

Boyd recalls that his self-esteem was low because he "grew up in a homophobic culture."

In a predictable linkage with their permissive view on sexuality, the speakers substitute innate human goodness for traditional teachings about Original Sin. "I don't see human beings as created sinful..." says James Cone, a professor of Black Liberation Theology. Matthew Fox agrees: "God doesn't make anything except good things."

Eco-theologian Sallie McFague says sin is not only "acts of aggression against human beings" but also against "other life forms." Matthew Fox warns against a "false dualism" that sets "human suffering against environmental suffering." Indeed, the sin of environmental insensitivity has largely replaced sexual sins.

The West is blamed for the world's eco-

troubles. "I don't think it's Third World people who are in conflict with the environment," remarks Virginia Doctor, an Episcopalian Mohawk leader. "The...burden [of repairing the environment] should be on the shoulders of First World people," agrees Sallie McFague.

The other big sins, besides neglect of the environment, are racism and male chauvinism. The cure for all these maladies is increased sensitivity and political action of the Hollywood-approved variety.

Is this what the Maryknoll Missioners, co-producers of the series, regard as missionary work? If any conversions result from this video series, it will be *away from* orthodox Christianity and *to* one or another fashionable form of vaguely religious humanism. ■

NO LONGER MAKING UP MY OWN RELIGION

THOMAS STORCK

INTO PETER'S BARQUE

I enjoy reading conversion stories, particularly those from the 1940s and 1950s, such as the various collections edited by Fr. John O'Brien, which included *Where I Found Christ*, *The Way to Emmaus*, *Roads to Rome*, and *Where Dwellst Thou?* Happily, such stories are being published again in our time, mostly stories of a new generation of converts. Conversion accounts can rally and buoy up those of us who are already Catholic as well as serve as a guide to those who are finding their way into the Church. I hope my account here will encourage both those already, and those not yet, Catholic.

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I was raised in a family that considered church-going very important, but at the same time was not theologically orthodox. My father was the cause of this unusual combination, for he was a skeptic in religion who nonetheless always valued the social aspects of church attendance. In the small and medium-sized Ohio towns where we lived, my family attended services of Protestant congregations, and at one point I went to Sunday school at a Methodist church practically next door to us. For a short time my father even conducted his own Sunday services in our home. Later, when I was about six or seven, we returned to the Unitarian Church, which was theologically more to my father's liking. I have several memories, pleasant enough, of going there. But when I was about 10 we left the Unitarians, I think because of quarreling among the members and the presence of eccentrics among them, such as flying-saucer devotees, and we be-

gan to attend the Episcopal Church. My father was attracted by the dignity of the service and the music, by the intellectual character of the clergy and members, and by the absence of a dogmatic emphasis in Episcopalianism.

Obviously I differ with my father about religious questions, but I am grateful to him nonetheless for having shown me that religion is not something to be left to women and children, but something that an adult male could well concern himself with. It is possible that, humanly speaking, I would never have started on the path that led to my embracing the Catholic faith had it not been for my father's words and example.

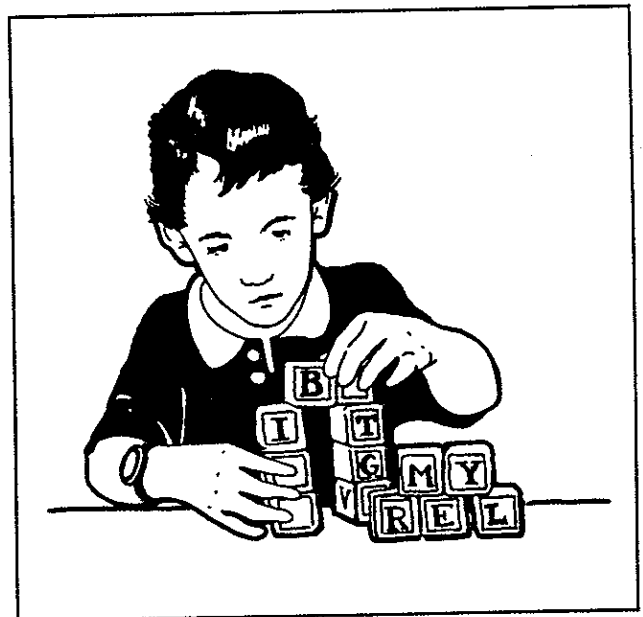
When I was young, say from about four to 10 or 11, I had a vague notion of God, once equating him with a very large piece of farm machinery that was parked near our house. As I approached adolescence, I began to wonder whether there was a God or not, and I didn't have the slightest idea of how to find out. By around the age of 13, I had concluded that there definitely was not a God, and I considered myself an atheist. During this period I underwent the Episcopal confirmation ceremony. I had had some hesitation about being confirmed, but my father urged me to do so, because of his belief that it was important to belong to some church, even if one did not believe what it taught. I remember in the 10th grade, during the moment of silent prayer at the beginning of the school day, consciously not praying, indeed attempting to do homework, until the teacher told me I had at least to sit there and do nothing if I did not want to pray. (This was in a public school!)

