The

Coming Home Network International

JULY 2006 NEWSLETTER

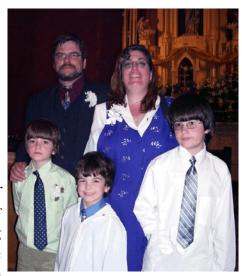
Journeys Home

Shadows of the Truth

by Former Baptist Minister

David Griffey

From "How to Market Your Church Effectively", to "Dynamic Worship for a Hollywood Culture"; from "Ten Ways to Become a More Charismatic Leader", to "Building the Next Mega-Church"; such headlines on a growing stack of magazines, religious brochures, and denominational literature filling the shelves in my church office were challenging my faith in the



Protestant experiment. On top of this Madison Avenue approach to Christianity, the countless divisions over every imaginable political and social issue, infighting, and a failure to stand firm against modern excess led me to wonder if we could even claim to stand on the Truth. Truth seemed to have lost out to slick marketing and politically driven blindness. And this insight was seldom welcomed by any side of the myriad divisions in Protestantism. I was at an impasse. I would either lose faith in the Christian Church once and for all, or find a new way through which to seek the Truth. I was ripe for conversion.

In 1966, I entered the family of my middle class, blue collar, Depression era, Harry Truman democrat parents during the waning days of Beatlemania. My Dad was a railroad engineer and my Mom stayed home with my older sister and me. At different times, they each had attended Protestant churches, but by my fourth grade year, that had stopped. Therefore, by the time I entered college, I was a non-believing liberal minded child of the post sixties counter culture revolution. Still, I had the best parents a person could want. They were founded on pre-sixties ethical norms, and I had a strong love and respect for them and their wisdom and morals. That anchor kept me sane through the cacophony of lame philosophies that would assault me over the first decades of my life.

This is important to know, because I entered college in 1985, in the center of the decade that canonized the Me-Generation and began the long, slow process of eradicating any system of thought that would challenge the intoxicating belief that I should be able to do anything I want without consequences. As appealing as that was, and despite being taught at one of our fine public institutions of higher learning to abhor religion in general, and Christianity in particular, that anchor in my family's good old fashion faith and horse sense always kept me from going over the edge. By the end of the 1980s, I no longer believed in the great Enlightenment Redux. I saw as much intolerance, bigotry, and egotism in places of liberal secularism as I ever did in a fundamentalist tent revival. Plus I witnessed the hurt, pain, misery, depression, hopelessness, helplessness,

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and aloneness that floundered in the wake of this fallacious culture of hedonism into which I was being indoctrinated.

But how did I overcome being told from every corner of my culture that religion was nothing but banal myths and legends that only the intellectually sterile could ever accept? How did I get around the growing belief that religion was a relic of the past that was solely responsible for most of the human suffering in the world? First of all, I lacked the egotism and narrow-mindedness to be an actual atheist, so God had always existed in some way or another for me, as He had with my family. I saw the problems brought out by the secularly driven 20th century. I also witnessed many friends and acquaintances sink under the mire of worldly debauchery and its all too real consequences. It didn't take me long to realize that many of the old arguments against religion didn't stand against an extra step back to look at the whole picture.

The fact was, I knew many intelligent religious folks, and history is covered with them. I also knew darn well

that many who never gave a swig about religion were quite capable of unspeakable atrocities. Plus there was a radical inconstancy in many of the so called proofs against the existence of God and the reliability of religion, not to mention the attempts to portray all people of faith with

negative stereotypes. I finally admitted that in trying to be modern, I had settled for intellectual mush, mere shadows of what was True regarding the important things in life.

I therefore began to seek Truth, the kind shunned by our modern "culture of me". So it came to pass that, after college, in the summer of 1990, I finally accepted Christ and was baptized into my family's Church of Christ in Galion, Ohio. I soon left that church and began to shop around, and immediately was struck by the radical differences between various denominations. Still, eventually I settled into Southern Baptist life upon moving to Clearwater, Florida. There I met a wonderful pastor who helped wean me into vocational ministry. I also met a lovely young brown-eyed girl who I eventually plucked up the courage enough to propose to in our church parking lot. Dee Dee and I were married in February, 1993; four months later, we were attending the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

While taking classes, I had my first exposure to those titanic clashes that erupt across the spectrum of Baptist living, with a sort of Darwinian survival of the fittest determining which point of view will triumph. The school had been dominated by intolerant liberal professors throughout the 1980s. But in 1993, we were assured that there was hope in the form of Dr. R. Albert Mohler, the school's new president. Armed with a Bible in one hand and a pad of pink slips in the other, his mission was to save the school from being in the firm grip of intolerant liberal heresy by molding it into a school that would be in the firm grip of intolerant fundamentalist Calvinism. The Machiavellian behavior I saw on both sides of the controversy caused a waning in the moral high ground that I once believed Baptists and Evangelicals possessed.

