



June 2018 CHNewsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



Rome Sweet Home

By Dr. Scott Hahn

It is a journey that took him from being a fervent Presbyterian minister and Professor of Theology at a major Protestant seminary to becoming a Roman Catholic theologian and internationally-known apologist for the Catholic Church. Through study and prayer, Scott Hahn came to realize that the truth of the Catholic Church is firmly rooted in Scripture.

Life is filled with unexpected surprises, and that's how I came to see the Catholic Church to be the family of God that He wants all of His children to share in. To paraphrase Venerable Fulton Sheen, there are not 100 people in the United States who hate the Catholic Church, although there might be millions of people who hate what they mistakenly believe the Catholic Church to be and to teach. I thankfully discovered I fell into the second category. For years I opposed the Catholic Church and worked hard to get Catholics to leave the Church. But I came to see, through a lot of study and considerable prayer, that the Catholic Church is based in Scripture.

Teenage Conversion to Jesus

My story begins with a conversion experience that I had in high school. I didn't grow up in a strong Christian family. We didn't go to church often so I wasn't very religious. What the Lord used in my life was an organization called Young Life, an outreach to unchurched high school kids, and a man named Jack, in particular, who befriended me and shared with me the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It made a profound difference in my life.

Early in my high school years, I made a commitment, asking Jesus Christ into my heart. I asked Him

to be my Savior and Lord; I gave Him my sins, and I received the gift of forgiveness and salvation. It made a world of difference for me. It cost me a lot of my friends, but the Lord, in a sense, more than made up for that by giving me real friends — friends in Christ.

Jack, who taught me to love the Lord, also taught me to read the Bible: not just to read it, but to study it, and not just to study it, but to soak in it — to read it and re-read it from beginning to end. By the time I finished high school, I had gone through the Bible two or three times in its entirety. I had fallen in love with sacred Scripture. As a result of that, I had become convinced of a couple of things.

First, in addition to reading the Bible, Jack had shared with me, from his own personal library, the writings of Martin Luther and John Calvin, and I became a convinced Protestant Christian — not just a Bible Christian, but somebody who was convinced that, up until the 1500s, the Gospel had almost been lost amidst all the medieval superstition and pagan practices that the Catholic Church had adopted. So this first conviction was that I should help my Catholic friends to see the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ, to show them the Bible, and to show them that in the

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Journeys Home

...Journeys Home Continued...

Bible, you just accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and that's all it takes. None of that claptrap: not Mary, not the saints, not purgatory, not devotions. Just asking Jesus to be Savior and Lord.

Around that time, I was dating a girl who was Catholic, and we were becoming more serious. But I knew there was no future in our relationship if she remained Catholic. So I gave to her a very large volume, a book by Loraine Boettner entitled *Roman Catholicism*. It's known as the bible of anti-Catholicism. It's four hundred and fifty-plus pages filled with all kinds of distortions and lies about the Catholic Church. But I didn't know that at the time, so I shared it with her in good faith. She read it from cover to cover then wrote me that summer, saying, "Thanks for the book; I'll never go back to Mass again." I say that with a certain shame and sorrow, but I say it to illustrate the sincerity that many Bible Christians have when it comes to opposing the Catholic Church. I figured that if the wafer Catholics are worshipping up on that altar is not God, then they're idolaters; they're pagans; they are to be pitied and opposed. If the Pope in Rome is not the infallible vicar of Christ, who can bind hundreds of millions of Catholics in their beliefs and practices, then he's a tyrant. He's a spiritual dictator, pure and simple. And because I didn't think he was the infallible vicar, I thought it was reasonable for me to help Catholics to see the same thing in order to get them to leave the Church.

The only Catholic in my family on both sides was my beloved grandmother. She was very quiet, very humble, and very holy, I have to admit. And she was also a devout Catholic. When she passed away, my parents gave me her religious belongings. I went through her prayer book and her missal and then I found her rosary beads. All of this stuff just made me sick inside! I knew my grandmother had a real faith in Jesus, but I wondered what all of this could possibly mean. So I tore apart her rosary beads and threw them in a trash can. I thought of these beads almost like chains; at last she was broken free from them. That was the second aspect of my own outlook: that these people might have some faith but it

was just surrounded by lies. They needed loving Bible Christians to get them out.

After graduating from high school, I decided not only to pursue the ministry, but to study theology as well. The decision came as a result of the senior research paper that I wrote during my final year in high school. I wrote a paper entitled *Sola Fide*. That's a Latin phrase which means faith alone or by faith alone. It's actually the phrase that Martin Luther used to launch the Protestant Reformation. He said that we are justified — we are made right with God — by faith alone, not by any works that we might do. And for him, that was the article on which the Church stands or falls, as he put it. Because of that, the Catholic Church fell and Protestantism rose. I wrote that research paper fully convinced, after much study, that if you get it wrong on this point, you get it wrong on everything else. If you say faith plus anything, you have polluted the simple truth of the Gospel. I entered college with this strong conviction.

College Years

My four years of college were spent triple majoring in Philosophy, Theology in Scripture, and Economics. But they were also spent doing ministry in Young Life. In effect, I wanted to repay God out of gratitude for how He had used Young Life in my life to introduce me to Christ. So for those four years, I devoted myself to reaching unchurched kids who didn't know about Christ, and I confess that this category included Catholic kids in the high school where I worked, because I looked on them as poor benighted souls who really didn't know Jesus Christ. I discovered, after several Bible studies, that not only did these kids not know Jesus Christ, but practically every Catholic high school kid I met didn't even know what the Catholic Church taught. If one or two of them knew what the Church taught, they didn't know why. They didn't have any reasons to back up their beliefs as Catholics. So getting them to see, from the Bible, the Gospel as I understood it from

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Understanding "Our Father" CD

In this CD, Dr. Scott Hahn examines the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer and looks at why this prayer is placed in the liturgy of the Mass. He discusses the context in which Jesus teaches the prayer during the Sermon on the Mount, the significance of referring to God as "Father," and more. Dr. Hahn argues that the Our Father is a prayer that we pray much, but ponder little and argues that a better understanding of these words, which come directly from the lips of Jesus, can lead us to a deeper appreciation for our relationship with God.

\$25

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\$50

SUPPORT 25 YEARS OF THE CHNETWORK with a donation of \$50 and receive *Rome Sweet Home* (\$2 for every year of our ministry).



Rome Sweet Home

— By Scott Hahn

In this bestselling book, Scott and Kimberly Hahn share their moving testimony of the grace and the trials that led Scott, and then later Kimberly, from Presbyterianism to the Catholic Faith. An instrumental book in so many people's journeys to the Catholic Church! Get one for yourself or to give away to someone you'd like to come home!

\$75

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Our 25-Year Mission, and Still Counting

By Marcus Grodi

In 1993, we began the work of the Coming Home Network, with the mission of helping non-Catholic clergy and laity discover the beauty, truth, and mystery of the Catholic Church — and if by grace they feel so led, to help them “come home.” Twenty five years ago this month we had our first gathering after the Defending the Faith conference in Steubenville, Ohio, which marked in a special way the beginning of the CHNetwork. In reflecting back on the quarter of a century of the CHNetwork’s ministry, I’m humbled by the many graces and blessings that God has given us. I am also inspired by the courageous witness of those whom we have been privileged to walk alongside on their journeys toward the Catholic Church, men and women who endeavored to follow our Lord Jesus, often at great personal cost.

I would like to share with you the following written by Fr. Benoît-Dominique de la Soujeole, a Swiss Dominican professor of theology, which, I think, describes in a profound nutshell our continuing mission: helping non-Catholics discover “The Three Levels of Intelligibility of the Church.”¹

[When we consider the mystery of the Church], we are dealing with an incarnate mystery like that of the Savior ... In order to grasp this, it is particularly helpful to start from the mystery of Christ and from the Gospel testimonies concerning the ways in which he was perceived by his contemporaries. Those who encountered Christ walking on the roads of Galilee and Judea saw, heard, and touched his humanity. In relation to that humanity, three reactions are reported in the Gospel.

There were those for whom Jesus was only the son of the carpenter from Nazareth and nothing more. They considered him an insignificant man, and if they encountered him at all, they neither listened to him nor, *a fortiori*, followed him. So it is with the Church yesterday, today, and tomorrow. It is possible to see in her only a religious organization like so many others, with its rules, rituals, and prayer formulas. This is the view of a certain sort of journalism and of statisticians, sociologists, and political society in the Western world. This first view encompasses only the mere phenomenon. To be sure, this consideration is not necessarily false, just as saying that Jesus weighed seventy kilos [154 pounds] is not necessarily false (assuming that it could be verified!), but it is still ignorance of the mystery, properly speaking.

