

**A JOURNEY BACK TO THE  
AUTHENTIC APOSTOLIC CHURCH**



# **A JOURNEY BACK TO THE AUTHENTIC APOSTOLIC CHURCH**

**- Exploring the Historical, Biblical  
and Doctrinal Roots – A  
Personal Perspective**

**PRABHATH DE SILVA**

Second and Revised Edition  
2025

*Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur:* Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith  
Archbishop of Colombo

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**To**  
**The blessed memory**  
**of**  
**My beloved Mother**

# Contents

Foreword	viii
Introduction	ix
Preface	xi
Chapter 1: My Journey from Catholicism to Protestantism	1
Chapter 2: Coming Home (My Spiritual Journey Back to Catholicism from Protestantism) and the Protestant Dogma of Sola Scriptura	15
Chapter 3: Apostolic Foundation of Christ's Church, Peter's Primacy, and Apostolic Succession	35
Chapter 4: The Protestant Dogma of Salvation by Faith Alone (Sola Fide)	56
Chapter 5: The Intercession of St. Mary and Other Saints in Heaven	69
Chapter 6: The Sacrament of Holy Eucharist	80
Chapter 7: Mary, 'The Mother of My Lord'	103
Chapter 8: The Immaculate Conception and Perpetual Virginity of Mary	116
Chapter 9: Use of Images and Statues: Do Catholics Worship Images and Statues?	130
Chapter 10: Baptism of Infants and Children of Christian Households: Infant Baptism	144

Chapter 11: Death, Hell, Heaven, Mortal and Venial Sins, and Purgatory	151
Chapter 12: Has the Second Vatican Council changed the Doctrinal Position of the Catholic Church on Salvation and Evangelisation? - The Papal Proclamation ' <i>Dominus Iesus</i> ' of 2000 - Papal Infallibility	199
Chapter 13: Conclusion: The Reformation Re- visited	221
Bibliography	248

## Foreword

This is a book in which history is mended, hearts are healed and the Kingdom of heaven is re-presented in clarity, truth and with re-vivifying strength.

Prabhath de Silva brings all the organisational and analytical skills that his legal career has provided him with and revisits the Catholicism of his youth.

The story of the schism in the Western Church is complicated by self-serving and often mis-presentations that become false narratives.

De Silva weighs the evidence of history, beginning with the Scriptures, moving through the Apostolic Fathers to arrive at a judgment about the truth and vitality of the Catholic Church.

As a pilgrim who has lived both sides of the debate, he cuts across all sectarian prejudice and carries the reader with him into a judgment that is both spiritually authentic and intellectually powerful. The Church that Jesus founded is the home of all who love Christ, honour the Father, follow the Spirit and care about truth.

Spirit and truth are married in this exhilarating account of the rediscovery of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.

Dr. Gavin Ashenden LLB, BA, MTh, Ph. D

Former Anglican Canon theologian, Chaplain to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Missionary Bishop of Church of England, Senior Lecturer at the University of Sussex, BBC presenter, journalist and author.



# Introduction

By Micheál Ó Fearghail

Prabhath de Silva, a lawyer and a former district judge in Sri Lanka, has written an important and engaging account of his journey back to the Catholic Faith after thirty-six years in Protestantism. De Silva sets the scene with a detailed explanation of the history and the ethnic and religious groups of his native Sri Lanka.

“All roads lead to Rome”. For some of us, the road is long and winding. Yet Our Lord has His own individual path set out for each of us.

A cradle Catholic, de Silva spent his childhood deeply inspired by the example and prayers of his devout Catholic mother. Yet in his late adolescence and teens, he was honest enough to enquire more deeply into his Christian Faith. The enthusiastic evangelism of Protestants, combined with the sudden slackening of the Catholic missionary effort particularly after the Second Vatican Council, and the inability of his Catholic acquaintances to answer some of the common Protestant objections to Catholic doctrine, his personal reading of the Bible, books on the 16th century Protestant Reformation and on Protestantism written by authors with Protestant bias led him to embrace Protestantism as more Christ-centred and Biblical. Yet the same intellectual rigour and honesty which had led him out of the Catholic Church as a young man, led him to an ever-closer critique of the Protestant position after 35 years, and to his eventual return to ‘The Pillar and Foundation of Truth, that is, the Church’ in 2018. After a thorough study of early Church history and Church Fathers, the Bible and the formation of the Bible Canon, De Silva found for himself the Biblical and historical basis of Catholic Faith, and also the answer to the initially plausible arguments of the Protestants. De Silva’s legal and judicial mind makes itself known in his very thorough and well-referenced exploration of the important issues which divide Protestants from Catholics and, as he demonstrates, the way that Protestant dogmas are mistaken and can be refuted. Each chapter is devoted to a particular dogma that has been questioned, and he provides irrefutable logic and exhaustive references to prove his case.