Despite this, I remained at the school and received my Masters of Divinity in 1997, and went back to pursue a Doctorate in theology in 1998. During that time I was involved in several churches, both Baptist and non-Baptist. In January of 2000, because of radical changes in the seminary's atmosphere, I parted ways

and moved back to Ohio. In Ohio, I accepted a position as pastor in a local Southern Baptist Church. It was a difficult ministry to say the least. Much corruption and controversy from previous ministers had left the church a hollowed shell. The

same ministers over the next several years. What hurt the most, however, was the denominational hierarchy's apathy about the problems in our small, out of the way church. Since it wasn't sexual sin, or a thriving Mega-Church, they just didn't seem interested in helping. Eventually, following split after split, the church managed to stabilize, but despite the presence of many Christ centered parishioners, my devotion was gone.

Frustrated with a religious tradition I no longer related to, and feeling that I was missing something crucial in my faith, I began wondering just where my faith really was. Was I the problem? Was I off kilter with Jesus? I knew good Christians who seemed content enough, but for years now I had felt things were amiss. Even as a Protestant, I realized there was a longing in my heart that still had not been filled. There were few options. I could remain where I was, and continue in a life I no longer truly believed in, or I could leave everything I had worked for over the last 15 years and search for what was missing. I chose the latter.

problems continued thanks to those

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Attack Number Two Bazillian and Five

by Marcus Grodi

During the past few years, the traditional beliefs of Catholics as well as Christians in general have been challenged by the bold and sometime bawdy claims of books and movies. The two most recent that come to mind are, of course, The Da Vinci Code and the Left Behind Series. The later undercuts many areas of Catholic doctrine while The Da Vinci Code befuddles all of our beliefs in a resurrected and holy Christ.

These are certainly not the first books to challenge the integrity of our faith, nor will they be the last. Other recent books, movies, and plays that I can remember are

Mass Appeal, The Last Temptation of Christ, The Life of Brian, The Name of the Rose, and Jesus Christ Superstar. Some of these I have read or viewed, and some of the things I've heard from them have made me pause—but then again, it's only by God's merciful grace that any of us believe at all, so we should always pray for His protection—for ourselves and our families—from the continuous onslaught of

Many Catholic authors have adequately addressed and

countered the false claims of these books (see the book we are offering as a special), so I won't attempt to condense their efforts in this short article. Instead, I would like to suggest that all these modern attacks on our faith—whether serious or frivolous—stem in some way from the Protestant rejection of the trustworthiness of the Church and Sacred Tradition and the Protestant overreliance on sola Scriptura and private interpretation. As I write this, I'm sensing I may be flaming the incredulous ire of some of you, but consider what Scripture teaches us about what Jesus our Lord intended: He chose, from out of the many disciples who followed Him, twelve men to be the foundation of His Church. Of these twelve, He chose one, Simon Peter, upon whom He would build His Church and to whom He would give the Keys of authority and leadership. Jesus then promised, as reported in John chapters 14-16, that He would send the Holy Spirit to

guide them into all truth, and this happened first in the Upper Room (John 20) and then in fullness at Pentecost. He also prayed (John 17) that His followers would be one as He and the Father are one—not thousands of independent and sometimes warring groups but, as the Fathers would later define her, One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. He then sent His Apostles forth to make disciples, preaching, teaching, and baptizing, and their oral and written witness carried the Gospel to the then known regions of the world.

