

Enrique Fernandez  
(1929-?)

## I discovered the Word of God



Born in Madrid to devout parents in 1929, I studied in the Metropolitan Seminary of Oviedo for twelve years. I was ordained on 30 May 1954. I then became a Roman Catholic chaplain in a convent of nuns in Navelgas, a tranquil village in Asturias, Spain. In the evenings I usually visited the village priest, an older man who was companionable and friendly. One night in 1960 he showed me a pamphlet entitled 'The Gift' (an excerpt from the autobiographical writings of the former Canadian priest, Charles Chiniquy [see testimony no. 51, to be published soon). I asked permission to borrow it and read it.

The pamphlet created an intense desire to read the Bible. I wanted to know if there was a real difference between the Roman Catholic and Protestant Bibles. With holding my identity, I wrote to the address on the pamphlet, requesting a Bible or a New Testament.

I began to study the New Testament, especially Acts and Hebrews. As I did, a conviction grew that the Roman Catholic Church had deviated from the Bible and that its priesthood had usurped Christ's place. The discovery of the Word of God became a thrilling adventure for me. As I continued reading, I felt the cutting reality of Hebrews 4:12: 'The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.'

## Theology Not the Bible

During my four years of theological studies, I had never seriously read the Bible. For me, the Holy Scriptures were only consulted as a reference book in the

study of Roman Catholic dogma. I knew only those parts of the Bible which were included in the Mass and in the texts of the Roman breviary.

Salvation, the Roman Catholic Church said, depended on absolution from sins by a priest, and whoever refused to confess his mortal sins to a priest was eternally condemned. But I could not find in Acts or in any other New Testament book any statement that this was so. All the sacred writers insisted that man must go directly to God for forgiveness.

On the other hand, in Hebrews I read very clearly that Christ had been offered once for all for the sinner. 'Then,' I said, 'how dared the Council of Trent declare in 1562 that in the Mass Christ offers himself by the hands of the priest as a true and real sacrifice to God?'

### **Faith Alone**

I also found that justification was only by faith, and I asked myself whether, if I had not found peace of soul in the Roman Catholic Church, it could perhaps be because I had expected to gain it as a reward for my own efforts? 'But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness' (Rom. 4:5).

In such a manner, I suddenly understood that Jesus Christ asked nothing of me, and I relinquished all my own effort to gain salvation. So Jesus Christ became my only Lord and Saviour.

### **Later Developments**

Through the Spanish Evangelical Mission in the Netherlands, I was put in touch with a former Spanish priest of the Roman Catholic Church who directed me to the Dutch foundation 'In de Rechte Straat' (In Straight Street). This Christian organization had for several years been helping priests who left the Roman Catholic Church to understand the principles of the sixteenth century Reformation and return to the doctrines of the Bible.

On 2 May 1961, I arrived in Brussels. Later I went to Hilversum, Holland. Then I sent a letter to my archbishop, telling him, 'I have discovered the Word of God, and Jesus Christ has presented himself to me as my only Lord and Saviour.'

Rome claims that Catholicism is centred in Christ, but in reality it has turned its back on him.'

Afterwards I went to San José, Costa Rica, where I received on 25 November 1963, a Bachelor of Theology degree in the Latin American Theological Seminary. Finally, I spent several months in Guatemala in consultation with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod before coming to the United States, where I have been preaching the gospel since 1 June 1964 to the Spanish speaking people.

My fervent desire is to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, to carry the gospel of grace to the people and to tell them what great things the Lord has done for me. What he has done for me, he can do for them, and for you.