De Silva does not intrude his personal life over much into his exposition, yet one may say that the unseen operation of his mother's decades-long prayers for her beloved son pervades his long path back to Rome: that Rome which, as Hilaire Belloc remarked, 'is alone the place where the human spirit has hearth and home'.

For anybody wishing to find a fair and readable exposition of the Catholic Faith, whether a Catholic already who is nonetheless hazy on various points, or one who left the Catholic Church for Protestantism, or a Protestant seeking a reliable account that will answer many of his questions about Catholicism, this timely book will be a valuable asset.

Micheál Ó Fearghail, BSc (Hons) (Melbourne), Diploma of Education (La Trobe), Diploma of Religious Studies (Church History) (London)

Cork, Ireland

## **Preface**

### **[Second and Revised Edition]**

The First Edition of this book was published in Sri Lanka, my native country, in 2021. This is the Second and Revised Edition published in 2025.

I was a cradle Catholic and, in my late adolescence and teens, I began to enquire more deeply into my Christian Faith. My interactions with the enthusiastic Protestants filled with missionary zeal, the inability of my Catholic acquaintances to answer some of the common Protestant objections to distinctive Catholic teachings and practices, my personal reading of the Bible, books on the 16th century Protestant Reformation and on Protestantism written by authors with Protestant bias led me to embrace Protestantism as ‘more Christ-centred’ and ‘Biblical’ in 1982, when I was 22 years old.

After a long spiritual journey of 35 years as a Protestant, I began to engage in a thorough personal study of early Church history and Church Fathers, the Bible and the formation of the Biblical Canon, the Apostolic Foundation of Christ’s Church, Peter’s Primacy, Apostolic Succession, Sacred Apostolic Tradition, Intercession of Mary and the Saints in Heaven, the Sacrament of Holy Communion, Baptism, the Catholic dogmas on Mary, Purgatory, the Religious Use of Statutes for Christians, Papal Infallibility: and re-visiting the 16th century Protestant Reformation and the distinctive Protestant dogmas of Sola Scriptura and Sola Fide. This helped me discover for myself, the historical, Biblical and doctrinal basis of Catholic Faith, and also the answers to the common arguments of the Protestants against the distinctive Catholic dogmas. These are the topics that are discussed in this book, based on my studies. The more I studied these topics, the more I became fully convinced of the historical, Biblical and doctrinal basis of the truth of Catholicism. I came to the irresistible conclusion, inter alia, that the Catholic Church is the one and only authentic apostolic Church established by our Lord Jesus Christ. In 2018, I finally decided to revert to the Catholic Church after a long spiritual journey of 36 years in Protestantism.

I also found that many Protestants in the western countries had embraced Catholicism after studying the early Church history, her

beliefs, the early Church Fathers, the Apostolic Foundation of Christ's Church, Peter's Primacy and the Apostolic Succession. I was encouraged by the fact that there were striking similarities between their own conversion stories (from the conversion story of John Henry Newman in 1843 to the stories of Scott Hahn, a Presbyterian minister who embraced the Catholic Faith in 1986, and of other Protestants converts to Catholicism in the last three or four decades) and my own conversion story to Catholicism. This book, I believe, is the first book on such a story written by a non-western writer.

I owe a very special debt of gratitude to Dr. Gavin Ashenden, a former Anglican Canon theologian, Chaplain to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Missionary Bishop of Church of England, Senior Lecturer at the University of Sussex, BBC presenter, journalist and author for writing a forward to this book.

With a profound sense of gratitude and appreciation, I thank Micheál Ó Fearghail for reading the manuscript and for writing an introduction. Michael's excellent suggestions, comments and editing immensely helped me improve the quality of the text in many ways. Michael has been a great source of strength, inspiration and guidance in this endeavor.

I extend my sincere thanks to His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, Archbishop of Colombo for taking time off His Eminence's busy schedule to read my book and for granting the Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur for its Second and Revised Edition.

With warm sincerity and appreciation, I thank Rev. Fr. Dr. Noel Dias, Professor G. P. V. Somaratne and Jim Anderson for their blurbs.