> From the beginning (see Galatians 1), however, false gospels arose from both within and outside the Church challenging all aspects of the Christian faith. By the fourth century, there were hundreds of writings vying for attention and acceptance, primarily to be read in the liturgy as a trustworthy part of the memoir of the Apostles. Various lists of accepted books were drawn up, by Church leaders as well as declared heretics, but it wasn't until three separate councils of Catholic bishops under the authority of the Church and in union with the Bishop of Rome—Rome (382), Hippo (393), and Carthage (397)—

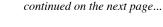
canon remained the accepted foundation of our Faith, as a part of Sacred Tradition, until the Continental Reformation in the 16th century.

defined the list of books to be included

in the inspired canon of Scripture. This

I realize that I've used the following explanation before in previous CHNewsletters (as well as from the lips of Father Bourque in my novel *How Firm a Foundation*), but it bears repeating in this instance. Up until the 16th century, the basic way that Christians learned and then knew what they were to believe was based on five sources of truth and particularly in the following order:

1. The Church: They learned their faith from priests and bishops whose authority they trusted;



- 2. Sacred Tradition: This included the Creed that they memorized and the devotions they prayed;
- 3. Sacred Scripture: Though few could read or possess books, they would hear Scripture read at Mass and from street preachers;
- 4. The Holy Spirit: The foundation for the reliability for the first three sources was, of course, the Holy Spirit, but the common Christian knew that they heard the Holy Spirit through the Church, Sacred Tradition, and Scripture, and were quite suspicious if the "Holy Spirit" was leading them to believe something that contradicted what they had learned from these three sources.
- 5. Conscience: They knew they were responsible for acting according to the dictates of their conscience, but never in contradiction to how it was to have been formed by the above four sources.

As a result of the 16th century Protestant Reformation, however, this list of sources was drastically truncated. The authority and trustworthiness of both the Church and Sacred Tradition were rejected, leaving Sacred Scripture as the primary, solo source of truth, to be interpreted by each person under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In time, these remaining sources would also be challenged and ridiculed by radical theologians, philosophers, and

psychologists, leaving modern Christianity a hodgepodge of opinions and fleeting loyalties.

We should not be surprised then when bookstores and the mass media produce tract after book after play after movie after DVD, all claiming a novel angle to undercut the Gospel and the Church Jesus established as the primary means of grace for salvation. But the bottom line is not to buck-up our knowledge so we can answer every challenge we may encounter to our faith, though this is important (1 Peter 3:15f). The bedrock of our faith is not our intellectual ability to answer all comers. Rather we must accept the witness of Scripture and the Church that Jesus did not leave us stranded without a trustworthy authority, a pillar and bulwark for our faith. By grace He has given us a trustworthy Church to which, by grace, He has called us home. May He continue by grace to help us trust this Church and to defend her when the ignorant assail her.



continued from conversion story by D Griffey on page 2

So why did I become Catholic? There were many reasons, for I had already begun to look at the Catholic Church with respect, if not downright envy. Because of space, however, only a few can be touched upon at this time. In some ways, it was a combination of being pushed out of Protestantism and drawn into Catholicism.

What pushed me out of Protestantism? Remember the discontent and disbelief I had in our MTV based culture of agnostic hedonism and immorality? Well, a similar thing happened as a Protestant, thought not quite as bad. First there was the problem with consistency. In an age when I was told there was no Truth, morality was relative, and we should all be tolerant of everything except that which is intolerable, I yearned to be part of a strong foundation of the Truth. As a Protestant, and Baptist, I was assured this foundation was the Bible and the Bible alone. Yet it took me less than six months to realize this wasn't accurate, since there was no end to the hundreds and thousands of different versions of this foundational truth spread across various denominational landscapes.

If the Bible was the only authority, how could so many people misunderstand it? More to the point, I wondered how we could say anyone was wrong? On what grounds did a Calvinist say an Arminian was wrong? On what basis did a Baptist tell a member of the Church of Christ that their understanding of Baptism was incorrect? How did those liberals and conservatives know the others were flawed? Were they just smarter, more spiritual? And how did we know how to read the Bible in the first place? There obviously are many different ways. How did we Baptists know we had the correct way to read the Bible? After all, we weren't like Catholics who let the Church tell them what to believe. Or were we?

I came to the painful realization that, while the idea that the Bible is the only authority works to dodge imperial convictions in European courtrooms, it simply doesn't pan out in real living. We Baptists were no different than Catholics. We believed we were the True Church, and that our way to understand the Bible, as taught by our leaders, was *the* way. After all,

continued on page 5 . . .