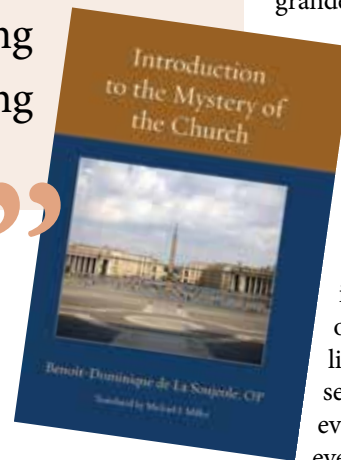
Crossing paths with Christ, there were those — often the lowly — who upon seeing him were struck by the dignity of his life and the authority of his words (Lk 4:22). They were also intrigued by the miraculous signs that he performed. All this was not insignificant. They then thought that this Jesus of Nazareth was inhabited by a force that could not be merely human. Therefore they thought he might be a prophet (Mk 8:27-28 and Lk 4:22). These people arrived at the threshold of the mystery. They still had not entered in,

but they were very close. So it is with the Church. Someone may observe without too much difficulty that this community carries within it and transmits a particularly sublime wisdom. In every age, in all places, men and women within this fellowship have shined with an extraordinary quality: the saints, whether or not canonized. For two thousand years this community has existed and expanded, despite many persecutions, while keeping its living identity intact despite the passage of generations and the variety of cultures. Within this community there are indeed miracles, not only those certified at Lourdes, but also the infinitely more numerous miracles of heroic charity. Does this community then not appear to be “something” that surpasses mere human capabilities?

There is a limit, however, to this parallel with Christ. Jesus was completely without sin (Jn 8:46), but the Church here below is made up of sinners. And it is true that in every age and in all places, besides the grandeur of Christian culture, we can also observe serious faults in Christians. We must admit this honestly but also reflect: precisely, how can this community continue to exist in this way, to preserve its sublime message, and always to have such influence, despite the serious contrary witnesses that affect it? From the human perspective, it ought to have disappeared long ago, like any kingdom divided against itself. And yet it continues to exist and even expands. This makes the inquiry even more complex. It leads the honest

mind to take a look at this phenomenon that goes further, a look that we can metaphorically call metaphysical: there is in this particular entity, the Christian community, “something” unique and not directly perceptible that raises a question. Not everything in the Church is explained at first glance, and even the second look does not produce a definitive answer; it sets one on the path to seeking something more. Here we have reached the level of apologetics, a discipline that ought to be renewed in-depth today. The second

“...the Church...
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1 Benoît-Dominique de La Soujeole, OP, *Introduction to the Mystery of the Church*, trans. Michael J. Miller (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014) pp. 301-304.

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look remains exclusively rational — it does not presuppose faith at all — but it consists of that docility of reason that allows itself to question and to be oriented toward more than it can find by itself; this reason itself — if the apologetic is proposed correctly — asks for help to surpass its own limits.

Among these people who take a second look, there will be a certain number, sometimes more, sometimes less, who will cross the decisive threshold. “Who do you say that I am?” (Mt 16:15), Jesus asked the Twelve. And this is Peter’s profession of faith, on which the Church is founded: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!” (Mt 16:16). So it is with the Church. The threshold is crossed when someone confesses, “Truly, this community, the very one that I have before my eyes, is the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Spirit, the People of God!” This is the profession of faith concerning the mystery of the Church: this visible, human, quite observable community *is* the community of human beings with God, of which Christ is the Head and the Holy Spirit — the soul.

Every Christian, as his conscious faith has awakened, has traveled this path slowly or rapidly — no matter! The important thing is not to lose any of the truth of the three looks; they must be kept together, and what makes this possible is the last look, the look of faith, which recapitulates and elevates the two preceding ones.

The existence of the ecclesial community is therefore a question asked of every human being who encounters it, and the only answer to it is either yes or no. Not to respond, to withhold one’s answer, saying, “We will hear you again about this” (Acts 17:32), is already to answer “no” to the mystery that presents itself. One cannot be a member of this community unless one embraces its mystery. To be sure, it will always be possible to be a member ex-

ternally without being a member in one’s heart, but this membership is only an appearance. In fact, one has not entered into its mystery. Even those who had acclaimed Jesus as a prophet (the second look) ended up leaving him. At the time of Christ’s Passion, where were they? Similarly, those who salute the Church for her originality, her historical greatness (it is no mean feat to have produced European civilization), her remarkable quality among the religious movements of humanity, are not yet fully members of her, living her life entirely, because they do not profess her to be what she is in the fullness of her truth.

Since this is a question of the faith that is involved in professing the ecclesial mystery, it would be futile to try to convince anyone of it, but we are asked to preach it, which is something else altogether. The preacher will encounter much opposition, surely, but it is not right to diminish the mystery so as to make it more acceptable. The Christian mystery, starting with the mystery of Christ, will always be a folly or a scandal for men left to their own intellectual and moral capabilities. But present-day difficulties seem to us to require a particular effort in order to foster the passage from the first to the second look, and to nourish the second look by a truly modern apologetic, for here it is a matter of preparations for the faith that ought not to be neglected.

This is what the Coming Home Network is all about — to do all we can to help anyone, drawn by grace, to move from the first to the second to the third look at Christ and His Church, to experience the fullness of His glory. That is what we have been dedicated to doing for the past 25 years and, God-willing, will continue to do in the future with your faithful support. ■

Joyful Journey Updates

We would like to share with you a few encouraging updates and anecdotes from CHNetwork members. Thank you for helping us to assist converts and those on the journey to the Catholic Church!

FROM TOM, A FORMER ANGLICAN:

"Thank you so much for all your help and generosity. You guys really gave me the support I needed in those first few weeks of confusion. I was amazed from the start at the level of concern and compassion shown by you and your guys over there. A heartfelt 'thank you.' Also it's interesting to note that my wife decided to join me on this journey, despite her reservations in the beginning. It was lovely the other day when I received a note from her thanking me for my part in her journey, and she noted that she had never felt so close to Jesus in her life."

FROM RJ, A FORMER BAPTIST

MINISTER: "I'm a new Catholic! Being a Roman Catholic feels joyful! I told my sister as we were walking up, 'Robina, I get to receive Jesus's Body for the first time!'"

FROM LOUIE, A FORMER SOUTHERN BAPTIST PASTOR:

"The Easter Vigil was amazing. [It was a] powerful week ending with the Easter Vigil. Confirmation and Eucharist truly blessed my soul. It's hard to find the words; I just feel so thankful that God led me on this path home. Thank you for your encouragement and prayers and the whole Coming Home Network; it made the journey easier and faster. I was so excited about the Eucharist that I went Easter morning, too! The Sister who runs RCIA said there is always one who comes back Easter morning. It reminded me of the parable of the 10 lepers."

FROM LINDA, A FORMER

METHODIST: "I was brought into the Church on the Easter Vigil. It was very moving . . . I love the Catholic Faith . . . Thank you for staying in touch. EWTN and the Coming Home Network and *The Journey Home* program have been a source of additional support, information, and caring. Thank you again."

FROM JEFF, A FORMER CHURCH OF

CHRIST: "The Vigil was really great. Our parish had an amazing service, and I was so happy to be welcomed into the community with my Confirmation and, of course, First Communion. It was a profound experience for me, and I am really looking forward to continuing to build my faith through the parish and through CHN's materials."

FROM KIRSTEN, A NEW CONVERT:

"Easter Vigil was so wonderful! My parents came! Also, many of my new Catholic friends came! It was such a special moment! . . . love being able to take the Eucharist now! Jesus really does transform us! It is like eating from the tree of life! . . . Thank you so, so much for your prayers and support! I needed it so much! I still do . . . Thanks be to God for His endless mercy!!" ■

25 Years of Helping Clergy on Their Difficult Journeys Home

By Jim Anderson

THE COMING HOME
NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



A primary focus of the CHNetwork's mission over the past 25 years has always been to provide support and encouragement to Protestant ministers who are on the journey to the Catholic Church. Jim Anderson, who has worked for many years with those men and women, reflects on some of the challenges and unique struggles they encounter.

When Protestant clergy are first introduced to the teachings of the Catholic Church, most times they do not have a clue of the journey that is before them. Usually it begins with casual curiosity or because a friend or member of their congregation has expressed interest in the Church, and they feel a need to better understand Catholic doctrines in order to help the person who they fear is headed down the wrong road. In doing this many people, for the first time, may pick up a book written by a Catholic containing Biblical, historical, and logical arguments in defense of Catholic teachings. The experience of listening to what the Catholic Church actually teaches, as opposed to what many Protestants think she teaches, can come as quite a shock to the inquirer. As G. K. Chesterton wrote, "It is impossible to be just to the Catholic Church. The moment men cease to pull against it they feel a tug towards it. The moment they cease to shout it down they begin to listen to it with pleasure. The moment they try to be fair to it they begin to be fond of it." As they read more about the Church and, especially when they begin to read the early Church Fathers and discover the ancient Church was Catholic and not Protestant in its life and teaching, they find themselves in a conundrum of how to deal with their newfound understanding. Often, it is at this point in their journeys that Protestant clergy first reach out to us at the Coming Home Network.