During the next year everything changed. I read something about C.S. Lewis in some Episcopal publication my parents took, and though I remember nothing about the article in question, I remember thinking that since Lewis was both a Christian and an intellectual, perhaps I should investigate whether Christianity might actually be true. About this time my brother gave me a gift certificate for a local bookstore as a Christmas or birthday present, and I used it to buy Cardinal Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. I don't think I had ever heard of Newman before, but I was attracted by the Latin title, since I was studying Latin in school. Reading this book put into my mind not only the idea of conversion, but the entire ques-

tion of God and revelation. But the decisive moment came in a different and unexpected way.

I have noted that my father had a great interest in religion. His library of several thousand books included a large religion section, probably the largest section in his library. One day he brought home a book of sermons or meditations by a Protestant minister. I took a look at it, as I usually did whenever he brought home new books. One of the sermons was about the existence of God. It included some very simplified renditions of the traditional arguments for God's existence. But in my state of knowledge at the time, that was enough for me. I can still see myself at the bottom of the stairway, in front of a glass bookcase, reading this book and suddenly coming to the realization that God does indeed exist. It was a stupendous moment, even if I did not fully realize its importance then.

So, I was a theist — but not a Christian. I was working part-time after school and began to have discussions with a Protestant woman at work. I told her I believed in God, but not in Jesus Christ as His Son. She told me to pray to God that He would show me the truth of the matter, and I began to do so. One problem was that I did not understand the idea of the Incarnation: How could God be both Creator of the world and yet present in it in the flesh? But from C.S. Lewis, whom I had begun reading, I picked up the idea of a playwright writing himself a part in his own drama.



This analogy is not a proof of anything, but it made the Incarnation thinkable. I accepted Jesus Christ as the Son of God and began to consider myself a Christian. This I think was in January of 1968.

When I was a baby I had been "baptized" in the Unitarian Church in Brooklyn, but what form of words was used or what the minister's intentions might have been were impossible to discover. I realized that I had a duty to be baptized, but I was afraid to ask about it or do anything about it. But after a few months, God changed my heart and gave me the courage to approach our Episcopal minister about baptism, and I was conditionally baptized in July 1968 in the presence of my family.

About this time my father acquired a book entitled *Liturgy and Worship*, published by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, a society in the Church of England. This book was a high-church survey of the Anglican liturgy and necessarily included a considerable amount of theology. I read it and, thanks be to God, this work gave a direction to my religious life which would ultimately bring me to the true Faith. For from reading this book I got a sense of the Church of Jesus Christ as a visible, corporate, and institutional Body, with a liturgy and sacraments and a faith handed down from our Lord and the Apostles. I was put in a position where I could begin to assimilate many Catholic truths.