Deep In Scripture Radio

Please forgive me! My excitement about our new DEEP IN SCRIPTURE LIVE RADIO PROGRAM is so overwhelming that I just have to talk about it again this month! Since the first week in January — every Wednesday from 2-3 EST and then rebroadcast on Fridays (9 pm) and Sundays (6 AM) — Jim Anderson, and sometimes special guests, have joined me to discuss the full implications of some passages of Scripture. Our guests have included Fr. Ray Rayland, Paul Thigpen, Kenneth Howell, Steve Ray, David Currie, Rosalind Moss, and Bruce Sullivan. Deep In Scripture's underlying goal is to discern how Scripture helps us grow closer to Jesus Christ and His Church. In addition, we want to illustrate the dangers of sola Scriptura and the necessity of the Church for interpreting the Bible correctly. EWTN estimates that nearly 1/3 of our audience—which is heard over radio, Satellite, short wave, and Internet—are non-Catholic, so my guests and I intentionally direct our discussions to our potential Protestant listeners.

If you aren't able to hear the program locally over Catholic radio, you can listen over the Internet from our radio website, http://www.deepinscripture.com. From the website, you can also access the program archives and

download any of the previous programs in MP3 format or as a podcast.

We want this program to be a resource for you to share with your friends, Catholic or non-Catholic, so if you can't download it, we are making it available to you by subscription for a donation of \$60. This donation helps cover the production cost and will bring you the entire year of programs in monthly installments. You can subscribe by sending in the subscription coupon found in this newsletter, or on our website, or by calling the CHNetwork office. You can also send a gift subscription to a friend, which they will receive monthly in your name. All proceeds from these subscriptions go directly to supporting the DEEP IN SCRIPTURE radio program. Even though this program is being broadcast through EWTN and its affiliates, the cost is completely underwritten by the Coming Home Network International.

Please pray for this program, for the Scripture discussions, and especially for all those, Catholic or non-Catholic, from around the world who will be listening.

Sincerely in Christ,

Marcus Grodi

A Reader's Response

I'm not always sure how my "tongue-in-sheek" articles are taken by our readers, but the following interesting and insightful response confirms that I was surprisingly on track! (Even a stopped clock is right twice a day.):

Dear Marcus.

Your editorial on coffee in the March 2006 issue of the newsletter reminded me of Bishop Sheen's advice to priests on "How to Make a Holy Hour" (see below). His comments were also done, I'm sure, "tongue-in-cheek."

May God continue to bless the good work of the Coming Home Network.

Prayers and best wishes,

Fr. Tim Nelson, Pastor Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church Flint, Michigan

How to Make the Holy Hour By Bishop Fulton Sheen

"If at all possible, the priest should make his daily Holy Hour before celebrating his Mass. Now that the Church's regulations on the pre-Eucharistic fast have been modified, he will be well advised to take a cup of coffee before he starts. The average American is physically, biologically, psychologically and neurologically unable to do anything worthwhile before he has a cup of coffee! And that goes for prayer too. Even sisters in convents whose rules were written before electric percolators we developed would do well to update their procedures. Let them have coffee before meditation."

(from The Priest Is Not His Own, Ignatius Press)





Please pray for...

♦Clergy **♦**

- ♦ An Anglican priest in England, who if he follows where his heart and conscience directs him to the Catholic Church, feels he is committing not only himself but his family to an uncertain future.
- ♦ Eric, a Non-denominational minister who, by the grace of God, wishes to become a Catholic Christian, and also lead his congregation into full communion with the Church with him.
- ♦ Bill a former Charismatic Episcopal priest who has begun the process to be received into the Catholic Church.
 - ♦ A Lutheran minister whose family and friends do not understand why he is looking toward the Catholic Church.
- Chris, a Baptist military chaplain who is studying the truths of the Catholic faith.
- † Two Anglican religious brothers who are considering coming into full communion with the Church.
- ♦ A former Jehovah's Witness elder in California who is studying the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- ♦ Eric, a former Charismatic Episcopal priest who has resigned his pastorate to come into the Catholic Church.
- ♦ Kevin, a Quaker pastor, who along with his wife, feels called to the Catholic Church.
- ♦ Willie, a Christian Holiness youth minister who want to know more about the Catholic faith.