Most clergy, when they first contact us, are already well on their journeys toward the Catholic Church. Fewer are casual inquirers curiously looking into the Church. Even fewer are those wishing to do battle with the Catholic Church and save us from "the corruptions of Rome." Most people are in a state of, one might call, spiritual shock, never having dreamt that they would ever have a hunger to learn more about the Catholic Faith.

They then begin to realize that there may be obstacles before them. Had God really called them to ministry if He knew that the Catholic Church was in their future? How will they support their family? Many went directly from college to seminary and then into ministry, having done nothing else with no secular work skills or experience. Is their spouse on the journey also? What is their spouse's opinion concerning the Catholic Church? Sadly, many clergy begin their inquiry into the Catholic Faith without thinking to bringing the subject up to their spouse, and hardly ever to their children. Many times, clergy are at a loss of how to share their journey with their family members, especially their spouse. Added to this, in our current culture, a large number of clergy need to deal with the necessity of one or more annulments before their

entry into the Church. Lastly, if they leave their ministry, what will become of their congregation? Many pastors feel that by leaving the ministry to enter the Catholic Church, they will be guilty of abandoning the people of their congregation whom they love and for whom they feel a great sense of responsibility. We know of several faithful pastors in mainline denominations who fear that the person who would replace them in the pulpit would likely be much less devoted to biblical Christianity and lead their people into the secularist agenda. It's in the midst of these many concerns and fears that the pastor finds himself in what we like to call "no-man's-land." They are to the point where they know that they can no longer remain Protestant, but they see no path open allowing them to move forward to the fullness of the Catholic Faith.

It is at this point when the Coming Home Network can play a particularly helpful role. We refuse to push, pull, or prod anyone into the Catholic Church. We stand by people, extending support, prayer, and advice. For those who are willing, we connect them with convert clergy who've already traveled down the same road and can give the advice and support that only having experienced the same trials and tribulations can provide. Often the best help for them is just to have a willing and caring friend to whom they can vent their concerns. That is what we are here to do, along with our network of convert helpers as well as our active online community forum. For those who wish it, we also offer free job counseling, thanks a generous counselor, who is himself a revert to the Faith. Most importantly of all, we pray for them, on our own, in our staff meetings, and through the intercession of Br. Rex Anthony Norris. In addition, the clergy are helped through the powerful prayers of many of our members who take the prayer requests published in our monthly newsletter before the throne of grace.

This is the most important aspect of the ministry of the Coming Home Network: praying that the many graces of our Lord Jesus Christ be showered upon the men and women who contact the CHNetwork seeking assistance and that the Holy Spirit powerfully guide them home to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. ■



JIM ANDERSON is the Ministry Membership and Pastoral Care Coordinator for the Coming Home Network International, with the primary responsibility of assisting non-Catholic clergy on their journeys home to the Catholic Church. He can be reached via email at jim@chnetwork.org.

...Journeys Home Continued...

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 2

Martin Luther, from an anti-Catholic perspective, was like picking off ducks in a barrel. They weren’t ready. They were unequipped. They were defenseless.

I don’t know exactly what has happened in the last fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years, but I look back on those kids and wonder if they weren’t guinea pigs in some sort of catechetical experiment, that people thought we could bypass instructing them in the doctrines they needed to believe and in the reasons for those doctrines. But there they were. I saw many of them leave the Church, and I opposed them, in a certain sense, out of a sincere good faith, but also I opposed them because I myself was uninformed.

My third year of ministry in Young Life, I asked a young lady, the most beautiful girl on campus, if she would join me in working together to reach these unchurched kids. Kimberly said, “Yes.” We worked together for two years and had a blast. Sometimes we’d fight like brother and sister in discussing various ways and means to reach these kids. But we really grew to respect one another, so that at the end of those four years of college, I posed The Question. And I think the dumbest thing she ever said, but the greatest thing she ever said, was “Yes.” We got married right out of college. Both of us had so much of the same vision. We wanted to do ministry together; we wanted to share the good news of Christ; we wanted to open up the Bible and make it come alive for people.

Seminary Years

We were off to seminary a week or two after our wedding. What a great experience it was studying theology together for a Master’s Degree! I took a three-year degree at Gordon-Conwell Seminary in Boston; she took a two-year degree. Both of us ended up with our Master’s Degrees. After three years, I graduated at the top of my class. I say that, not out of any pride, but to illustrate how I pursued my studies with a sort of vengeance. People who knew me at seminary knew me to be rather intense. I would spend just about every waking hour reading and studying Scripture or books about Scripture that would make more sense out of the Bible. If I wasn’t reading and studying, I was out looking around at used book stores, finding resources. Kimberly and I had a great three-year experience. But a couple of things happened along the way that I need to relate because in retrospect I see them as landmark experiences.

The first thing was a course that Kimberly took in her first year, a class that I had taken the year before, entitled Christian Ethics. Dr. Davis had all the students break up into small groups so that each small group could tackle one topic. There was a small group on abortion, a small group on nuclear war, a small group on capital punishment. At dinner one night she announced that she was in a small group devoted to studying contraception. I remember thinking at the time, “Why contraception?”

The year before, when I took the class, nobody signed up for that small group, and I told her so. She said, “Well, three others have signed up for it, and we had our first meeting today. So-and-so appointed himself to be chair of the committee, and he announced the results of our study even before it began. He said, ‘Well, we all know, as Protestants, as Bible Christians, that contraception is fine, I mean so long as we don’t use contraceptives that

are abortafacients, like the IUD and so on.’ He announced further that, really, the only people who call themselves Christians and oppose artificial birth control are the Catholics. He told us, ‘The reason they do, of course, is because they are run by a celibate Pope and led by celibate priests who don’t have to raise the kids but want Catholic parents to raise lots of them, so they can have lots of priests and nuns to draw from, you know.’”

Well, that kind of argumentation did not really impress Kimberly. She said, “Are you sure those are the best arguments they would offer?” And I guess he must have mocked or said something like, “Well, do you want to look into it yourself?” You don’t say that kind of thing to Kimberly. She said, “Yes,” and she took an interest in researching this on her own. A week went by, and a friend of mine stopped me in the halls. He said, “You ought to talk to your wife; she’s unearthed some interesting information about contraception.” Interesting information about contraception? What is interesting about contraception? “She’s your wife,” he told me “You ought to find out.” “Yeah, all right; I will.”

So that night, at dinner, I asked her. And she said, “I’ve discovered that up until 1930, every single Protestant denomination, without exception, opposed contraception on biblical grounds.” Then I said, “Oh, come on, maybe it just took us a few centuries to work out the last vestiges of residual Romanism; I don’t know.” And she said, “Well, I’m going to look into it.”

Another week later, my same friend stopped me again and said, “Her arguments make sense.” I queried, “Arguments against contraception from Scripture?” He said, “You ought to talk to her.” “All right, I’ll talk to her.” You know, given the subject matter, I thought I had better do that.

So I raised the issue, and she handed me a book. It was entitled *Birth Control and the Marriage Covenant* by John Kippley. It was later reissued as *Sex and the Marriage Covenant*. You can get it from the Couple to Couple League. I began to read through the book with great interest because in my own personal study, going through the Bible several times, I had come upon this strong conviction that if you want to know God, you have to understand the covenant because the covenant was the central idea in all of Scripture. So when I picked up this book, I was interested to see the word “covenant” in the title. I opened it up and began reading. “Wait a second, Kimberly, this guy is a Catholic. You expect me to read a Catholic?” The thought had instantly occurred to me, *What is a Catholic doing, putting “covenant” into his book title? Since when do Catholics hijack my favorite concept?*

Well, I began to read the book. I went through two or three chapters, and he was beginning to make sense. I threw the book across my desk! I frankly didn’t want him to make any sense. But then I picked it up again and read through some more. His arguments made a lot of sense. From the Bible, from the covenant, he showed that the marital act is not just a physical act; it’s a spiritual act that God has designed by which the marital covenant is renewed. And in all covenants, you have an opportunity to renew the covenant. The act of covenant renewal is an act or a moment of grace. When you renew a covenant, God releases grace — and grace is life; grace is power; grace is God’s own love. Kippley shows how, in a marital

...Journeys Home Continued...

covenant, God has designed the marital act to show the life-giving power of love — that in the marital covenant, the two become one. God has designed it so that when the two become one, they become so much one that, nine months later, you might just have to give it a name. And that child who is conceived embodies the oneness that God has made of the two through the marital act. All of this is the way that God has designed the marital covenant. God said, “Let us make man in our image and likeness.” God, who is three in one, made man, male and female, and said, “Be fruitful and multiply.” The two shall become one, and when the two become one, the one they become is a third, a child, so that they become three in one. It just began to make a lot of sense, and he went through other arguments as well. By the time I finished the book, I was convinced.