Alice Eichelman Redmond, Mrs. Catherine Wade Onarato, Mrs. Janice Ferdinand and Professor Ratnajeewan Hoole read the manuscript of the first edition at different stages of its formation and offered their suggestions and comments for the improvement of the text. Catherine was instrumental in introducing Micheál Ó Fearghail to me. Janice was instrumental in introducing Rajeev Kulendren to me for the task of designing a cover for the book. Rajeev designed a beautiful cover for the book. I remember all of them with gratitude.

I thank my wife and daughter for the patience and support they extended to me during the long hours I spent on writing this book over a period of more three years.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Peter Paul van Bekkum, Chief Executive Officer of Mybestseller BV in Rotterdam, and to his staff for their courtesy and for their prompt answers to my queries regarding the services of Bookmundo for independent publishing, printing and distribution.

Last but not least, I thank every individual who helped me in this endeavor though I have not mentioned their names here.

Prabhath de Silva

01<sup>st</sup> February 2025



# **Chapter 1: My Journey from Catholicism to Protestantism**

## **1:1 Christianity in Sri Lanka where I was born and where I live**

I was born to a Catholic family in Sri Lanka in 1959. Sri Lanka (formerly known as Ceylon) where I was born and where I live, is a scenically beautiful Island in the Indian Ocean situated at the southern tip of the Indian sub-continent. Sri Lanka has attracted the attention of ancient and modern colonial empires, foreign countries, merchants, travellers, missionaries and emissaries over the centuries, owing to its strategic and prominent location at a crossroads of maritime routes traversing the Indian Ocean, and its commodity products such as spices, gems ,coconuts, coffee, tea and rubber [Pliny the Elder, 77 AD - English Translation 1855: Book VI Chapter 22; Nicholas and Paranavitana 1961: 1-16; see also Biedermann and Strathern 2017: 2-12 ].

Sri Lanka's largest ethnic group is the Sinhalese, constituting 74.9% of the population. The Buddhist missionaries from India during the reign of Emperor Asoka introduced Buddhism to Sri Lanka in the 3rd Century BC, and it soon became the established formal religion of the ancient Sinhalese monarchy as well as of the majority Sinhalese people and of some Tamil inhabitants [Nicholas and Paranavitana

1961: 32-53; Somaratne [https://www.academia.edu/37140971/Tamil\\_Buddhism\\_in\\_Sri\\_Lanka](https://www.academia.edu/37140971/Tamil_Buddhism_in_Sri_Lanka)].

The Sinhalese majority community is predominantly Buddhist [93% of the Sinhalese population] and only 7% of the Sinhalese population is Christian [Census of Population and Housing of 2012, Department of Census, Sri Lanka]. Hinduism has been in existence in Sri Lanka since at least the 2nd or the 3rd century BC [Nicholas and Paranavitana 1961: 58]. The Sri Lankan Tamils are predominantly Hindu [85% of the Sri Lankan Tamil population]. The Indian Tamil population of Sri Lanka is also predominantly Hindu [93% of their population]. Only 7% of their population is Christian [Census of Population and Housing of 2012, Department of Census, Sri Lanka]. A 15% of the Sri Lankan Tamil population is Christian [Census of Population and Housing of 2012, Department of Census, Sri Lanka]. There are 22500 Tamil Buddhists constituting 1% of both Sri Lankan and Indian Tamil population [Daily Mirror -25 February 2016].

Islam was brought to the Island by Muslim settlers from the Arabian Gulf, Persia and India, beginning in the 8th Century AD [Nicholas and Paranavitana 1961: op. cit, 161-174; see also, Devaraja 1994 : Chapter 1]. Malays who are descendants of Malay settlers brought by the Dutch colonial rulers from Malaysia also profess Islam [Ansaldo & Lim, 2014: 100-118]. Those who profess Islam constitute a 9.3 % of Sri Lanka's population [Census of Population and Housing of 2012, Department of Census, Sri Lanka].

Sri Lanka's tiny minority groups include the Malays, Burghers, Chetties and the Veddahs. They constitute 0.05 % of Sri Lanka's population. The Veddahs are Sri Lanka's indigenous people [Seligmann and Seligmann 1911]. Chetties are descendants of Tamil-speaking people who migrated from the South of India during the Portuguese rule in the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka [Wickramasinghe 2015 : 165]. Malays are descendants of Malay settlers brought by the Dutch colonial rulers [Ansaldo & Lim, 2014: pp. 100-118]. The Burghers are a Eurasian community of mixed origin, descended from the marriages between the natives and European colonists mainly from Portugal, the Netherlands and the UK. The Burghers are Christians [de Silva Jayasuriya 2000: 253-259 ; see also, Ferdinands 1995].