- **†** Kevin a former Nondenominational pastor who is hungry to grow spiritually and intellectually as a Catholic Christian, and desires to use his gifts and talents to serve God through the Catholic Church. .
- ♦ An Anglican Franciscan community in Puerto Rico that is in the process of working their way to full communion with the Catholic Church.
- † Taylor, an Episcopal priest who has recently notified his bishop that he was renouncing his orders to enter the Catholic Church.

In every issue we include timely prayer concerns from the membership. Each person mentioned has contacted us and is somewhere along their journey home. All members are encouraged to pray at least one hour each month before the Blessed Sacrament for the needs in general and specific of the CHNetwork, its members and supporters.

Please submit all prayer requests and answers to:

> CHN Prayer List P. O. Box 8290 Zanesville, OH 43702

You may also email your prayer requests to:

prayers@chnnetwork.org

We will use only first names to preserve anonymity.

†Laity **†**

- † Please pray for our sons-in-law, Jim and Matt. Please pray they convert to Catholicism.
- ♦ Dolores in her loss of her husband, that she sees God's hands in the road ahead

- ♦ Jim and Jeanne, and their parents as they watch their children battle Alcohol and cancer.
- † All our fallen away brothers and sisters, especially Don, April, Kevin and all others within the Helpers Network
 - † All the works of the 2006 Conference, and its attendees.
- ♦ All the Helpers, and the gifts they stand to be for those looking to understand the Fullness of Truth.
- ♦ For all those who have sought help from the CHNetwork to aid them in their understanding of being called home to the Catholic Church.
- ♦ For baby Ambrose, and thanksgiving for the blessings God has already given to his life.
- † The needs of Bill and Gail Barrett, and strengthen their commitment to witness at all cost

Quo Vadis Youth

- ♦Will, Maricruz, and all youth considering the Catholic faith.
- ♦ Colt, that Christ may soften the hearts of his family toward his recent conversion.
- ♦Lindsey, David, and all youth who joined the Catholic church this Easter. Welcome Home!
- † This summer, that it may be a blessed time for all youth involved with Quo Vadis.



on **EWTN** television and radio Mondays live at 8 PM EST Tues 1 & 10 AM, Wed 1 PM, Sat 11 PM

July 3 Re-Aired from May 29 **Guy Gruters**

former Vietnam POW and Catholic Revert

Fr. Tobias Unnerstal

former Swedish Lutheran

July 17 Pre-taped from Ireland

Þhillip Boelter

former Lutheran minister

July 31

Michael Coren

revert from Evangelicalism

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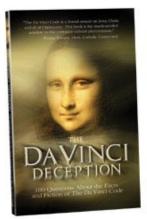
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Featured Resources

The Da Vinci Deception

by Mark Shea and Edward Sri



This "fast-paced and hilarious survey of the blunders, lies and frauds of the best-selling novel The Da Vinci Code" is a must for those who wish to learn more about Dan Brown's popular assault on the Catholic Church and her Savior. With wit and clarity, the *Da Vinci Deception* exposes not only the falsehoods behind Dan Brown's work, but also presents the foundational Truth to rebuke Brown's assault

on what every Catholic should hold dear.

Receive either resource with any donation of \$35.00 OR MORE!

The Protestant Reformation in England and Ireland

by William Cobbett



An eye-opening work, written by a Protestant between 1824 and 1827, this book sheds light on English history from Henry VIII (1509) thru George III (1820). Frequently republished by Catholic publishers, it shows that England was better off before the Reformation than after. An unabashedly pro-Catholic work, it presents the English Reformation from a viewpoint not often heard in Protestant dialogue.

RECEIVE BOTH RESOURCES WITH ANY DONATION OF \$50.00 OR MORE!



Name

We Love Conversion Stories

Every month the CHNetwork includes a conversion story, they are usually written by a former Protestant clergyman but sometimes also from a layperson. This part of our newsletter is included for your encouragement, enlightenment and edification. We love conversion stories and would like to read yours. Please send it as an attachment in Microsoft Word, 1800 to 2000 words in length to jim@chnetwork.org. We look forward to reading your story and possibly including it in some future issue of the CHNetwork newsletter.

How Have We Helped?

At CHResources, we would like to hear from you about what we offer in our quest to aid those looking toward completeness of their Faith. We often present various books, journals, and media resources in an attempt to give our brothers and sisters who may be looking toward Rome the aid they might need in this wonderful journey. Please drop us a line, or email us at dave@chnetwork.org, and let us know what books, tapes, or other items you have used or have heard that was particularly beneficial for those whom we pray will someday call the Catholic Church home.