It bothered me just a little that the Catholic Church was the only denomination — the only Church tradition on earth — that upheld this age-old Christian teaching, rooted in Scripture. In 1930, the Anglican Church broke from this tradition and began to allow contraception. Shortly thereafter, every single mainline denomination practically caved in to the mounting pressure of the sexual revolution. By the 1960s and 70s, my own denomination, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, endorsed not only contraception, but also abortion on demand and federal funding for abortion. That appalled me, and I began to wonder if there wasn't a connection between giving in a little here and then all of a sudden watching the floodgates open later. I thought, *No, no, you know the Catholic Church has been around for 2,000 years; they're bound to get something right.* We have a saying in our family that even a blind hog finds an acorn. And so it was, I thought. That was my second year.

During my third and final year at seminary, something happened that represented a crisis for me. I was studying covenant, and I heard of another theologian studying covenant, a man by the name of Professor Shepherd in Philadelphia, teaching at Westminster Seminary. I heard about Shepherd because he was being accused of heresy. People were suggesting that his heresy grew out of his understanding of the covenant. So I got some documents that he had written, some articles, and I read through them. I discovered that Professor Shepherd had come across the same conclusions that my research had led me to.

In the Protestant world, the idea of covenant is understood practically as synonymous with, or interchangeable with, contract. When you have a covenant with God, it's the same as having a contract. You give God your sin; He gives you Christ, and everything is a faith-deal for salvation.

But the more I studied, the more I came to see that for the ancient Hebrews, and in Sacred Scripture, a covenant differs from a contract about as much as marriage differs from prostitution. In a contract, you exchange property, whereas in a covenant you exchange persons. In a contract you say, “This is yours, and that is mine.” But Scripture shows how in a covenant, you say, “I am yours, and you are mine.” When God makes a covenant with us, He says, “I will be your God, and you will be my people.” After studying Hebrew, I discovered that *‘am*, the Hebrew word for “people,” literally means “kinsman, family.” I will be your God and father; you will be

my family, my sons and my daughters, my household. So covenants form kinship bonds, which makes us family with God.

I read Shepherd's articles, and he was saying much of the same thing: our covenant with God means sonship. I thought, “Well, yeah, this is good.” I wondered what heresy was involved in that. Then somebody told me, “Shepherd is calling into question *sola fide*.” What! No way. I mean, that is the Gospel. That is the simple truth of Jesus Christ. He died for sins; I believe in Him. He saves me, pure and simple; it's a done deal. *Sola fide*? He's questioning that? No way.

I called him on the phone. I said, “I've read your stuff on covenant; it makes lots of sense. I've come to pretty much the same conclusions. But why is this leading you to call into question Luther's doctrine of *sola fide*?” In our discussion, he showed that Luther's conception of justification was very restricted and limited. It had lots of truth, but it also missed lots of truths.

When I hung up the phone, I pursued this a little further and discovered that, for Luther and for practically all of Bible Christianity and Protestantism, God is a judge, and the covenant is a courtroom scene whereby all of us are guilty criminals. But since Christ took our punishment, we get His righteousness, and He gets our sins, so we get off scot-free; we're justified. For Luther, in other words, salvation is a legal exchange. But for Paul in Romans, for Paul in Galatians, salvation is that, but it's much more than that. It isn't just a legal exchange because the covenant doesn't point to a Roman courtroom so much as to a Hebrew family room. God

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...Journeys Home Continued...

is not just simply a judge; God is a father, and His judgments are fatherly. Christ is not just somebody who represents an innocent victim who takes our rap, our penalty; He is the firstborn among many brethren. He is our oldest brother in the family, and He sees us as runaways, as prodigals, as rebels who are cut off from the life of God's family. And by the new covenant, Christ doesn't just exchange in a legal sense; Christ gives us His own sonship, so that we really become children of God.

When I shared this with my friends, they were like, "Yeah, that's Paul." But when I went into the writings of Luther and Calvin, I didn't find it any longer. They had trained me to study Scripture, but in applying that very training, I discovered that there were some very significant gaps in their teaching. So I came to the conclusion that *sola fide* is wrong. First, because the Bible never uses the term anywhere. Second, because Luther inserted the word "alone" into Romans 3:28 in his German translation, although he knew perfectly well that the word "alone" was not in the Greek. Nowhere did the Holy Spirit ever inspire the writers of Scripture to say we're saved by faith alone. Paul teaches we're saved by faith, but in Galatians, he says we're saved by faith working in love. And that's the way it is in a family, isn't it? A father doesn't say to his kids, "Hey, kids, since you're in my family, and all the other kids who are your friends aren't, you don't have to work; you don't have to obey; you don't have to sacrifice because, hey, you're saved. You're going to get the inheritance no matter what you do." That's not the way it works.

So I changed my mind and grew very concerned. One of my most brilliant professors, Dr. John Gerstner, had once said that if we're wrong on *sola fide*, we'd be on our knees outside the Vatican in Rome tomorrow morning doing penance. Now, we laughed — what rhetoric, you know. But he got the point across: this is the article from which all of the other doctrines flow. And if we're wrong there, we're going to have some homework to do, figuring out where else we might have gone wrong. I was concerned, but I wasn't overly concerned. At the time, I was planning to go to Scotland to study the doctrine of the covenant at Aberdeen University, because covenant theology was born and developed in Scotland. I was eager to go over and study there, so I wasn't particularly con-

cerned about resolving this issue. After all, that could be the focus of my doctoral study.

Then, suddenly, we got news that our change in theory about contraception had brought about a change in Kimberly's anatomy and physiology. She was pregnant! And Margaret Thatcher was not interested in funding American babies being born in her great empire. So we looked at the situation and realized that we couldn't afford to go over to Scotland just yet. We'd have to take a year off. But what were we going to do now that we were drawing close to graduation? We weren't sure; we began to pray.

Pastor of a Church in Virginia

The phone rang. A church in Virginia, a well-known church that I had heard a lot of good about, called me up and said, "Would you consider coming down to candidate for the pastorate here?" This meant preaching a trial sermon, leading a Bible study, and interviewing with the elders who ran the session. I said, "Sure." I went down, preached a sermon, led a Bible study, and met with the session. They said, "That was great; we want you here. In fact we'll pay you well enough so that you can study at least 20 hours a week in Scripture and theology. We want you to preach, however, at least 45 minutes each Sunday morning to open up for us the Word." 45 minutes! Can you imagine what a Catholic priest would get if he preached for 45 minutes? The next week that sanctuary and the whole church would be empty. But here were the ruling elders of this Presbyterian church, asking me to preach at least 45 minutes. I said, "If you insist, you know, twist my arm. Sure." And they said, "We want you to immerse us in the Word of God." And so I began.

The first thing I did was to tell them about covenant. The second thing I did was to correct their misunderstanding of covenant as contract, to show them that covenant means family. The third thing I did was to show them that the family of God makes more sense of who we are and what Christ has done than anything in the Bible. God is Father, God is Son, and God through the Holy Spirit has made us one family with Him. As soon as I began to preach and teach these things, it took off like wildfire. It spread through the parish; you could see it affecting marriages and families. It was exciting!

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June 11

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June 18

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...Journeys Home Continued...

The fourth thing I did was to teach them about liturgy and covenant and family, that in Scripture, the covenant is celebrated through liturgical worship, whereby God's family gathers for a meal to celebrate the sacrifice of Christ. I suggested, in my preaching and teaching, that maybe we ought to have that family meal, communion — I even used the word "Eucharist." They had never before heard this. I said, "Maybe we ought to celebrate being God's covenant-family with communion each week." "What?" I said, "Instead of being sermon-centered, why not have the sermon be a prelude and a preparation to enter into celebrating who we are as God's family?" They loved it!

But one guy came up and said, "Every week? You know, familiarity breeds contempt; are you sure we should do it every week?" "Well, wait a second," I told him. "You know, do you say to your wife 'I love you' only four times a year? After all, honey, familiarity breeds contempt. You know, I don't want to kiss you more than four times a year." He looked at me and said, "I get your point."

As we changed our liturgy, we felt a change in our lived experience as a parish, as well as in our families. It was exciting to see, and as I taught them more about the covenant, they just hungered and thirsted for still more.