The Portuguese were the first European Christian colonial power to arrive in Sri Lanka in 1505, when it was divided into three



independent native kingdoms: namely Kotte, Kandy and Jaffna. Their presence in Sri Lanka's maritime provinces between 1505 and 1656 AD began as an interaction of trade and commerce, and later developed into colonial rule in those provinces. During the Portuguese presence in the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka, Catholicism was introduced by the Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries.

The maritime provinces of Sri Lanka came under the rule of The Dutch East India Company after its armies defeated the Portuguese in a series of battles between 1640 and 1658 [Winus 1971: 87-172; Goonewardene: 1958]. The Dutch soon introduced laws proscribing Catholicism in Sri Lanka and introducing Protestant Christianity (Calvinism). Through the brave and zealous endeavours of Catholic missionaries from Goa – a territory of the Portuguese in India – the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka, which had become an outlawed underground church, survived and grew amidst persecution during the Dutch occupation [Perniola, Catholic Church in Sri Lanka, The Dutch Period Volumes I and II, 1983]. The Dutch rule in the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka ended in 1796 [de Silva 2005: 237 -248], when the English East India Company took over the control of those provinces [de Silva 2005: 275 -285].

In 1802, the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka became a Crown colony of the British [de Silva 2005: 286]. In 1815, the British became the colonial masters of the entire Island when the Chiefs of the interior Kandyan Kingdom, with the blessings of the Buddhist priests, in order to replace the cruel and despotic King of Kandy, Sri Wickrema Rajasinghe, ceded sovereignty to the British monarch. This was ratified by a treaty known as the Kandyan Convention [de Silva 2005: 287 - 306].

From the beginning of their rule, the British colonial administration adopted a policy of religious freedom and tolerance for all religions and removed all penal restrictions imposed on the Catholics in Sri Lanka by the Dutch. The Catholic Church emerged as the largest Christian church in the Island. [Tennent 1850: 90]. During the 19th century, the British permitted missionaries to come to Sri Lanka to engage in missionary activities such as establishing congregations, schools and charitable institutions. These included the Catholic missionaries (from France, Belgium, Ireland, Italy, and Goa), Anglican, Methodist and Baptist missionaries (from the British Isles) and Congregationalist missionaries (from the United States). These missionaries established their respective networks of schools and

charitable institutions throughout the Island, in addition to establishing congregations [Tennent 1850: 77-111]. In 1883, Salvation Army missionaries from Britain arrived in Sri Lanka and started their evangelistic and social service activities. In the early 20th century, when Sri Lanka was still a colony of the British, missionaries from the Assemblies of God, an American Pentecostal denomination, introduced their brand of Christianity to the Island. Later, other Pentecostal groups from Denmark and Sweden started missionary work in Sri Lanka during the last three decades of British colonial rule.

In 1948, Sri Lanka gained Independence from the British. In 1946, two years before independence, 64.5% Sri Lanka population were Buddhists, 19.8% Hindus, 6.6% were Muslims, and 9.1% were Christians [Census of Ceylon of 1946 Vol 1: Part 1]. The trends of polarization and marginalization on ethnicity, religion and language found their expression intensively in the political developments that took place during the post-colonial era.

In the post-Independence era, we see political, constitutional, economic and social changes amidst ethno- religious-linguistic-tensions and conflicts. According to the Census of Population and Housing of 2012, the total population of the country was 20,359,439 people [Census of Population and Housing of 2012, Department of Census, Sri Lanka]. It is estimated that the present population of Sri Lanka may approximately be 21.41 million people [<https://www.worldometers.info/>]. According to the Census of Housing and Population of 2012, 70.2% of Sri Lankans were Buddhists, 12.6% were Hindus, 9.7% were Muslims (mainly Sunni), 7.4% were Christians (Catholics 6.1 % and Protestants 1.3 %) and 0.05% others.

## **1:2 My Catholic Background and My Mother**

My mother was a pious Catholic lady with a strong Christian faith and moral character filled with patience, love and charity. When I was a child, my mother would keep me by her side on a mat after sunset whilst praying, and she was the first to tell me the story of the suffering and the atoning death of Christ on the Cross of Calvary for our sins, and I wholeheartedly believed. I still remember how it moved me to tears, when I was about five years old. It was my mother who first taught me about Jesus and His great sacrificial love for us. I believe that this had an indelible imprint upon me. As a child, at times when I fell sick, my mother would tell me, ‘Tell Jesus, he will heal you and

protect you.’ Later, throughout her life till her death at the ripe old age of 87, whenever I was sick or having a problem, she would repeat the same words ‘Tell Jesus, He will help you and protect you.’ My mother was the first instrument of God to inculcate in me a Christ-centered faith and trust in His love.