Listening and Learning from God's Word

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)

Deep In Scripture Radio Program Subscription Form

For a \$60.00 (which covers the production costs) you can receive a subscription for Deep In Scripture radio programs for one year. There are 3 ways to receive this subscription.

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continued from page 4

you couldn't go into a Baptist Church and say we should listen to the Pope, could you? That's because Baptists insist that is an incorrect interpretation of Matthew 16. If Baptists teach that, then it stands to reason that Baptists set themselves up as an authority on par with Scripture. And so does everyone else. The fact that we don't admit it, however, gnawed at me. To me, this was as inconsistent as the faux convictions and rampant contradictions in modern secularism that so gnawed at me as a non-Christian. We claimed to be superior to Catholicism because we stood on the Bible Alone. And as a pastor preaching doctrines I no longer believed to be true, or even biblical, it became unbearable.

But that wasn't all. Another problem was the growing divisions and splits that had become pandemic in the Protestant world. Every year saw new versions of the Church arise. Some were split over various social and political stances. Others just withered on the vine. In most cases, classic doctrines such as justification, eternal security, and regenerative baptism didn't matter. It was that you were anti-this or pro-that. You were for this right or against that behavior. Or you simply attended the latest super-church and made it successful. The foundational continuity of your faith in all cases seemed to be of decreasing relevance.

Trying to find a consistent theology and morality in this mess of divided churches proved virtually impossible. For instance, some denominations that lean toward the left, while rightly concerned about social justice and aiding the poor, all but abandon the idea that the church has anything relevant to say about ethics below the waistline, no matter how many lives are ruined in the pursuit of unhindered personal gratification.

Meanwhile, the right leaning church, wise and prudent in its skepticism regarding the behavioral excesses of modern life, fails to focus on the results of unjust greed and corporate sin. After reading Bonhoeffer's *Cost of Discipleship* and Sider's *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, I knew that there was a huge hunk of Christian Truth all too often de-emphasized in many modern conservative, evangelical churches.

Of course you also have the extremes. On the left is a descent into what can only be called a new religion. I call it neo-Gnosticism, because it is based on the notion that 90% of the old Christian faith is bunk, and only the morally and intellectually enlightened elite of this new progressive fundamentalism can lead us to the truth, lest we be exposed as the bigots, racists, sexists, or homophobes that we really are.

On the other side, there is in conservative evangelical churches the emergence of the Mega-Church Growth movement. The goal here appears to be getting as many numbers as possible into a church with whatever means available. Of course they claim the real reason is to reach the lost for Jesus. But I couldn't help but notice that the end was gradually shifting from winning people to Christ, to simply having the largest churches. Celebrity ministers, million dollar gymnasiums, church food courts, Wall Street style marketing strategies — all peddled and packaged in a way that implies only those churches able to entertain you with such fluff and pop entertainment are worthy of your devotion, not to mention your tithes. I began to feel as if Tetzel had returned.

These divisions also haunted me for another reason. As a former agnostic, I had listened to the growing hatred and bigotry being leveled against religion by my own generation. While such noteworthy thinkers as Alan Dershowitz and Christopher Hitchens may say you are silly to believe in God, they will nevertheless fight to the death your right to be silly and believe in God. But not these newer anti-theists. They have been groomed their entire lives in an intellectually incestuous culture that teaches religion is always bad and inherently ridiculous. Too many of those I knew in college had decided that religion must go the way of slavery: it must be eliminated. I saw this confirmed by such intellectuals as Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris (who dogmatically asserts that dogmatic assertions are the cause of human suffering). These standard bearers for the New Secularism encourage a radical intolerance toward the very existence of religion, and I knew that a faith as divided as ours could not prevail against such a determined onslaught.