Meanwhile, I was also teaching part time at the local Christian high school that met there at the church. I had some of the brightest students there that I have ever taught, and they, too, responded with enthusiasm to this covenant idea. I began to teach a course on salvation history. At first they were scared because it was so confusing — all those names and places that you can't even pronounce much less make sense out of. So I showed them, "Hey, once you think of covenant as family, it's really quite simple." I took my students through the series of covenants in the Old Testament, which led up to Christ. First, you have the covenant God makes with Adam; that's a marriage, a family bond. The second covenant is the one that God makes with Noah. That's a family, a household with Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their three wives; together they formed a family of God, a household of faith. Then, in Abraham's time, you actually have God's family growing to the extent that it becomes a tribal family. In the next covenant, which God makes with Moses, Israel has twelve tribes that become one nation, but through the covenant they become God's national family. Finally, when Christ establishes the new covenant, instead of having God's family identified with one nation, the distinctive greatness of the New Covenant, I taught them, was that now we have an international family, a worldwide family, a catholic family.

One of my students raised her hand and said, "What would this look like if we could actually redevelop it?" I drew a pyramid on the board, and I said, "Think of it as a big, extended family, with father and mother figures at all these different levels, and all of us being brothers and sisters in Christ." I heard somebody murmur in the back, "Sure looks like the Catholic Church to me." I said, "No, no, no! What I'm giving you is the solution to the problems, the antidote to the poison." Well, Rebecca came up one day at lunch time. I was eating lunch, and she said, "We took a little vote in the back of the class; it's unanimous; we all think you're going to become a Roman Catholic." I choked on my sandwich. "Quiet,

quiet. I don't want to lose my job. But Rebecca, I assure you that what I'm giving you is not Catholicism; it's the antidote to the poison of Catholicism." She just stood there looking at me. "No, it's unanimous; you're going to become a Catholic." And she turned around and walked away.

Well, I was stunned by that. I went home that afternoon, walked into the kitchen, and saw Kimberly over by the refrigerator. I started, "You'll never guess what Rebecca said today." "Tell me what, another Rebecca story?" I said, "Well, she came up at lunch time and announced that they had taken a vote in the back of the class, and it was unanimous that I'm going to become a Roman Catholic. Can you imagine that, me becoming a Catholic?" But she wasn't laughing one bit. She just stood there staring at me. "Well, are you?" It was as though somebody plunged a dagger into my back. You know, *Et tu, Brute — Kimberly? Not you, too!* Out loud, I said, "You know I'm a Calvinist, a Calvinist of Calvinists, a Presbyterian, an anti-Catholic. I've given away dozens of copies of Boettner's book; I've gotten Catholics to leave. I was weaned on Martin Luther." She just stood there, and she said, "Yeah, but sometimes I wonder if you're not Luther in reverse." Whoa, wait a minute here! I had nothing to say.

I just slowly walked back to my study, shut the door, locked it, sank into my seat, and really began to brood. I was scared. Luther in reverse! For me, at one point, that meant salvation in reverse. I was scared. Maybe I was studying too much and praying too little. So I began to pray a lot more. I began to read more anti-Catholic books, but they just didn't make sense anymore. So instead, I turned to Catholic sources and read them.

Teacher at a Presbyterian Seminary

Meanwhile, something dramatic occurred. I was approached by a Presbyterian seminary and asked if I would teach courses to the seminarians beginning with one Gospel of John seminar. I said, "Sure." So I began to share from the Gospel of John all about the covenant, about the family of God, and about what it really means to be born again. I discovered in my study that being born again does not mean accepting Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord and asking Him into your heart, although that is important for every believer, Catholic or Protestant, to build a living, personal relationship with Him. But I discovered what Jesus meant in John 3 when He said that you must be born again. He turned around and said that you must be born of water and spirit. In the previous chapters, He was just baptized with water, and the Spirit descended upon Him. And as soon as He is done talking to Nicodemus about the need to be born from water and spirit, the very next verse says that Jesus and the disciples went about baptizing. I, therefore, taught that being born again is a covenant act, a sacrament, a covenant renewal involving baptism. I shared this with my seminary students, and they were convinced.

Meanwhile, I was preparing my sermons and some lectures ahead of John chapter 3. I was delving into John chapter 6. In many ways, John's Gospel is the richest Gospel of all. But chapter 6 is my favorite chapter in that fourth Gospel. There, I discovered something that I'm sure I had read before, but I never noticed. "Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh

...Journeys Home Continued...

of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.” I read that; then I reread it. I looked at it from ten different angles. I bought all these books about it, commentaries on John. I couldn’t understand how to make sense of it.

I had been trained to interpret that passage in a figurative sense; Jesus was using a symbol. “Flesh and blood” really is just a symbol of His Body and Blood. But the more I studied, the more I realized that that interpretation makes no sense at all. Why? Because as soon as the Jews hear what Jesus says, they all depart. Up to this point, thousands were following Him, and then all of a sudden, the multitudes just simply are shocked that He says, “My flesh is food indeed, my blood is drink indeed,” and they all depart. Thousands of disciples leave Him. If Jesus had only intended that language to be figurative, He would have been morally obligated as a teacher to say, “Stop, I only mean it figuratively.” But He doesn’t do that; instead, what does he do?

My research showed me that He turns to the Twelve, and He says to them, what? “We’d better hire a public relations (PR) agent; I really blew it guys.” No! He says, “Are you going to leave me, too?” He doesn’t say, “Do you understand that I only meant it as a symbol?” No! He says that the truth is what sets us free, and I have taught the truth. What are you going to do about it? Peter stands up and speaks out; he says, “To whom shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life and we have come to believe.” Peter’s statement “To whom shall we go?” implies “You know, Jesus, we don’t understand what you mean either, but do you have another Rabbi on the scene you can recommend? You know, to whom shall we go? It’s too late for us; we believe whatever you say even if we don’t

understand it fully. If you say we have to eat your Flesh and drink your Blood, then somehow you’ll give us the grace we need to accept your words at face value.” He didn’t mean it figuratively.

As I studied this chapter, I began to realize it’s one thing to convince Presbyterians that being born again means being baptized, but how in the world could I possibly convince them that we actually have to eat His Flesh and drink His Blood? I focused, then, a little bit more on the Lord’s Supper and communion. I discovered that Jesus had never used the word “covenant” in His public ministry. He saved the one time He used it for when He instituted the Eucharist, when He said, “This cup is the blood of the new covenant.” If covenant means family, what is it that makes us family? Sharing flesh and blood. So if Christ forms a new covenant, that is, a new family, what is He going to have to provide us with? New flesh and new blood. I began to see why, in the early Church, for over 700 years, nobody in any place disputed the meaning of Jesus’ words. All of the early Church Fathers, without exception, took Jesus’ words at face value. They believed and taught the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. I was scared; I didn’t know who to turn to.

Then an episode occurred one night in a seminar, something I wasn’t ready for. An ex-Catholic graduate student named John raised his hand. He had just finished a presentation for the seminar on the Council of Trent. The Council of Trent was the Catholic Church’s official response to Martin Luther and the Reformation.

In about an hour and a half, he had presented the Council of Trent in the most favorable light. He had shown how many of their arguments were, in fact, based on the Bible. Then he turned the tables on me. The students were supposed to ask him a question or two. He said, “Can I first ask you a question, Professor Hahn? You know how Luther really had two slogans, not just *sola fide*, but the second slogan he used to revolt against Rome was *sola Scriptura*, the Bible alone. My question is, ‘Where does the Bible teach that?’”

I looked at him with a blank stare. I could feel sweat coming to my forehead. I used to take pride in asking my professors the most stumping questions, but I never heard this one before. And so I heard myself say words that I had sworn I’d never speak; I said, “John, what a dumb question.” He was not intimidated. He looked at me and said, “Give me a dumb answer.” I said, “All right, I’ll try.” I just began to wing it. I said, “Well, 2 Timothy 3:16 is the key: ‘All Scripture is inspired of God and profitable for correction, for training and righteousness, for reproof that the man of God may be completely equipped for every good work.’” He replicated, “Wait a second, that only says that Scripture is inspired and profitable; it doesn’t say that *only* Scripture is inspired, or even better, *only* Scripture is profitable for those things. We need other things like prayer.” He went on: “What about 2 Thessalonians 2:15?” I said, “What’s that again?” He said, “Well, there Paul tells the Thessalonians that they have to hold fast; they have to cling to the traditions that Paul has taught them either in writing or by word of mouth.” Whoa! I wasn’t ready. I said, “Well, let’s move on with the questions and answers; I’ll deal with this next week. Let’s go on.”