My mother possessed an uncompromising Christian Faith. This she seemed to have inherited from her father. She used to tell me a story about her father’s own uncompromising Christian Faith. Her father was the eldest child in a family of six children. After his parents passed away, he was in charge of the family. One of his younger brothers in his forties fell seriously sick. He, my maternal grandfather’s brother, was a father of three young children. Whilst he was in the hospital, his condition was getting critical and he was coming near to his death. At this time a Buddhist monk and a few villagers had come to my mother’s father. The Buddhist monk had told him, ‘I can heal your brother by performing a demonic ritual and offering. Will you permit me to do it in order to save him from death?’ My mother’s father had promptly said to the Buddhist monk, ‘If I permit you to perform a demonic ritual and offering to save my brother from death, even if it works, he will be bound to the Devil (Satan). Even if he lives longer after the demonic rituals and offerings, one day when he dies, he will go to Hell to be with the Devil (Satan). But if my brother dies now in his Christian Faith, he will go to Heaven to be with our Lord Jesus Christ.’ My maternal grandfather refused to accede to the request of the Buddhist priest. A few days later, my maternal grandfather’s younger brother passed away peacefully, having received the Sacraments of the Catholic Church. My mother had no compromising streak of syncretism in her. She had received sound religious formation or moulding in the pre-Vatican II Catholic era.

The Second Vatican Council ‘Reforms’ had still not been introduced to the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka until I was about 8 or 9 years old. Apart from the three Bible readings we heard at Mass, it was almost unusual in Catholic families to have a Bible at home for personal reading or family worship. Prayers in Catholic homes were liturgical prayers and the recitation of the Rosary. It was rather unusual to see Catholics praying spontaneously in their own words.

Bible stories, however, were taught to children at the Catechism classes and in the Sunday Schools. Catholicism was again taught in schools as a curriculum subject for Catholic students.

My Catholic mother was the first to share a Bible with me when I was a child. She had received the Bible from a Protestant evangelist. In the mid-1960s, the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka, pursuant to the reforms introduced by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), began to encourage her laity to read the Bible at home, and began to support the work of the Ceylon Bible Society in its Bible translation projects. With the emergence of a Catholic charismatic movement known as '*Kithu Dana Pubuduwa*' [Christian People's Renewal] in Sri Lanka, in the early 1970s, a small section of the Catholic laity who joined this movement began reading the Bible in their homes and praying spontaneously. In spite of these initiatives, personal Bible reading among the Catholic laity in their homes remained largely an unknown practice.

### **1:3 Missionary Zeal of Protestants**

Although the Second Vatican Council has not changed the official doctrinal position of the Catholic Church on evangelisation, the other religions, the other Christian communities in any manner, the missionary zeal of the Catholic Church for evangelisation has diminished since the Second Vatican Council in my country. This, I believe, is largely due to the misinterpretations, misconceptions or lack of proper reading of its statements (which I will discuss in detail in Chapter 12 of this book). In contrast, in my country the evangelical Protestant churches have actively been engaged in evangelisation over the past few decades. The result is the conversion to evangelical Protestantism [largely Pentecostalism] of hundreds of Catholics, members of mainline Protestant churches, Buddhists and Hindus.

The term 'evangelical Protestant' is used to describe those who profess the three main Protestant dogmas affirmed and asserted by Martin Luther, Zwingli and Calvin, the Reformers of the 16th century Protestant Reformation: *Sola Scriptura* [the Bible is the sole and infallible source of authority for the matters of faith, morals and the Church], *Sola Fide* [a person is saved or justified before God in a juridical sense by their faith alone solely in Jesus Christ's vicarious atonement for sins on the cross but not on the merits of their good works] and *Sola Gratia* [salvation is solely an act of God's free grace]. In fact, evangelical Protestant Christianity, of which Martin Luther was the founder, is today divided into thousands of denominations or sects with diverse interpretations of the Bible. You find evangelical Protestants in both mainline Protestant churches and free evangelical Pentecostal churches.

Evangelical Protestants in the mainline established Protestant churches such as Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Reformed or Presbyterian churches constitute the conservative or orthodox wings of those churches. They subscribe to teachings in their respective early Protestant Confessions of Faith of the 16th century Reformation. In many of these mainline established Protestant churches, you find liberal wings consisting of liberal Protestants who have been influenced by modernism, theological liberalism, Bible criticism and syncretism. There are also members known as moderates who are in between the conservative evangelical wings and the liberal wings. Among the mainline Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist churches, you may also find exclusively evangelical Protestant churches.

