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By Greg Warner

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WACO (ABP)—Evangelical philosopher [Francis Beckwith](#) has become a Roman Catholic and, as a result, has resigned as president—and as a member—of the Evangelical Theological Society.

Beckwith, associate professor of [church-state studies at Baylor University](#), said the decision he made to seek “full communion” with the Roman Catholic Church grew from his desire to find “historical and theological continuity” with the early Christian church.

Francis Beckwith

Beckwith, famous for his arguments against abortion and for the right to teach intelligent design, has been [a leading figure](#) in the Evangelical

Theological Society, the prominent academic society for conservative Protestants.

But his views on the church and society, which he acknowledged are “Catholic-friendly,” have drawn criticism from some Baptists. He served as associate director of Baylor’s [J.M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies](#) from 2003 to early 2007, despite protests from descendents of the institute’s namesake, who said Beckwith’s views denied church-state separation. His application for tenure at Baylor was first denied but granted on appeal.

Because Beckwith was a Catholic in his youth, he needed only to go to confession and receive absolution to become Catholic again, he said.

The ETS executive committee issued a response May 8 praising Beckwith but calling his resignation “appropriate” in light of the differing belief systems of evangelicals and Catholics.

“The work of the Evangelical Theological Society as a scholarly forum proceeds on the basis that ‘the Bible alone and the Bible in its entirety, is the word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs,’” the statement said.

The Catholic Church accepts writings of the Apocrypha as authoritative Scripture, ETS said, and “extends the quality of infallibility” to certain doctrines and pronouncements of the pope and the church hierarchy.

“We are grateful for Dr. Beckwith’s past association with ETS, and we pray that God will continue to use his considerable gifts,” the leaders concluded, noting Hassell Bullock of Wheaton College, ETS president-elect, will serve as acting president until new officers are elected.

Beckwith has been a member of the Evangelical Theological Society since 1984. He said his return to Catholicism was unexpected. But in January, he

began reading “some of the more sophisticated works on justification by Catholic authors,” as well as writings by the early church fathers.

“I became convinced that the Early Church is more Catholic than Protestant and that the Catholic view of justification, correctly understood, is biblically and historically defensible. Even though I also believe that the Reformed view is biblically and historically defensible, I think the Catholic view has more explanatory power to account for both all the biblical texts on justification as well as the church’s historical understanding of salvation prior to the Reformation all the way back to the ancient church of the first few centuries.

Beckwith is author of more than a dozen books, including *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview* and *Law, Darwinism and Public Education*.

He holds a doctorate and master’s degree in philosophy from Fordham University, as well as a law degree from Washington University School of Law in St. Louis. Before going to Baylor, he taught philosophy at Princeton University. He is a fellow of the [Discovery Institute](#), chief advocate for teaching intelligent design in public schools.

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