I don’t think the class realized the panic I was in. When I drove home that night, I was just staring up to the heavens asking God, why have I never heard that question? Why have I never found

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...Journeys Home Continued...

an answer? The next day, I began calling up theologians around the country, former professors, asking them, “Where does the Bible teach *sola Scriptura*? Where does the Bible teach us that the Bible is our only authority?” One man actually said to me, “What a dumb question, coming from you.” I said, “Give me a dumb answer then.” (I was catching on!) One professor whom I greatly respect, an Oxford theologian, said to me, “Scott, you don’t expect to find the Bible proving *sola Scriptura* because it isn’t something the Bible demonstrates. It is our assumption; it is our presupposition when we approach the Bible.” That struck me as odd; I said, “But professor, that seems strange because what we are saying then is that we should only believe what the Bible teaches, but the Bible doesn’t teach us to believe only what the Bible teaches. Our assumption isn’t taught by the Bible. That feels like we’re cutting off the branch that we’re sitting on.” Then he said, “Well, what other options do we have?” Good point, all right.

Another friend, a theologian, called me and said, “Scott, what is this I’m hearing that you’re considering the Catholic Faith?” “Well, no, Art, I’m not really considering the Catholic Faith.” Then I decided to pose him a question. I said, “Art, what for you is the pillar and foundation of truth?” He responded, “Scott, for all of us Scripture is the pillar and foundation of truth.” I said, “Then why, Art, does the Bible say in 1 Timothy 3:15 that the pillar and foundation of truth is the church, the household of faith?” There was a silence and he said, “Well, Scott, I think you were setting me up with that question then.” I told him, “Art, I feel like I’m being set up with lots of problems.” He said, “Well, which church, Scott? There are lots of them.” I said, “Art, how many churches are even applying for the job of being the pillar and foundation of truth? I mean, if you talk about a church saying, ‘We’re the pillar and foundation of truth; look to us, and you will hear Christ speak and teach’ — how many applicants for the job are there? I only know of one. I only know that the Roman Catholic Church teaches that it was founded by Christ; it’s been around for 2,000 years, and it’s making some outlandish claims that seem awfully similar to 1 Timothy 3:15.”

Well, at this point I wasn’t sure what to do. I got a phone call, though, one day from Steve, the chairman of the board of trustees at the seminary where I was teaching. Steve asked me out for lunch. I wasn’t sure why. I thought, “Word has reached the chairman of the board that I’m teaching things that are perhaps somewhat Catholic.” When I joined him for lunch, I was very scared and unsure. He proceeded to announce that the trustees had reached a unanimous decision. Because my classes were going so well and so many people were signing up for my courses, they asked if I would consider becoming dean of the seminary at the ripe old age of 26. I couldn’t believe it. He said, “We will let you teach the courses you want. We will let you hire faculty if you need them. We’ll even pay for your doctoral program in theology.” I said, “Where is there a doctoral program in theology nearby?” He said, “Catholic University.” I thought, *No, no, no. I don’t want to study there; I’m fleeing that perspective at present.* I really didn’t know what to tell him. In fact, he said, “Well, would you pray about it?” I said, “I will, but, Steve, I think I already know the answer. And oddly enough, I

think I’m going to have to say ‘No,’ and I’m not going to be able to explain why because I’m not sure myself.”

When I got home, Kimberly was waiting for me. She said, “What did he want?” I said, “He asked me to become dean.” “You’re kidding!” I said, “No.” “What did you say?” I said, “No.” “I’m sorry, what did you say?” I said, “No.” “Why did you say no?” I said, “Kimberly, because right now I’m not sure what I would teach. Right now I’m not sure what Scripture is teaching, and I know that someday I’m going to stand before Jesus Christ for judgment, and it is not going to be enough for me simply to say, ‘Well, Jesus, I just taught what I had been taught by my teachers.’ He has shown me things from Scripture that are true, and I have to be faithful to what He has shown me.” She walked right over to me, threw her arms around me and gave me a big hug. Then she said, “Scott, that’s what I love about you; that’s why I married you — but, oh, we’re going to have to pray then.” She knew what it meant: It meant not only turning down this offer; it also meant resigning from a booming job as pastor of a growing church.

Administrative Assistant to the College President

We didn’t know what we were going to do. We were high and dry in July. After a lot of prayer, we decided we ought to move back to the college town where we met. When we moved back, I applied for a job at various places, but the college itself hired me as an administrator, to be assistant to the president. For two years I worked there, and it was rather ideal; because I worked during the day, and it left me free in the evenings to pursue in-depth research. From around eight in the evening, after putting our children down, until around one or two in the morning, I would read and study and research.

In two years’ time, I had worked through several hundred books, and I began for the first time to read Catholic theologians and Scripture scholars. I was shocked at how impressive their insights were — but even more, at how impressive their insights were which agreed with my own personal discoveries. I couldn’t believe how many novel, innovative discoveries that I had come up with, here they were assuming and taking for granted. That bothered me.

At times I’d come out and read sections to Kimberly and say, “Hear this; name the author.” She was a theologian, in a sense, but she was so busy with raising children that she really didn’t have much energy. Yet she would sit there, listening in, and I would say, “Who do you think that was?” She said, “Wow! That sounds like one of your sermons down in Virginia. Oh, I miss those so much.” I said, “That was Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*. That was the Catholic Church.” She pleaded, “Scott, I don’t want to hear that.” I responded, “Kimberly, this stuff about liturgy is so exciting. I’m not certain, but I think God might be calling us to become Episcopalians.” It’s a halfway house. She looked at me, and her eyes filled up with tears and she said, “Episcopalian!” She said, “I’m a Presbyterian; my father’s a Presbyterian minister; my uncle’s a Presbyterian minister; my husband was a Presbyterian minister; my brother wants to be one, and I’ve thought about it myself. I don’t want to be Episcopalian.” She felt so abandoned at this moment, so betrayed.

...Journeys Home Continued...

I remember that exchange because a few months later, after reading a lot more, one night I came out and said, “Kimberly, I’m not sure, but I’m beginning to think that God might be calling me to become a Roman Catholic.” A look of desperation came over her. She said, “Couldn’t we become Episcopalians? Anything but Catholic.” Cradle Catholics don’t know the terror that comes over a Protestant when he thinks he might have to swim the Tiber, might have to “Pope,” as my friends put it. Well, she was getting so desperate, she began to pray for somebody to rescue her husband — some professor, some theologian, some friend.

Direct Journey to Catholicism

Finally, it happened. I got a call one day from Gerry, my best friend from seminary — a Phi Beta Kappa scholar in classics and New Testament Greek. He was the only other student at seminary, along with me, who held to the old Protestant belief that the Pope was the Antichrist. We stood shoulder to shoulder, opposing all the compromises we saw in our Protestant brethren. He talked to me one night on the phone. I read to him a passage from a book by Father Bouyer. He said, “Wow, that is rich and profound. Who wrote it?” I said, “Louis Bouyer.” “Bouyer? I’ve never heard of him, what is he?” “I said, ‘What do you mean?’” “Well, is he a Methodist?” I said, “No.” “Is he a Baptist?” “No.” “I mean is he Lutheran? What is this, twenty questions? What is he?” I said, “Well, he’s a Cath—.” “I’m sorry, I missed that.” I said, “He’s Roman Cath—.” “Wait a second, there must be a bad connection, Scott. I thought you said he’s Catholic.” I said, “Gerry, I did say he’s Catholic, and he is Catholic, and I’ve been reading lots of Catholics.”

All of a sudden it started gushing out like Niagara Falls. I said, “I’ve been reading Daniélou and Ratzinger and de Lubac and Garrigou-Lagrange and Congar and all these guys, and, man, is it rich! You’ve got to read them, too.” “Slow down,” he said. “Scott, your soul may be in peril.” I urged, “Gerry, can I give you a list of titles?” He said, “Sure, I’ll read them, anything to save you from this kind of trap. And I’ll give you these titles.” He mentioned to me about ten titles of anti-Catholic books. I said, “Gerry, I’ve read every single one of them, at least one or two times.” He said, “Send me the list,” and I sent it to him.

About a month later, we arranged to have a long phone conversation. Kimberly couldn’t have been more excited — at last, a Phi Beta Kappa knight in shining armor coming to rescue her husband from the clutches of Romanism. So she was waiting with bated breath when the conversation was done. I told her that Gerry’s excited because he’s reading all this stuff, and he’s really taking me seriously. She said, “Great, I knew he would.”

Well, this went on for three or four months. We would talk on the phone — two, three, sometimes four hours long distance — discussing theology and Scripture until three or four in the morning. Kimberly was glad and grateful for him taking me so seriously.

One night I came to bed around two or three; she was still up. The light was out, but she sat up in bed and said, “How’s it going?” I said, “It’s great.” “Tell me about it.” I said, “Gerry is almost intoxicated and excited about all the truth from Scripture that the Catholic Church puts forth.” “WHAT!” I couldn’t see her face, but I could almost feel it sink as she just slumped back down into bed,

put her face into her pillow and began to sob. I couldn’t even put my arm around her; she was just so wounded and abandoned.