Charismatic Pentecostalism which emerged in the early 20th century America, as breakaway groups from the Methodist and Holiness movements, is also exclusively evangelical and accepts Luther's dogmas of Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, and Sola Gratia. The Pentecostals distinctively differ from the evangelicals of the mainline Protestant churches in that they, unlike the latter, claim that after coming to faith as an adult, a believer should necessarily receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and that the believer, after that Baptism, will receive the charismatic gifts of speaking in unknown tongues, prophesying, healing and miracles. The Pentecostals emphasise the experience of "coming to faith in Christ" at the age of understanding as the experience of being "born again". For them, every true believer should have the experiences of "being born again" and of "Holy Spirit Baptism" followed by the charismatic gifts of speaking in unknown tongues, prophesying, healing and miracles.

## **1:4 My Journey from Catholicism to Protestantism**

In my adolescence and teens (11-16), I found it fascinating to follow a number of Bible correspondence courses advertised in the newspapers by the evangelical Protestant groups. These correspondence courses had no doctrinal content but were very simple Bible reading exercises. The student was required to read each chapter of a Gospel and answer questions in an answer script based on the facts in each chapter without any doctrinal interpretation. On the completion of each chapter, I was required to send the answer script to their offices

by mail. After correction, it was sent back to me with the next lesson and question paper by post. I would eagerly wait for the next lesson every time. When the postman came and rang his bicycle bell at the gate of our garden, I would run to him with excitement to see whether I had letters from their offices. On successful completion of every course, I would get a certificate. In between, they would send me beautifully printed tracts and booklets with Bible verses. I loved to read them.

I vividly remember one incident when I was about 12 years old. One morning, I heard our door bell being rung by a visitor. I went up to see who the visitor was. I saw a gentleman standing near the door with a small bag. I opened the door, and he gave me a leaflet from his bag. I thanked him and took it. I began to read it. It was a simple tract introducing Jesus with a few Bible verses. At the end of the tract, the reader was invited to write to the office of the organisation that was responsible for the distribution of the tract, if he or she wished to know more about Christ. I wrote to them immediately. It was a simple 4 lesson correspondence course based on the Gospel of St. John. I followed this course with great enthusiasm. At the end of the course, they would ask, ‘Do you believe in Jesus Christ?’ etc. ending with an invitation to say a written prayer that some evangelical Protestants would call ‘The Sinner’s Prayer’. It is also called the ‘Consecration Prayer’ and ‘Salvation Prayer’. It is a simple prayer of repentance, prayed by individuals who being convinced that every human being is a sinner after the fall of Adam and Eve, and being convinced of the presence of sin in their lives, have the desire to form or renew a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ believing in the atoning death and resurrection of Christ. It is a popular practice in some evangelical Protestant groups to get the person with whom they have shared the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to recite this prayer. At Billy Graham Evangelistic Association’s rallies and televised messages, at the end, he or the preacher would ask the hearers to say it as follows:

“Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Savior. In Your Name. Amen.”

Some evangelical Protestants view reciting the ‘Sinner’s Prayer’ as the turning point in life defining one’s salvation and assurance of salvation, whilst others consider it as the beginning of a new or renewed relationship with Christ. After the ‘Sinner’s Prayer’, at the end of the

last lesson, the correspondence course student had been advised to go to the nearest 'Bible believing' church. As I was only 12 years old, I really did not know how to discern what is meant by 'a Bible believing' church and how to find it. I, however, vividly remember writing to them that I would love to serve the Lord. As I was only 12 years old, they replied to me that I was too young to make such a decision.

When I was in Grade 8 in school, there was a lesson in our history textbook on the Reformation of Luther in the 16th Century. As Luther was portrayed in the lesson as a Reformer who stood up against the corrupt practice of the sale of Indulgences, I saw in him a great personality. In later years, I began to read books on the Reformation and Luther, written mostly by Protestant writers and other Western writers with some bias towards Luther and Protestantism. This and my personal reading of the Bible with the evangelical Protestant literature gradually drew me more and more towards evangelical Protestantism. It was a gradual process over a few years. At the age of 22, a few months before I was enrolled and admitted as an Attorney-at-Law of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka after the completion of the prescribed course of studies in Law, I decided to embrace Protestantism with a firm and sincere conviction that Protestantism was more Christ-centered and Biblical than Catholicism. This I did again with a sincere love for Christ in my heart.