But more than splits or inconsistent morals, I began to see that the Christian Faith was far less Protestant than I would have liked. I certainly had ceased to believe the New Testament was a Baptist document. There were simply too many verses that plainly countered Baptist doctrine (such as Acts 2:38 and James 2:24, to name just two). But I began to notice that the early church, the history of the Church, and the picture of the Church presented in the New Testament looked far less Protestant than I once believed. Passages such as Matthew 16:19, 2 Thessalonians 2:15, John 20:23, Acts 21, and John 6 were more easily explained in a Catholic framework. Furthermore, I noticed that the Apostles exercised authority over churches without church votes, early Christians had a sacramental understanding of Communion, Marian devotion was not some Medieval



interpolation but appeared in early church writings, nor were the ideas of confession or sacramental baptism late additions. In fact, the early church fathers bore witness to doctrines abandoned by all but Catholics, including the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the authority of the Bishop of Rome. On the other hand, if there was a Baptist version of the original faith, there were no documents to prove it!

I ultimately realized that the Bible itself was a Church teaching. The faith of the Church was not based on the Bible, the Bible was based on the Faith of the Church; a Church that looked annoyingly Catholic. The easiest solution to my problems had been to look at the Biblical and Historical record at face value. I did, and it appeared quite Catholic. That certainly changed everything.

Does that mean I was ready to move to Rome right there and then? No. These revelations occurred over the course of my entire Christian walk. I grew up in an anti-Catholic society, and had walked my early steps with Christ in a tradition no less antagonistic toward the Catholic Church. Still, since I had once abandoned general bigotry

against Christianity, I certainly could do it again for specific bigotry against Catholicism. But there was more to it than intellectual assent. A major problem was my livelihood. I was an ordained minister. I had three boys, a wife, five fish, and a cat. I had to consider the ramifications of such a move. What, then, finally caused the problems of Protestantism to swell

up and jettison me beyond those considerations? Not so much the problems of the Protestant experiment as the appeal of the Catholic Tradition. Let me explain.

In 1999, when I returned to seminary to pursue a PhD, I quickly became disenchanted with the direction of the school. There were the general problems with the school and its direction that I already touched on. But more importantly, I was aware of the fact that, even at this level of scholarship, the Bible was simply everyone's to use as they pleased. Doctrinal debate was no more than different individuals arguing over which verses were more important than others. Theology appeared to be the exercise of making sure the Bible agreed with what you were already sure it said in the first place. And what was worse, I couldn't find that magic instruction book that told me how to read it a certain way to begin with. So with the growing problems these trials were causing my faith walk, my ministry, my family, and my marriage, I decided to get away. In November of 1999,

I took a personal retreat to St. Meinrad Archabbey and Benedictine Monastery in southern Indiana, mostly because of its solitary and pastoral setting.

While there, I was exposed to a broad Catholic devotional atmosphere, complete with chanting monks, grottoes adorned with statues, a Romanesque church, and an isolated chapel on a tree bordered hill overlooking the lands below. There, on top of that lonely hill, on a chilly, gray, cloudy November afternoon, I had my first meditative spiritual renewal, all thanks to a decidedly Catholic environment. While I went to the retreat thinking I might have a spiritual encounter *despite* it being a Catholic institution, I came away from it with the belief that I had experienced Christ in a profound way precisely *because* it was a Catholic institution.

And that got me thinking. After that, I began looking at Catholicism in a different light. I should mention that I was never one to regard Catholics as apostates bound for hell. But the idea of being Catholic had never seriously been on the radar screen. Now I began to read more and look more at what Catholicism had to offer. Sure

there were scandals and controversies and dark periods in its history. But as an agnostic I was taught that this was indicative of all of Christianity. Perhaps the negative was a bit over-stated regarding the Catholic Church as well. This was likely, since my experience both as a pagan and a pastor had taught me that nowhere are we safe from the stain of sin — not in settings non-

religious, religious, Protestant, or Catholic.

I looked more closely at Catholics I had known of and read about, such as Mother Teresa, Archbishop Fulton Sheen, St. Francis of Assisi, and of course, Pope John Paul II. I began to realize that they had something that was lacking in my experience as an agnostic or as a Baptist, something I had experienced at St. Meinrad. They had a breadth and depth to their devotion. There was a comprehensiveness and continuity in their approaches to universal Truths that was sorely lacking in the secular world, and even missing in Protestantism. They were not, as C.S. Lewis would say, Capitalists or Socialists. They weren't liberal or conservative, Republican or Democrat. They were other, above, beyond. They stood on a different foundation, not one cast to and fro by the prevailing media currents of the day. Theirs is a solid foundation that stands firm no matter how low the water recedes, or how high it arises.

