (1 Peter 3:15).

The first Christian apologetic I read was Lee Strobel’s *The Case for Christ*. This snowballed into books and programming from other leading apologists and preachers including Norm Geisler, Josh McDowell, William Lane Craig, Frank Turek, John MacArthur, Ron Rhodes, John Ankerberg, Walter Martin, Greg Koukl, James Kennedy and others. Curiosity led me into deeper study of the major world religions, cults, evolution, cosmology, physics, chemistry, biology, history, archaeology, paleontology, astronomy, and astrophysics. I discovered a staggering amount of evidence corroborating the inerrant biblical record that reinforced my already strong faith in Christ.

One critical lesson learned is that a person cannot choose to be born into a family of Mormons, Methodists, or Muslims, but they should always test their beliefs against the evidence; for it is written, “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves...*” (2 Corinthians 13:5). While multiple *beliefs* are possible, multiple *truths* are not. In addition, Truth has consequences. The Lord gave us divine guidance when He said, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*” (2 Timothy 3:15). This led me to examine Roman Catholic doctrines, for validation or refutation, in light of the Scriptures. I did not trust my search to man, but rather to the Holy Spirit. “*Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD*” (Jeremiah 17:5).

Another Gospel, the Doctrines of Devils

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote,

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from [H]im that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:6-10).

Scripture shows us that men were already perverting the Gospel preached by the Apostles while Paul still lived and breathed. They nullified the Word of God for the sake of their manmade gospels and traditions. Thus, development of later distortions is unsurprising.

By Biblical standards, false prophets expose themselves through unfulfilled prophecies (Deuteronomy 18:22). Mormon founder and false prophet, Joseph Smith, prophesied that the

British would join the American Civil War and that he (Smith) would overcome his enemies. The Civil War ended without British combat involvement, and a mob of Smith's enemies later stormed the jail where he was being held and murdered him. The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (the Jehovah's Witnesses) founder and false prophet, Charles Taze Russell, prophesied that the kingdoms of the world would come to an end with God establishing His full Kingdom by the end of 1914. What followed were two world wars, numerous smaller wars, and sinful rebellion that continues to this day.

While simultaneously researching these deceptive cults, my inner struggle grew as I studied the Word of God and with it sifted Roman Catholic doctrine. Just as a single incorrect prophecy is an indicator of a false prophet, so too are self-claimed "infallible" teachings that contradict the Word of God an indication of false teachers. It is written, "...*ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.*" (Matthew 15:6)

In my search, the unchanging truth of Scripture ferreted out numerous unbiblical doctrines of Roman Catholicism. Some examples of the manmade shifting traditions of the Roman Catholic Church accumulated over the centuries are as follows:

1. Circa 300, the making of the sign of the cross was invented and prayers for the dead began.
2. In 431, the Council of Ephesus confirmed the church's exaltation of Mary as "the Mother of God."
3. In 451, the church declared that infant baptism *regenerates souls*.
4. In 500, the Mass began as a *re-sacrifice* of Jesus for sins, and priests started dressing differently from laymen.
5. In 593, Gregory I declared that *sins needed to be purged*. Prayers to Mary, angels, and dead saints began around 600.
6. Also in 600, Gregory I imposed Latin as the language of prayers and worship.
7. In 607, Boniface III was the first man given the title of "pope."
8. In 649, Pope Martin I declared that Mary gave birth miraculously and *without pain, injury, or opening of her womb!*
9. In 709, the tradition of kissing the pope's foot was established.
10. *Worship of images* (idols) and relics was authorized in 786.
11. A priest first blessed holy water in 850.
12. In 995, Pope John XV began canonizing dead people as saints.
13. Mass attendance became *mandatory* under penalty of mortal sin in 1000.
14. In 1079, Pope Gregory VII *imposed celibacy* on the priesthood.
15. The Rosary was invented in 1090.
16. 1190, the church began *selling* indulgences to reduce time in Purgatory.
17. In 1215, Pope Innocent III proclaimed that the communion wafer is the *actual* body of Christ and he instituted confession of sins to priests.
18. In 1229, the Council of Valencia labeled the Bible a *forbidden* book.
19. In 1438, the Council of Florence elevated Purgatory to dogma.
20. The following year, 1439, the doctrine of the Seven Sacraments was affirmed.
21. In 1545, The Council of Trent declared Roman Catholic Tradition *equal* in authority to the Bible.
22. The Council of Trent also *added* the error riddled deuterocanonical, or Apocryphal books *to the Bible* in 1546.