My devout Catholic mother, being the gentle, patient and kind person that she had always been, did not try to stop me from embracing Protestantism with any persuasion, argument or threat, but remained close to me and was pleased to see that my faith was centered on Christ and that I had a great love for Christ. Her love and affection for me continued throughout 30 years of my 35-year journey in Protestantism until she passed away in 2012 at the ripe old age of 87.

My father had ceased to be a practicing Catholic since his forties, and had embraced some rationalist and atheistic ideas. Being a liberal, he had no objections to my conversion to Protestantism. My father in spite of his rationalist and atheistic ideas did not try to persuade his children and his wife not to practice Catholicism. My father, after a long journey in atheism, in his last days, reverted to the Catholic faith and received the sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Extreme Unction [Anointing of the Sick] before his death in 1995. My parents were selflessly devoted to their children and provided us with every comfort they could afford with what they earned as teachers.

Neither my mother nor my Catholic relatives, nor Catholic friends, could convincingly counter my Protestant beliefs. For example, when I told them that the dogmas of intercession of Mary and the Saints and the practice of asking them to pray for us were extra-biblical, instead of countering my argument with sound Catholic apologetics, they would say that it was more effective to ask for a favour from God through the prayers of a person much closer to God than we.

They did not, however, claim that we could not reach God directly through prayer. They conceded that we could reach God directly in prayer through Christ. I was not convinced. I would tell them that God loved us and we could always reach His Throne of Grace directly and effectively with our prayers in the name of Christ who loved us. I remember my mother quoting Matthew 16:18 “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it”), in one of her very humble, gentle and mild attempts to convince me of the truth of the claim that the Catholic Church was the Church our Lord Jesus Christ built on Peter. With my little knowledge I had acquired from the Protestant tracts and literature, I would repeat the evangelical Protestant interpretation of Matthew 16:18 that the rock upon which Christ would build His Church is not Peter but Peter’s confession that Jesus is ‘the Christ, the Son of the living God’. I must humbly admit that I had definitely not arrived at this opinion after a thorough and careful study of the text of this verse. It was a mere acceptance of the Protestant claim without any critical examination or analysis. Neither my mother, nor our Catholic relatives and friends, had enough knowledge of Catholic apologetics to defend the Catholic claim. Now, after thirty-nine years of water has flowed under the bridge in my life, I am writing about this to draw the attention of the Catholic Church to the imperative need for teaching Catholic Apologetics to her laity, to equip them for defending their Catholic Faith. The laity ought to know, and be able to defend, the reasons why they believe the dogmas of the Church.

In 1982, I formally left the Catholic Church and began to worship with a local congregation of the Methodist Church at Kalutara on Sunday mornings, whilst on and off in the evenings attending Sunday Worship in a congregation of the Dutch Reformed Church (now known as Christian Reformed Church of Sri Lanka ) in a suburb of Colombo.

In 1983, I wrote an article entitled “Martin Luther: The Reformer who changed the course of History” in order to commemorate the 500th Birth Anniversary of Luther. After I had finished writing my article, I met an American missionary from the



Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, a very conservative Lutheran denomination, in order get his comments to improve the text of my article. In mid- 1983, my article was published in ‘The Herald’, the official organ of the Dutch Reformed Church. I developed a close friendship with the American missionaries from the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) and learnt a great deal of Protestant dogmas of conservative Lutheranism from them. The pastors whom I befriended in the Dutch Reformed Church and these LCMS missionaries enlightened me on the dangers of modernist, syncretic and liberal teachings that had crept into mainline Protestant denominations. They influenced me to distance myself from these teachings, and from the excesses of charismatic Pentecostalism. I owe a debt of gratitude to them for enlightening me on the dangers of theological modernism, theological syncretism and theological liberalism in Christian denominations, and on the excesses of charismatic Pentecostalism. By this time, I had become a ‘Bible only believing’, mainstream conservative Protestant.

In 1985, I attended a course on Public International Law at The Hague Academy of International Law situated at the Peace Palace where the International Court of Justice is housed. During this visit to The Netherlands, I made contacts with some people who belonged to a very conservative Calvinist (Reformed) denomination. In 1989, I visited the Netherlands again to read a paper entitled: “Sri Lanka in Grotius ‘De Jure Praedae’ (1604) and ‘Mare Liberum’ (1608) “at the Legal, Cultural and Historical Society of the Universities of Amsterdam [ Sri Lanka Journal of International Law 1990, Vol. II ]. My friends in this conservative Calvinist denomination impressed me very much by their way of life. At every meal, they would read the Bible and pray. On Sundays, they would go to Worship Service both in the morning and evening. On Sundays, they would not watch TV and movies. Nor would they buy newspapers. On Sundays, they would not go shopping but keep away from all worldly things except from acts of mercy and necessity. The friends in this particular Protestant church influenced me and shaped my strong Protestant ideas (Calvinist) more than any other group, though in recent times, this church too has relaxed some of its very orthodox Calvinist dogmas and practices.