I saw the Catholic Church resist doing what we always condemn the Church for having done in the past, and that is bow down to pressures from the outside world. From its ethical and moral stances, to its theological positions, to the Mass itself: the Church stands tall and proud on what it is, not what the latest polls say it should be. No "drop kick me Jesus through the goal posts of life" here; through the liturgy of the Eucharist, the Catholic Church invites you into something timeless, not a call to follow the latest headlines or popular trends. The Mass became for me a Sacred answer to the profane darkness that I saw encroaching upon the world; an answer I had longed for and was desperate to experience. Christ really Present in the Lord's Supper? That's what I was missing.

There was also that all important oneness, that unity prayed for by Jesus and so long ago lost to the Protestant experiment. My wife, who was raised

Southern Baptist and had a healthy skepticism of the Catholic Church, did not share in my enthusiasm about looking to Rome for answers. She agreed with my assessment of the many problems in the church today, and was even willing to consider the

Isn't there supposed to be just one Church?

idea of starting our own 'non-denominational' church (a popular fad in modern Protestantism). She also admitted that she had longed for something spiritual her whole life, but to date had never found it. But going Catholic was not an option. Then one day she was teaching at the Christian School which my boys attended. Our oldest, Charlie, was in her class as they discussed the daily Bible lesson. Suddenly, he raised his hand and asked Dee Dee, "Isn't there supposed to be just one church?" To make a long story short, my wife was confirmed with me at Easter Vigil.

Because of my disillusionment with the Southern Baptist Convention, and a desire for something more, I posted my resignation in February, 2005. I had no clue what to do, or how to do it. Dee Dee and I began studying and searching for a new denominational home. We would read, visit, and read some more. Each denomination promised very good things, and had many wonderful Christians; but we felt they also were lacking, or indulging in ideals and ethics we knew not to accept. It began to dawn on us that all Protestant traditions were but a shard of the historic Church. And more to the point, that Historic Church was beginning to look like the Catholic Church.

Eventually, through contacts with a local priest I knew from our ministry association, I was put in touch with

the Coming Home Network, Int., and began seriously to look toward Rome. I managed to grab a job here and there, Dee did as well (as we enrolled in RCIA, she was unceremoniously dumped from her teaching position). We dabbled with the idea of staying Protestant, if simply for the money. But we stayed faithful to the course, and all worked out. She had credentials that allowed her to be hired for her current position, and I eventually was brought on at the Coming Home Network, Int. — an opportunity I admit was not far from my prayers.

Still, as 2005 trudged along, though we had overcome the typical Protestant misunderstandings of Catholicism, we were in a stalemate regarding certain teachings of the Church. They were the usual ones, such as the Immaculate Conception, purgatory, the confessional — the cliché hurdles. Then one evening, after a heated discussion, Dee said she just couldn't get her mind around these, and didn't know if she ever would. At

a point of frustration, I stated that perhaps we should stop trying to look at them from the viewpoint of an American Protestant Bible Only Believer, and look at them from a Catholic perspective. By that I meant accepting the authority of the

Church instead of assuming, like a Protestant, that we and our Bibles were the final authority, able to carve for ourselves a convenient piece of the Vatican pie as we saw fit. Well she did, I did, and that was that. We accepted the Church and its authority, the last obstacle fell, and the road was paved toward Confirmation.

So here we are. In April, 2006, we officially became Catholic. We stand in the True Church, embracing Christ in the Eucharist, Truth in Unity, and the Peace in Jesus that comes through the Sacraments in a way we could never have dreamed. For Dee Dee it was a new beginning, the completeness of her faith as she likes to say. For my boys — Charlie, Davey, and Phillip — it has been an exciting and meaningful journey with which they still seem fascinated. Even the fish and cat are happy. And as for me? Well I'm just sitting here thinking how after all those long years of searching, I finally found that Truth.

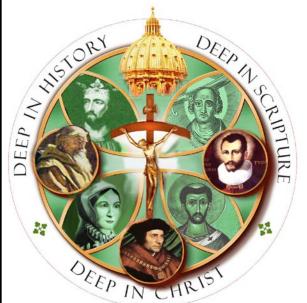
Dave Griffey, his wife Dee Dee, and their children were received into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil Mass, 2006, at St. Mary Parish in Delaware, Ohio. Dave is presently serving as Editor and Coordinator of CHResources for the Coming Home Network.



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