23. In 1854, Pope Pius IX made Mary's sinless "*Immaculate Conception*" official.
24. By a *split vote*, the Vatican Council declared the Pope's teachings on faith and morals *infallible* in 1870. The Vatican Council also *condemned freedom of religion, speech and press* and asserted the Pope's rule over *all* other world leaders.
25. 1922, Pope Benedict XV proclaimed that, "*[Mary] redeemed with Christ the human race*" (*Inter Soldalica*).
26. Pope Pius XI *condemned* public schools in 1930.
27. In 1950, Pope Pius XII officially announced that Mary was assumed into Heaven.
28. Moreover, the Second Vatican Council in the 1960's reiterated that she "associated herself with His sacrifice. Catholics reserve a special form of *worship* for Mary called *Hyperdulia*. It is greater than the worship of saints and angels, but not quite the same as the worship of God. Knowing this, it is unsurprising that Pope John Paul II dedicated his papacy to *Mary* and said, "*Mary participates in the redemption achieved by her Son,*" and, "*Victory when it comes will be through Mary.*"

Warning believers to look out for the development of aberrant doctrines, the Lord has written,

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

Roman Catholicism explicitly opposes the Word of God by demanding that, "*Clerics are obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven, and are therefore bound to celibacy...*" (Canon Law 277), and "*Abstinence from meat, or from some other food as determined by the Episcopal Conference, is to be observed on all Fridays, unless a solemnity should fall on a Friday. Abstinence and fasting are to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday*" (Canon Law 1251). God calls forced celibacy and mandatory abstention from meat "*doctrines of devils*" that "*depart from the faith.*"

Despite proclaiming "Christian" origination, false teachings are masterful deceptions intended to lead souls down the broad road of destruction. There can be no larger contradiction to God's teaching than the Catholic teachings about the core of the Gospel itself, namely, "*In the treasury, too, are the prayers and good works of all the saints... In this way they attained their own salvation and at the same time cooperated in saving their brothers in the unity of the Mystical Body*" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) Paragraph #1477*) and, "*No one can merit the initial grace which is at the origin of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit, we can merit for ourselves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life, as well as necessary temporal goods*" (CCC #2027). However, Scripture tells us, "*...if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*" (Galatians 2:21) and, "*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*" (Galatians 2:16)

Contradicting the Holy Spirit’s teachings through Paul in Galatians, the Catholic Church pronounced a curse on anyone who says that we are justified by faith alone and not works: **“If any one saith, that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary unto salvation, but superfluous; and that, without them, or without the desire thereof, men obtain of God, through faith alone, the grace of justification; though all (the sacraments) are not indeed necessary for every individual; let him be anathema”** (Council of Trent, Decree on the Sacraments).. This curse attacks the foundational doctrine of the Christian Gospel, the means by which we can have eternal life. If you damn the Gospel of Christ, are you merely another denomination, or are you in fact another counterfeit religion?

The Miracle of Our First Born



God blessed us during this turmoil and performed the fifth major miracle of my lifetime, our first pregnancy. Our son was born in 2007, and he is a gift from God. Every day since then has been a blessing to our family as we watch him grow. We thank God that he has a Christian home and pray that some day he too will trust Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

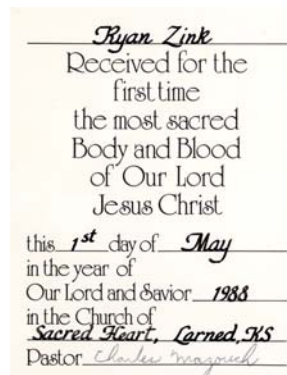
Cracks Develop in the Dam

I tend to think, analyze, and reach a conclusion about something while sharing very little of that process with those around me. Part of that results from having numerous friends that never followed through on their plans and intentions. During the course of my research, Amanda picked up on the indefensibility of some Roman Catholic doctrines that blatantly contradicted Scripture, but I failed to discuss them in detail and the implications of them. She could sense my uneasiness developing as time passed. My faith in Catholicism as a valid expression of Christianity was crumbling.