My father had in his library several Catholic books, including the *Baltimore Catechism*, Ronald Knox's *The Belief of Catholics*, Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man*, and others. Reading through such books taught me much Catholic doctrine and helped me think clearly about religion and avoid some of the errors in religious thought common in our culture, such as the notion that religious truth is subjective or that it exists only to give us psychological comfort. My reading also enabled me to avoid misconceptions about what the Catholic Church really teaches. I continued to read C.S. Lewis, from whom I had learned much, not so much for actual doctrine as for a sound attitude toward religious truth. Lewis never compromised on the fundamental supernatural outlook essential to any form of Christianity, nor did he allow his reader to forget the ever-present and over-arching issue of salvation or damnation. There was no mushy Christianity with him.

From the time of my Episcopal baptism until

1976 I lived as an Episcopal layman, attended a college affiliated with the Episcopal Church, was married in the college chapel, worked as a parish religious education director, and read a considerable amount of high-church Episcopal theology, including the 10 volumes of dogmatic theology written by Francis J. Hall (1857-1932), sometimes called the Anglican *Summa Theologiae*. From this I learned considerable Catholic theology, though in one important matter, as I will relate below, I was misled. Although for part of this time, especially when I was an undergraduate, I was involved in several pan-Protestant prayer groups with no particular denominational affiliation, I was careful to keep my theological thinking more or less high-church, and I never received communion from a minister I did not consider to be in the Apostolic Succession.

I continued in this situation until I was forced to consider carefully the claims of the Catholic Church because of actions by the Episcopal Church, specifically the authorizing of the ordination of women as "priests" by the General Convention, the governing body of the Episcopal Church, in 1976.

Before discussing this, however, I should say something about what I thought of Catholicism during my 10 or so years as a committed Anglican. From the examples of Newman, Knox, and Chesterton, the idea of conversion from Canterbury to Rome was quite familiar to me. In fact, for many years Catholicism had been very attractive to me. But as a high-church Episcopalian who adhered to the so-called branch theory of the Church — the notion that the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church is made up of three more or less co-equal branches, the Anglican, the Eastern Orthodox, and the Roman, with at most a primacy of honor given to the Bishop of Rome — I considered that I was already a Catholic. Still, there were many aspects of the Church of Rome and Catholic life that appealed to me. Rome, I felt, was a *temptation* to me, in the sense that I was inclined to accede to her without sufficient intellectual conviction, but merely because of various cultural or populist attractions. Roman Catholicism contained such a wonderful mass of humanity, the poor of so many nations, colors, and cultures, not just the upper-middle classes of English-speaking countries. The music, art, and architecture of the Catholic ages and lands are undeniably great. And, while

a senior in high school, I had read R.H. Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, which started in me a lifelong passion for the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. All these things kept pulling my gaze toward Rome during my years as an Anglican.

I do not know how many times I seriously considered conversion before I actually did convert, but I remember at least two times, one in the summer of 1972 and the second during the subsequent winter. The first time I talked at some length with a seminarian friend of mine (now a priest of the Diocese of Toledo) and the second time with a priest resident near my undergraduate college. This latter man turned out to be a modernist, and his remark that now that Christians had successfully demythologized Scripture they would now begin to demythologize dogma put me off, and I did not speak further with him.

About this time, during the first semester of my senior year of college (fall 1972), I wrote a long paper for an English history class on the question of the continuity of the Church of England with the pre-Reformation Catholic Church. I remember being shocked when I discovered that those who had assisted King Henry VIII in setting up the Church of England regarded ultra-Protestants such as Calvin as their friends and co-religionists. So much for the Branch Theory in the 1540s! However, my Episcopal professor suggested that instead of looking at the intentions of the Anglican founders, I should look for how much of Catholicism (as he and I understood it) had managed to survive the Protestant Revolt, despite what Cranmer and his colleagues may have desired. This satisfied me and helped to keep me in the Episcopal Church for another few years.

The crisis, as I said, came after the General Convention's authorizing of the ordination of women in 1976. I knew that this was entirely against the Catholic tradition in any sense, and indeed a flat repudiation of the Branch Theory, which held that none of the three branches should act unilaterally. For a short time I even published a little periodical called *The Newsletter on Women's Ordination*, in opposition to the idea. The Sunday after the Episcopal Church voted to allow it, my wife and I attended Sunday services as usual. This was almost the last time that I attended an Episco-

pal church as a worshiper. The following Easter we journeyed to Columbus, Ohio, to attend an Episcopal parish that had rejected the General Convention's action, and a few other times in the next year we went to Episcopal churches for special reasons. But my days as an Episcopalian were essentially over.