A little while later, Gerry called and said, “Listen, I’m a little scared. My friends are a little scared. We really ought to take this seriously. I talked to Doctor John Gerstner, this Harvard-trained Presbyterian, anti-Catholic theologian. He will meet with us as long as we want.” We arranged a six-hour session for Gerry, Dr. Gerstner, and me, going through the Old Testament in Hebrew, the New Testament in Greek, and the council documents of Church history. At the end of six hours, Gerry and I expected to be completely blown out of the water by this genius. Instead, what we discovered was that the Catholic Church almost doesn’t even need a defense. It’s more like a lion; just let it out of its cage, and it takes care of itself. We simply presented the Church’s teachings and showed the text in Scripture, and we didn’t feel like he had answered a single one of our questions or objections. In the end, we were asking each other, “Wow, what does this mean?” Neither of us knew: the most anti-Catholic seminarians wondering whether God might be a Catholic ... we were terrified!

Meanwhile, I sent an application off to Marquette University because I had heard that they had a few really outstanding theologians who were based on the covenant, who were studying the Church and doing lots of good things. Right before I heard back from them that I was accepted and would receive a scholarship, I began to visit a few priests in my area. I was scared. I’d do it at night so nobody would see me. I almost felt dirty and defiled stepping into the rectory. I’d sit down and finally get some questions out. Each priest would say to me, “Let’s talk about something else besides theology.” None of them wanted to discuss my questions. One of them actually said, “Are you thinking of converting? No, you don’t want to do that. Ever since Vatican II we discourage that. The best thing you can do for the Church is just be a good Presbyterian minister.” I said, “Wait a second, Father...” “No, just call me Mike.” I said, “OK, Mike. I’m not asking you to break my arm and force me in. I think God is calling me.” He said, “Well, if you want help from me, you’ve come to the wrong man.”

After three or four or five encounters like this, I was confused. I shared it with Kimberly. She said, “You’ve got to go to a Catholic school where you can study full time, where you can hear it from the horse’s mouth, where you can make sure that the Catholic Church you believe in still exists.” She had a good point. So after a lot of prayer and preparation, we moved to Milwaukee, where I studied for two years full time in their doctoral program.

Those two years were the richest years of study I ever experienced and the richest time of prayer as well. I found myself in some seminars, though, where I was actually the lone Protestant defending the Church’s teaching against the attacks coming from Catholics. It was weird. For instance, I was explaining to these people John Paul II’s teaching which is so scriptural and so “covenantal” instead of them explaining it to me. But there were also a few good theologians who made so much sense out of it all. I really enjoyed the time.

But something happened along the way, actually two things.

...Journeys Home Continued...

First, I began to pray the Rosary. I was very scared to do this. I asked the Lord not to be offended as I tried it. I proceeded to pray, and as I prayed I felt more in my heart what I had come to know in my mind, that I am a child of God. I don't just have God as my Father and Christ as my brother; I have His Mother for my own, as well.

A friend of mine, who had heard I was thinking about the Catholic Church, called up one day and said: "Do you worship Mary like those Catholics do?" I said, "They don't worship Mary; they honor Mary." "Well, what's the difference?" I said, "Let me explain. When Christ accepted the call from His Father to become a man, He accepted the responsibility to obey the Law, the moral law which is summarized in the Ten Commandments. There's a commandment which reads, 'Honor your father and mother.' Chris, in the original Hebrew, that word, 'honor,' *kaboda* in Hebrew, means to glorify, to bestow whatever glory and honor you have upon your father and mother. Christ fulfilled that law more perfectly than any other human being by bestowing His glory upon His heavenly Father and by taking His own divine glory and honoring His Mother with it. All we do in the Rosary, Chris, is to imitate Christ, who honors His Mother with His own glory. We honor her with Christ's glory."

The second thing that happened was that I quietly slipped into the basement chapel down at Marquette, the Gesu Chapel. They were having a noon Mass, and I had never gone to Mass before. I slipped in. I sat down in the back pew. I didn't kneel; I didn't genuflect; I wouldn't stand. I was an observer; I was there to watch. But I was surprised when 40, 50, 60, 80, or 100 ordinary folk walked in off the street for midday Mass, ordinary folk who came in, genuflected, knelt, and prayed. Then a bell rang, and they all stood up, and Mass began. I had never seen it before.

The Liturgy of the Word was so rich, and not just in the Scripture readings. They read more Scripture, I thought, in a weekday Mass than we read in a Sunday service. But their prayers were soaked with biblical language and phrases from Isaiah and Ezekiel. I sat there thinking, *Man, stop the show; let me explain your prayers. That's Zechariah; that's Ezekiel. Wow! It's like the Bible coming to life and dancing out on the center stage. This is where I belong.*

Then the Liturgy of the Eucharist began. I watched and listened as the priest pronounced the words of consecration and elevated the host. And I confess, the last drop of doubt drained away at that moment. I looked and said, "My Lord and my God." As the people began going forward to receive Communion, I literally began to drool. *Lord, I want you. I want communion more fully with you. You've come into my heart. You're my personal Savior and Lord, but now I think You want to come onto my tongue and into my stomach and into my body as well as my soul until this communion is complete.*

And as soon as it began, it was over. People stuck around for a minute or two for thanksgiving and then left. Eventually, I just walked out, wondering, *What have I done?* But the next day I was back, and the next, and the next. I couldn't tell a soul. I couldn't tell my wife. But in two or three weeks, I was hooked. I was head over heels in love with Christ and His Real Presence in the Blessed

Sacrament. It became the source and the summit and the climax of each day, and I still couldn't tell anybody.

Then one day Gerry called me on the phone. He'd been reading hundreds of books himself. He called to announce, "Leslie and I have decided that we're going to become Catholics this Easter, 1986." I said, "Now wait a second, Gerry. You were supposed to stop me from joining; now you think you're going to beat me to the table? This isn't fair." He said, "Listen, Scott, I don't know what objections or questions you've got left, but all of ours are answered." I said, "So are mine." He said, "Well, look, I'm not going to pry."

When I hung up the phone, it occurred to me that delaying obedience was, for me, becoming almost like disobedience. God had made it so clear in Scripture on Mary, on the Pope, even on Purgatory from 1 Corinthians 3:15 and following, on the saints as God's family, as my brothers and sisters in Christ. I was explaining to friends of mine how the Family of God is the master idea that makes sense out of all the Catholic Faith. Mary's our mother; the Pope is a spiritual father; the saints are like brothers and sisters; the Eucharist is a family meal; the feast days are like anniversaries and birthdays. We are God's family. I'm not an orphan; I've got a home. I'm just not there yet. I began to ask the Lord, "What do you want me to do? Gerry's going to join. What do you want me to do?" And the Lord just turned the tables and said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "That's easy. I want to come home. I want to receive our Lord in the holy Eucharist." And I just had this sense that the Lord was saying to me, "I'm not stopping you." So I thought, I'd better talk to the one person who wanted to stop me.

So I went downstairs and announced, "Kimberly, you'll never guess what Gerry and Leslie are planning to do." "What?" She had already given up hope at this point. "They're going to become Catholics this Easter, 1986." She looked at me, and with the insight that she knows me so well and yet still loves me, she said, "So what? What difference does that make? You gave me your personal promise that you wouldn't join until 1990 at the earliest." I said, "Yeah, you remind of that; that's right, I did. But I could be dispensed from that if

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...Journeys Home Continued...

you felt..." "No, no, don't..." "Would you pray about it?" "Don't spiritualize away your promises, Scott." "But, Kimberly," I pleaded, "you don't want to hear this; you don't want to read this; you don't want to discuss it. But for me to delay obedience to something that God has made so clear, it becomes disobedience." I knew Kimberly loved me enough to never allow me or pressure me to disobey my Lord and Savior. She said, "I'll pray about it, but I have to tell you, I feel betrayed. I feel abandoned. I have never felt so alone in my life. All my dreams are dying because of this." But she prayed, and God bless her, she came back, and she said, "This is the most painful thing in my life, in our marriage, but I think it's what God wants me to do."

That Easter of 1986, she actually accompanied me to the Vigil Mass, where I received what I like to call my Sacramental Grand Slam: conditional Baptism, first Confession, Confirmation, and then, God be praised, holy Communion. When I came back, I felt her crying, and I put my arm around her, and we began to pray. The Lord said to me, "Look, I'm not asking you to become a Cath-

olic in spite of your love for Kimberly because I love her more than you do. I'm asking you to become a Catholic because of your love. Because you don't have the strength to love her as much as I want you to love her, I'll give you what you lack in holy Communion." I thought, *Well, try to explain that to her.* And I had this sense of peace slowly come when He said, "I will explain it in due time; you just back off. You're not the Holy Spirit; you can't change her heart." The next few days, the next few weeks and months, she still wasn't interested. It was hard.