My discomfort at Mass grew as I learned more about the meaning behind the ritual. It reached a point where I stopped taking communion when I realized that the Roman Catholic Church unbiblically teaches that,

“The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: ‘The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different.’ ‘In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner’” (CCC #1367).



This contradicts what is written: “*And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission*” (Hebrews 9:22), and “*But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*” (Hebrews 10:12-14).

Christ’s sacrifice is *complete*. Ongoing, unbloody sacrifices serve no purpose. It is written, “*...every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins*” (Hebrews 10:11). Rome teaches that the daily sacrifice of the Mass takes away sins, but Christ has already done it once and for all, for those who place their faith in Him alone for their salvation.

Searching for Answers Where There Were None

I sat down and visited with our priest, Mike Tierney. The main topic was the Catholic teaching that the sacraments (works) are necessary for salvation (CCC #1129). He gave a kindhearted explanation of the “Baptism of the Willing,” which opens multiple paths to salvation apart from faith alone in Jesus. This contradicts Christ who said that He was the only means of salvation (John 14:6).

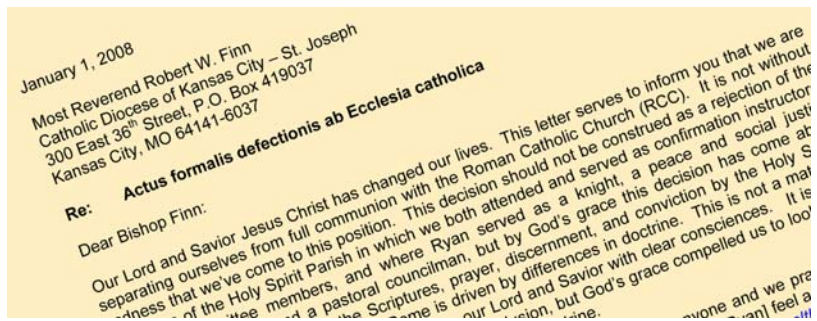
As an overburdened priest of a huge parish, he referred me to our Religious Education Director who likewise gave me vague, unbiblical answers, which included an apologetic against apologetics and evangelism. In other words, she gave me a defense, or apologetic of *her* belief that people shouldn’t defend *their* beliefs or question others’ beliefs. She even said that since a devout Mormon in her ecumenical group says he’s a Christian, she accepts that at face value. When someone, especially members of non-Christian religions profess to be Christians, it is important to ask them to clarify what they mean by “Christian.”

When I quoted the Catechism of the Catholic Church, pointing out questionable doctrines, she responded by saying that the Catechism was not a divinely inspired book. While *absolutely* true, her statement contradicts Roman Catholicism’s claim to infallibility when teaching about faith and morals. The Catechism says of itself, “*This catechism aims at presenting an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals...*” (CCC #11). Therefore, the teachings of the Catechism appear to claim infallibility. God does not contradict Himself, but as any Truth seeker can see, the Catechism contradicts the Scriptures in numerous ways. Amanda saw my inner turmoil, and I finally explained everything I had discovered.

Jesus Christ Set Us Free

Seeking clear consciences in front of our Lord and Savior, together we decided to follow God who says, “*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you*” (2 Corinthians 6:17), and, “*Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table,*

and of the table of devils” (1 Corinthians 10:21). We could no longer ignore the irreconcilable differences between Roman Catholicism and Biblical Christianity. Amanda and I completed a letter to Bishop Robert on New Years Day 2008. It announced our formal departure from the Roman Catholic Church for the sake of following Jesus Christ. Many feelings were hurt and friendships ended because of our decision and the very high visibility of it within the parish.



As one of the twelve members of the Pastoral Council, I’m sure many saw me as a Judas. We never heard from our priest or deacon again. However, many close friendships endured and the Lord opened a few doors to share the Gospel, with Truth-seeking Roman Catholics who had doubts and questions of their own. We missed our teenagers the most. At least seven of the nine teenagers were confirmed as full adult members into the Roman Catholic Church by Bishop Robert that April.