Many Episcopalianism were opposed to what their Church did, and almost immediately some began to organize breakaway groups. Had there been one convenient to us, I am certain we would have joined it. But there was nothing nearby, nor were there any parishes of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Since I believed that it was my duty to attend the eucharistic sacrifice, my wife and I began attending Mass at the local Catholic parish. This did not make me a Catholic, but it did allow us to hear about Natural Family Planning (the lack of knowledge of which had in part prevented me from more seriously considering Rome in the past), and it caused me to think that perhaps I should seriously investigate the Catholic faith, since (practically speaking) the only parishes of my great Three-Branched Church that were ever likely to be proximate to us were the Roman.

I made the decision to undertake this investigation the following fall when we were living in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. We began instruction at the Catholic Student Center, Christ the King. As many readers know, since it was publicized in series of articles in a national Catholic newspaper, this center was staffed by modernist Claretian priests, who about two years later were expelled from the diocese by Bishop Sullivan. The priest who instructed us was a modernist, not, I believe, the worst of those on the staff, though he did use *Christ Among Us* as our text. In any case, because of my reading, including some of what I had learned from the Anglican Francis Hall, I was not corrupted by the instruction. In fact, I argued with the priest, particularly over *Humanae Vitae*, which I had come to accept. The reason I did not attempt to find a better Catholic parish was that I didn't know any existed — I had read so much in the secular press about dissent in the Church that I thought it wasn't worth the trouble to look for one (I didn't know that an excellent parish, St. Agnes, was not far away from where we lived; a few months after we became Catholics we left Christ the King to attend St. Agnes).

Our instruction began in September or Octo-

ber of 1977 and lasted until December. I was still undecided, and the priest recommended that we wait until after Christmas vacation. During this vacation I explored the matter further.

Now, though I knew that for me the key to the entire question was the attitude of the early Church toward the papacy, I actually had read very little of the Fathers, except for Augustine's *Confessions*. So, among other things, I did some reading in the Fathers and other early writers. I was shocked to find passages such as the following: "This church [Rome] has a position of leadership and authority; and therefore every church... must needs agree with the church at Rome; for in her the apostolic tradition has ever been preserved..." (St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, iii, 1).

Passages such as this surprised me, in part because the Anglican writer I mentioned, Francis Hall, though indefatigable in gathering quotations from the Fathers and others on behalf of doctrines and practices that high-church Anglicans accepted, was on the question of the Bishop of Rome strangely selective and therefore misleading: He had cited none of the acknowledgments of Roman primacy that I found readily in Irenaeus, Cyprian, and even the Montanist Tertullian.

In any case, reading the passages Hall had omitted was enough for me. They, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, completed the change in me, and at that point I accepted the fundamental principle of the Faith and thus the entire corpus of Catholic belief. I did more reading after that, but the question was essentially settled. Since I now recognized that the true Christian Church was gathered in communion with the successor of Peter, I did not need to debate separately such articles of faith as the Infallibility of the Pope or Our Lady's Immaculate Conception and Assumption. It was enough to know that those Christians who were grouped in the true Church had authoritatively defined those dogmas. All this occurred in January 1978, and a few weeks later, on February 12, my wife and I were received into the Holy Catholic Church at Christ the King Chapel.

In looking back from my standpoint as a Catholic, I now see that the "Anglo-Catholic" Branch Theory of the Church is profoundly contrary not just to the Fathers, but to the New Testament itself. The kind of unity that St. Paul

continually appeals to and, in fact, practices, as he travels among the various small congregations of Catholics in Asia Minor and Greece, has nothing in common with the "unity" supposed in the Branch Theory (e.g., see 1 Cor. 1:10-15). Moreover, of the three supposed branches of the Church, both the Roman and the Eastern Orthodox emphatically reject the Branch Theory, while among Anglicans, most are indifferent to it, with only a small group of "Anglo-Catholics" accepting it!