My personal studies on basic Reformed Theology drew me to the Dutch Reformed Church in 1992 as a communicant member, and I came to the conclusion that Calvinism is the ‘purest interpretation of the Bible’. I fully subscribed to the teachings of the early Confessions of the 16th and 17th Century Reformed and Presbyterian Protestants, namely the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons

of Dort, the 17th century Presbyterian Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms. This I did, because I had become convinced that the Biblical teachings were accurately expounded in these confessions. Gradually I became a staunch Calvinist Protestant and later an ‘ultra-orthodox Calvinist’ as some of my Protestant friends would jokingly describe me. This ‘ultra-orthodox Calvinism’ in me induced me to leave the Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka for some time, mainly because of their ecumenical relations with the Protestant churches in Sri Lanka and abroad, into which liberal, modernist and syncretic trends had crept, and with the ecumenical bodies where such churches have membership, even though the Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka is an evangelical conservative confessional Reformed Church with no such teachings within it. And I went on a very isolated spiritual path, striving and taking every endeavour to form ‘a true’ Reformed church. After a time, I realised that this goal of ‘a true’ Reformed church – a more orthodox Reformed Church – could not be achieved in spite of my sincere labours and commitment to the cause, and so, several years later, I again started worshipping with the Dutch Reformed Church.

During my spiritual journey as a ‘Bible only-believing’ Protestant in the mainstream conservative Protestantism, I had accepted, *inter alia*, the following Protestant beliefs:

1. **Sola scriptura:** I wholeheartedly believed that the Bible was the sole authority for matters of faith, morals and Church;

2. **Sola fide:** I wholeheartedly believed that a person was saved only by faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ on the Cross for his or her sins but not by his good works. I believed that once a person genuinely came to such faith with repentance for his sins, he had been saved or had received everlasting life, and would have the assurance of salvation. In other words, like any other evangelical Protestant believer, I believed that the assurance of salvation was a once and for all experience;

3. **Sola gratia:** I wholeheartedly believed that salvation is solely an act of God’s free grace;

4. **Rejection of Transubstantiation:** I rejected the dogma of transubstantiation. I believed that the bread and wine in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, did not change to the real Body and real Blood of Christ as taught in the Catholic Church. I believed that bread and

wine were symbols that represented the Body of Christ and Blood in heaven. I believed that Christ was only spiritually present in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, accepting the Calvinist interpretation. I also believed that as the sacrifice of Christ's Body and Blood on the Cross of Calvary was a finished work, and that the Catholic Eucharist was a vain repetition that amounted to Idolatry;

**5. Rejection of the Sacrament of Reconciliation:** I believed that the Sacrament of Reconciliation practised in the Catholic Church was not necessary as we could confess our sins directly to God with genuine repentance and ask for pardon;

**6. Rejection of the dogma of intercession of Mary and Saints in heaven (or prayers of Mary and Saints in heaven for us):** I believed that the dogmas of intercession of Mary and Saints in heaven and the practice of invocation of Mary and Saints in heaven (or asking them to pray for us) are distinctively extra-biblical heresies or innovations introduced by the Catholic Church;

**7. Rejection of Purgatory and the Use of Statues:** I believed that the use of statues in the churches and the veneration of statues, and purgatory, were again un-biblical innovations introduced by the Catholic Church. Like other Protestants, I sincerely and strongly believed that Catholics 'worship' statues and that it amounted to idolatry.

I believed that a true Church had three marks, as pointed out in the early Reformed and Presbyterian Confessions of Faith [Belgic Confession of faith of 1561 and Westminster Confession of faith of 1647], namely

- (a) it should preach the Gospel according to the Bible;
- (b) it should administer Sacraments according to the Bible and
- (c) it should exercise discipline according to the Bible.

Applying these standards according to conservative Protestantism (Reformed), I concluded that the Catholic Church was no longer a true Church, although the 'remnants of Divine Grace' are in that Church. I judged the mainstream Protestant churches into which theological liberalism and theological modernism had crept, according to the same standards. Nevertheless, I was 'charitable enough' to strongly believe that although the Catholic Church and those Protestant churches with liberal and modernist trends, were no longer 'true' churches, there had always been a segment of true Christian believers in the Catholic Church and in those Protestant churches. I believed that it was important for every Christian to join 'that true visible Church'.