The sixth great miracle of my life occurred on the very day that Amanda distributed our letter to the Bishop and dozens of families within our parish. The Lord guided Pastor Derek to our



doorstep where he asked us if we had a home church, and he invited us to worship with his congregation. We visited a number of local churches, but we kept Faith Baptist Church in our minds and occasionally attended there on Sunday mornings. The straight forward presentation of biblical truth, strong support of missions, and an incredible focus on sharing the Gospel in our own community were the

factors that led us to join the church three months after leaving Catholicism. In the six months prior, this Christian church had grown from around a dozen members to more than 100 worshipers on Sunday mornings. Pray that God will continue to bless this fellowship of Christians.

Believer’s Baptism

The physical act of baptism cannot wash away our sins since, *“the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin”* (1 John 1:17). Biblically, baptism takes place after a believer comes to faith in Christ, and it serves as an outward expression of the inner conversion that has already taken place. Faith is the prerequisite for baptism, *“If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest...”* (Acts 8:37). Wanting to publicly profess our faith in Jesus Christ, Amanda and I were both baptized along with five other redeemed Christians on March 30, 2008.

God's Blessings Abound



The seventh major miracle of my life occurred less than two weeks later when Amanda and I learned that we were pregnant for a second time. Our daughter was born in 2008. We have two children to match the two doctors who said Amanda would never give birth. God answers prayers, heals bodies, and opens wombs. As her parents, we acknowledge and pray for her greatest need, a new birth in Christ Jesus.

Stepping Out by Faith

My studies and prayer continue as I mature as a Christian. My commitment to follow Christ is allowing the Holy Spirit to lead me where He would have me serve. By God's blessing and provision, I have been extremely successful by worldly standards, but I desire to share the Gospel with others, so I am currently laying the groundwork to attend seminary in pursuit of a Master of Divinity in Apologetics degree. "...*how shall they hear without a preacher?*" (Romans 10:14) God is saving souls in rural Kansas and I desire to return there and serve that Christian community where pastors are needed. The Lord is preparing the work ahead of me. The Spirit will lead and I will follow.



Christ Came For You

Every Roman Catholic, from the peasant to the pope, is created in the image of God and worth pursuing and sharing the Truth with. While doctrinal criticism does not target the adherents whom I love dearly, many Catholics may be personally insulted and offended when someone questions the absolute claims that *their* church makes about *itself*, but it would be unloving not to expose and confront those claims. A person can be both sincere *and* sincerely wrong.

Please know and understand that God does not change (Malachi 3:6). Therefore, He does not and cannot contradict Himself. The Bible is the Word of God that we can trust as His ever relevant, unchanging Truth to be used not only for teaching and training, but also for refuting and correcting erroneous doctrines (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Lord records a great example of biblical investigation by the Bereans about whom it is written, "*And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*" (Acts 17:10-11). Follow their example. Paul wrote most of the New Testament, but his teachings were still subject to scriptural examination. Why should we exempt the pope from biblical judgment (Canon Law #1404), if Paul was not? Examine what men say in light of what God has said. If what men say is wrong, refute and correct those teachings and, "...*contend for the faith...*" (Jude 1:3).

Most Catholics would be surprised to learn that they are *not* actually Catholics at all. A Catholic is someone in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church and as such they are required to believe *all* Roman Catholic dogmas (Canon Law 750). According to the Catholic Church, to deny any Catholic dogma makes one a heretic (CCC #2089); to embrace heresy means “automatic excommunication” from the Church without necessity of public acknowledgement (Canon Law 1364), and non-Catholics will not go to heaven (Pope Eugene IV, *Cantate Domino*). Therefore, anyone professing to be a Catholic who does not believe *every* dogma of the Church is in fact *not* a Catholic at all. Additionally, if they do not repent and submit to the Church and its teachings, that person is destined for eternity in hell.

By Roman Catholic Tradition, *and certainly not God’s Word*, if you deny papal infallibility (despite papal doctrines that contradict other papal doctrines and the Scripture), deny that Mary remained a virgin *after* Christ’s birth (despite the Bible naming her other sons and daughters), deny that worshiping statues of and praying to saints is proper (despite prohibitions against worshiping idols and communicating with the dead), or any of the plethora of ever-growing dogmas, then you are not a Catholic, no matter how loudly you profess it.