One other point I will mention. Sometimes when people, either Catholics or non-Catholics, ask me what I was before becoming a Catholic, and I tell them, they say something like "Oh, an Episcopalian, well, that's not very different." Yes and no. As an Anglican I did believe most of Catholic doctrine. But there was one thing that was very different. All Protestants, including Anglo-Catholics, basically make up their own religion. That is, those Protestants who profess to believe only the Bible can decide for themselves just what the Bible means and how to interpret difficult passages. And if they choose to follow a particular pastor or evangelist on some disputed point, still they themselves choose which pastor or evangelist to follow. The decision is in their own hands.

This is true also for high-church Anglicans, so-called Anglo-Catholics. Although as an Episcopalian I professed to follow the Fathers of the undivided Church and the traditions common to Rome, Canterbury, and Constantinople, still I decided exactly which traditions were "really" universal and thus binding on all Christians. I decided when the testimony of the Fathers was sufficiently unanimous. Even if I followed an author I thought was sound, it was my decision which author to trust. I essentially made up my own religion. The ultimate decision was always mine. This was the biggest difference I noticed after becoming a Catholic: finding the locus of authority truly outside myself. It was like having cold water thrown over me on a hot day — a bit of a shock but very refreshing.

The refreshment I felt at no longer having to make up my own religion was the refreshment that comes from beginning to learn a bit of humility, as well as from leaving off a job that was never meant to be mine in the first place. Of course, this does not mean that I denigrate reason. The Catholic tra-

dition of reasoning, and Catholic esteem for human intellect, are well known. True and genuine authority is in no way contrary to reason, but rather its friend and ally.

With this, I finish. May many others, with

the help of God, find their way into Peter's barque, there to begin an eternity of praise for their grace of conversion. *Benedicamus Domino et gratias agamus ei.* (Let us bless the Lord and give thanks to Him.) ■

A WORD TO CERTAIN CATHOLIC PARENTS

Biff Rocha

ON RETURNING TO CATHOLICISM VIA CAMPUS CRUSADE FOR CHRIST

There is a spiritual hunger raging inside young people today: They hunger for values that are not relative, knowledge that has foundation, and meaning that is not arbitrary. I have heard many parents report regretfully that their sons and daughters are lost to the Church. But I can tell you parents: They need solid food. Once they awaken to their need, they may return to their Father's house, where even "the servants have bread enough and to spare" (Lk. 15:17). I have seen it because I have been there. I, too, am a prodigal son of the Church.

I grew up in a Catholic family. We went to church. I went through the C.C.D. program: Baptism, First Communion, and Confirmation. I don't recall asking a lot of questions: I sort of accepted whatever the priest or sister told me. From time to time I would ask my parents a question: I know now that their responses were incomplete, sometimes incorrect. After my First Communion, my parents stopped attending church. After my Confirmation, so did I. Going through public high school, I did not have much use for religion. I prayed every night, and once in a while felt guilt

for teenage transgressions, but mainly I slept late on Sunday mornings, and religion faded into the background of life.

College! New places, new faces, new ideas. I enrolled at a reputable public university, and in the first week had two surprises. In line at my dining hall, I was approached by someone asking me to fill out a survey on religion. Since I was waiting in line anyway, I humored the guy and filled it out. Religious survey? Someone cares about that here? No one at home had seemed to. Then, when I walked into my class on Western Civilization, the reading list included "the Bible" and time was scheduled on the syllabus for discussion of the Gospels. What? Jesus in the classroom? What about the separation of church and state? I thought we were going to be learning historical facts, not reviewing cultural mythology.

Maybe my surpassing ignorance is unique to me. Maybe not. I tell my story because it is like the stories I have heard from many young people. I will say this: Whereas at home Jesus had been presented as about as consequential as the Easter Bunny or the Tooth Fairy, here in Western Civ class I was introduced to the Jesus whose life had changed the world. This novelty — Jesus Christ the historical person — left me dumbfounded.

Soon enough some students from Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC) came to my door following up on the survey I had filled out, offering

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