I ended up taking a job down in Joliet, teaching for a few years at a college there. Right before we moved, something happened which the Lord instigated. We had a third baby, Hannah. When Hannah was conceived, I was really scared — scared for lots of reasons, but never so scared as I was one Sunday morning when Kimberly was only four months pregnant. We were standing in her church, singing the last stanza of the last hymn, and she turned to me. She was white as a ghost and she said, "I don't feel good.

Prayer List



Clergy

■ For Paul, a former Anglican priest, that as he delves more deeply into a better understanding of the papacy, he may be drawn to full communion with the successor of St. Peter.

■ For Jacob, a Baptist minister, that the witness of faithful Catholics would continue to draw him and his wife home to the Catholic Church.

■ For Robert, a minister in Ohio, that the Holy Spirit may guide his reading of the *Catechism* and other resources.

■ For an Episcopal priest in Indiana, that our Lord Jesus may lovingly draw him back home to the Catholic Faith of his youth.

■ For Peter, an Anglican priest, that all of his questions and concerns may be answered and the way be opened for him to enter the Catholic Church.

■ For a Presbyterian seminarian, that his study of the role and authority of creeds and catechisms may lead him to full Catholic unity.

■ For Christian, a former Jehovah's Witness deacon, that our Lord would give him a hunger for Jesus in the most holy Eucharist.

■ For an Anglican religious brother in Scotland, that he may obtain full unity with the Catholic Church while maintaining his religious vows.

■ For a former United Pentecostal minister, that the love and grace of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit guide him back to the Catholic Church founded by Jesus.

Laity

■ For a non-denominational woman in Maryland who is struggling knowing how to share with loved ones her decision to become Catholic.

■ For a convert to the Catholic Church who is returning to Mormonism, that she continues to seek truth.

■ For Amanda who is very drawn to the Catholic Church but can't yet openly share her desire to be Catholic with her loved ones, that she be comforted by the Lord's presence in her life.

■ For an Episcopalian in the south to be able to come into full communion with the Catholic Church and that the obstacles barring her way will be removed.

■ For a Methodist in Virginia who is struggling with how to move forward with her journey and still be an obedient and supportive wife to her husband who doesn't understand her desire to be Catholic.

■ For Valerie to be able to embrace Catholicism in its fullness even though it means leaving behind loved ones at her current church.

■ For Elaine who is interested in returning to the Church after being away for decades and is beginning to foster a Catholic devotional life.

■ For a woman in Pennsylvania who is having a hard time in her journey back to the Catholic Church, that she not be discouraged and be able to find good support for her journey.

■ For Roger as he continues to ask questions about the Catholic Faith, that he come to a place of peace and clarity with where God is leading him.

■ For a non-denominational Christian in California who feels that it is now the right time to move forward with her journey but doesn't know hardly any Catholics.

■ For a young woman who was received into the Church at Easter but her conversion resulted in a big strain in her relationships with loved ones, that our Lord Jesus gives her comfort.

■ For Alison who is tentatively going forward with her journey and is trying to resolve past hurts from negative interactions with Catholics.

■ For Ashley who is looking to connect with an RCIA program and possibly become Catholic, that she find a good local parish to support her journey.

■ For a member of the Church of God in Kentucky who is struggling with the Catholic belief in the papacy, that she find answers to her questions.

■ For Laura who became Catholic at Easter but her family is very hostile to her conversion, that they become more understanding of her decision to become Catholic.

Thank you for 25 years of prayer for men and women on the journey and for the healing of divisions in the Body of Christ. All members are encouraged to pray at least one hour each month before the Blessed Sacrament for the needs, both general and specific, of the CHNetwork and its members and supporters.

...Journeys Home Continued...

I'm hemorrhaging." She sat down and lay in the pew while everybody began to leave the sanctuary. I panicked. I didn't know what to do. I ran to a pay phone. I called up our OB. I said, "Where is he?" "Well, we don't know where Dr. Marmion is. It's the weekend, and he might be out of town." "Could you page him?" "We'll page him, and he'll call back if he's around." I hung up. I was in a panic. I began to pray to St. Gerard, to everybody. I just asked the Lord Jesus Christ to help us. Ten seconds, maybe fifteen went by, and the phone rang. I picked it up and said, "Hello." "Scott?" "Yes." "Dr. Marmion here." I said, "Pat, where are you?" He said, "Where are you?" I said, "I'm outside the city in this particular borough." "Where?" "At this church." "Where in the church are you?" "I'm right outside the sanctuary, by the pay phone." He said, "This is unbelievable. I just happen to be visiting that church this morning. I'm calling from the basement. I'll be right up." He ran up the stairs in four or five, maybe eight seconds. He said, "Where is she?" I said, "There she is." He ran over and began administering help to her. She got in the car. We sped off to (thankfully) St. Joseph Hospital, and Kimberly's life was spared, the baby's life was spared; and eventually Hannah was born.

I just had this sense that the Lord was so much closer to us and to our marriage, which seemed more broken down than I had realized. I began to pray, "What are we going to do with a new baby?" Kimberly approached me right before Hannah was born, and she said, "I'm not sure exactly why, but the Lord has impressed upon me that Hannah is to be a child of reconciliation. I'm not sure what it means." We hugged, and we began to pray about it.

After Hannah was born, Kimberly again approached me. She said, "I'm not sure why, but I think the Lord wants me to have Hannah baptized in the Catholic Church." I said, "What!" She said, "I'm not sure, but, yes." We went through this baptism liturgy together. Monsignor Bruskewitz, the priest who brought me in, is just the noblest prince of a godly man. He went on to be Bishop of Lincoln, Nebraska. But for us, he did this private liturgy so well, so filled with tradition and Scripture, that halfway through it, when he said, "Alleluia, alleluia," in one of the liturgical prayers, Kimberly almost jumped out of her socks. She said, "Alleluia! — Oh, I'm sorry." He said, "No, I wish Catholics would do that; this is good."

As a result of this liturgical celebration of Baptism, she photocopied the baptismal liturgy and sent it to her family and friends. But she still wasn't ready to go into these debates. She began to read and to pray. I just tried to back off more and more.

Trip to the Vatican in Rome

My father passed away in December 1990. This was the man who taught me to love calling God, "Father." The January following, my father-in-law invited me to join him and a very small group of people who were battling hardcore pornography in Eastern Europe in a journey over to the Vatican for a conference and a private audience with Pope John Paul II. My father-in-law, the Presbyterian minister, inviting me to meet the Pope? Of course, I said, "Yes!" So at that time, I not only met with the Pope in this small group, but I also was invited to join him in his private chapel for Friday morning Mass at 7:00 AM. I was just a few feet away from him, and I felt him praying. You could hear him praying with

his head in his hands, carrying the weight of the Church with all of its burdens in his heart.

As he celebrated the Mysteries of the holy Mass, I made a resolution, actually two of them: to enter more deeply each day into the Mass, and into this ministry that he has, to pray for him. The second resolution was to share with my brothers and sisters in Christ about our Holy Father and how Christ has graced us with an incredible family, with the Blessed Virgin Mary to be our own spiritual Mother, with the Pope to be a guide and a spiritual father-figure, leading all of us in worshipping our heavenly Father, with saints as brothers and sisters, to know ourselves as God's family, but most of all, with the holy Eucharist, to know ourselves around the table as a household. ■



DR. SCOTT HAHN *is the author (or editor) of over forty books, including best-selling titles like Rome Sweet Home, The Lamb's Supper, and Hail Holy Queen. His most recent titles include: The Creed, The Fourth Cup, and The First Society. He holds the Fr. Michael Scanlan Chair of Biblical Theology and the New Evangelization at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, where he has taught since 1990. He is the founder and president of the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology.*

An exceptionally popular speaker and teacher, Dr. Hahn has delivered numerous talks nationally and internationally on a wide variety of topics related to Scripture and the Catholic Faith. His talks have been effective in helping thousands of Protestants and fallen away Catholics to (re)embrace the Catholic Faith.

He graduated from Grove City College in 1979 with his B.A. in Theology, Philosophy, and Economics. He received his M.Div. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 1982 and his Ph.D. in Theology from Marquette University in 1995. He was ordained in 1982 at Trinity Presbyterian Church (Fairfax, VA). He entered the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil, 1986 and his wife, Kimberly, entered in 1990. They live in Steubenville, Ohio and have six children.

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DEFENDING THE FAITH

Join us at the **Defending the Faith** conference at the Franciscan University of Steubenville for **Coffee and Conversations**. It will be held during lunch on Saturday, July 28 and will be a time for networking and fellowship for non-Catholics and converts sponsored by the Coming Home Network. Go to steubenvilleconferences.com/adult/dfc for more information about the conference. We hope to see you there!

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