But, the entire system collapses if the claim of papal infallibility is proven fallible. In such an event, the bishop of Rome exposes himself as a false teacher. Pope Eugene IV taught “infallibly” in regards to faith that, “***those not living within the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics cannot become participants in eternal life***” (*Cantate Domino*). In other words, if you reject Catholicism, you are going to hell. Later, Pope John Paul II taught “infallibly” in regards to faith that salvation is available for, “***all who seek God with a sincere heart, including those who do not know Christ or His Church***” (December 16, 2000). In contrast to Eugene IV, John Paul II says that salvation is universally available to everyone, independent of being a Catholic or a Christian. So which “infallible” teaching is correct? In short, neither. Both are false teachings that contradict Jesus Christ who said, “***...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me***” (John 14:6).

Beware of those who would deceive and lead you astray. The Lord, our God, warns us that, “***For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works***” (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). We have to filter everything we are taught through the Truth of the Scriptures. If we fail to do this, then we make ourselves susceptible to unbiblical teachings. If those teachings contradict the divine revelation of the Scriptures, they are nothing more than lies fabricated by the father of all lies, Satan. We must avoid the traps that lead down the broad road of destruction. Jesus said, “***If any man serve me, let him follow me***” (John 12:26). His loving sacrifice has opened a narrow gate that He invites sinners to walk through.

Why trust manmade religion when you can trust the simplicity of salvation freely offered by Jesus Christ? Paul wrote, “***But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ***” (2 Corinthians 11:3). The gospel of Roman Catholicism has complicated the simplicity of the Gospel preached by the Apostles. Jesus Christ Himself said, “***Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my***

word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

The truth is that our sins, even just one, separate us from a righteous God whose standard is absolute perfection (Romans 3:23). You may think that unfair, but we do not want fairness. We want mercy. *All sinners* deserve eternal separation from God in hell. That would be the just punishment for our unrighteousness and rebellion. Salvation does not come through being baptized as an infant and being a “good person” in order to maintain your salvation by good works in order to earn your way into heaven as I once foolishly believed. This is an overestimation of your own righteousness and an underestimation of God’s righteousness. The sacraments, worship of Mary, and other works play no part in our salvation (Isaiah 64:5). If you believe that salvation comes through faith *plus* your good works, then you’re placing your faith in a false Christ who was incapable of paying your sin debt in full. Salvation comes *through faith alone* in Jesus Christ who is our Savior (John 3:16).

If you have lingering objections, please consider that, “...*Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).* A true Christian will follow Jesus and His teachings, not man and his teachings. You cannot serve two masters. I implore you to follow Jesus Christ and flee false teachers because you endanger your eternal life anytime you elevate man’s teachings above those of Christ. My heartfelt plea is that you will find a congregation that clings to teachings that are grounded in the Word of God.

Jesus Christ said, “*He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).* Disregard for the Truth spoken in the Word of God has *eternal* consequences. By following the teachings in Scripture alone, we can know everything necessary for salvation, for the Gospel has, “...*the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth...*” (Romans 1:16). Trust in the Lord and examine the Scriptures so that you are not deceived. Many people that express their zeal for God by doing good works (that cannot atone for sin), attend daily Mass (that blasphemes Christ’s sacrifice), participate in Adoration of the Eucharist (that is not Christ, but an idol made by human hands), and pray nightly the Rosary (that Mary cannot hear since Jesus is our only mediator), will one day discover that they were led astray by doctrines foreign to Scripture. Jesus Christ taught that,

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22-23).

What a truly horrifying thought. Jesus also warned, “...*fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28).*

May you find no rest until the Holy Spirit sears your conscience, burns away your pride, and gives you the guidance and wisdom to follow Him in Truth. Christ said, “...*If ye continue in my*

word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). I found that freedom when I followed His Word. I was set free from deception and released by the Truth of the hope I place in Jesus Christ who lives and reigns.

When I see a Crucifix with Christ permanently depicted in death, I remember the verse that says, “...*Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen*” (Luke 24:5-6). It was *impossible* for death to hold Him, and this same risen Christ can liberate sinners from the bondage of death with the promise of resurrection unto eternal life.

Jesus said, “*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand*” (John 10:27-28).

May every soul place their hope and trust in our Lord and God Jesus Christ, and not the fallible men whom He created. Amen.

If this testimony has been an encouragement or a challenge to you, please feel free to contact me at ryan.a.zink@gmail.com. I would love to hear from you. May all glory and honor go to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.