

My wife was brought up as a Plymouth Brethren, a conservative Anabaptist Protestant sect that first appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as an offshoot of and reaction against the Anglican Church. The modern Protestant preoccupation with the Rapture, along with the entire Dispensationalist theology, has its roots in this tiny Protestant sect. My background was more varied, as my father moved from church to church, denomination to denomination, all within the same general orbit of fundamentalist Christianity, including an extended stint in the Plymouth Brethren churches. I was convinced that the Roman Catholics were my theological enemies. If I ever thought of the Orthodox, I would have considered them as merely Catholics without the Pope, or Catholic lite.

From time to time my wife and I would visit various Charismatic and Pentecostal churches—sometimes to see the latest Christian movie on the rapture, or for a concert by a Contemporary Christian band, or just because a friend invited us to ‘come and see’. Looking back on it now, it seems the very fact that I would try out different denominations, and was willing to flirt with the Charismatics, is evidence that I was looking for a fuller expression of Christianity, something more vibrant, more vital, more true.

In the late 1980s things deteriorated; for reasons neither of us could really explain, my wife and I grew increasingly uneasy with and in the fundamentalist/evangelical milieu. I was briefly tempted by Eastern Orthodoxy after I began reading “Facing East” by Frederica Mathewes-Green, but I never actually attended a service—for about two-thirds of the way through that book, I came across evidence of the veneration of Mary among the Orthodox, something I dismissed as a Roman Catholic doctrine, a contemptible recrudescence of paganism clothed in Christian garb. The veneration of Mary, being one of the most visible aspects of Roman Catholicism, must therefore be wrong.

Having rejected Orthodoxy, I found myself attracted to the Lutheran church, where I exchanged one theological system for another, one style of worship for another, one vocabulary for another. But I discovered that even the so-called ‘confessional Lutherans’ are by no means monolithic. The ‘saltwater Districts’, being those bounded by salt water, were more liberal in doctrine and practice than those in the heartland. And even the so-called ‘confessional’ Lutheran churches had a great variation in their liturgy, and often refused to fellowship with each other over minor points of doctrine.

Eventually I began to reexamine my distaste for the veneration of Mary. My Protestant background had convinced me that the Virgin Mary was simply a girl making a cameo appearance in the Christmas pageant, then fading into the background. However, the scriptural evidence for Mariology—instead of being slight and easily dismissed—turned out to be quite extensive. My Protestant background had ill equipped me for this sort of investigation. Eventually it became clear that the standard Protestant arguments against Mariology were weak at best, showing strong evidence of the logical fallacy called "Begging the Question".

After 20+ years as a fundamentalist, and another 20 years as a Lutheran, my wife and I became Orthodox; we finally found the church in its fullness. "We have seen the true light. We have received the heavenly Spirit; we have found the true faith, in worshiping the indivisible Trinity; for He hath saved us."