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Transformed by Christ

Until I was over 50 years of age I lived in complete spiritual darkness. Despite having been a priest for many years, my knowledge about Jesus Christ was very limited and distorted. In fact, for me, the real Christ of the Bible had been hidden under a blanket of complex religious teaching.

I believed that outside the Roman Catholic Church there was no possibility of salvation, and that the pope, as Christ's representative on earth, was infallible. My loyalty was so great that I would have been willing to give my life in defense of the pope.

The Teaching of the Church

I had been educated by Jesuit Fathers and decided to become a Jesuit monk at the age of sixteen. I studied in Peru, Ecuador, Spain, and Belgium and was later ordained a priest. For many years I taught in Catholic schools, held a position as a professor in a seminary, served as Vice Chancellor of Ecclesiastical Tribunal in my diocese, held the office of a chaplain in the army and served as a priest of two of the principal parishes of my country.

As a parish priest I set myself to opposing the Protestants in my area. I treated them as heretics, and I taught my people that they all held the lowest possible moral standards. As some of these Protestants continually appealed to the authority of the Bible, I decided to write a book exposing their error in the light of the Bible.

The Teaching of God

As I studied the Bible chapter by chapter over a period of three years, it came as a terrible shock to me to discover that I was the one in error. Far from being able to refute these heretics I found myself being refuted by my own Roman Catholic Bible. I began to see how far away from the Bible my Catholic beliefs were. Often as I studied I found myself moved to tears to think that I had submissively followed human ideas rather than the teaching of God.

Another effect of reading the Bible chapter by chapter was that I found my conscience came to life within me. I saw that personally I was a long way from God. As a priest I projected an image of holiness, but in reality I gave way to all kinds of sin and lived a thoroughly worldly life. The black robes, which I wore, symbolized the darkness of my heart. No amount of sacrament, prayer to the saints, penitence, holy water, or

confession of sin to a human confessor could give me the peace that my soul began to long for.

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One day, although a priest over fifty years of age, I at last surrendered my heart to God. I knelt before Christ, Who though invisible, became real and living to me. Feeling like “a nobody,” and with sorrow in my heart, I repented of having offended Him by my awful life of sin. In my imagination, I saw the Cross where His precious blood was shed to save me from the punishment I so richly deserved. The result of this prayer was that Christ transformed my life. He called me out of the tomb of spiritual darkness and brought me into a living experience and knowledge of Himself.

The secret of true spiritual reality is to have a personal meeting with Christ through a sincere and vibrant faith. When Christ takes over a heart, every other spiritual blessing is assured. In the Scripture, salvation is seen clearly to be in Him. For example the Apostle Paul’s own testimony states, *“that I may win Christ and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”* (Philippians 3:8-9) In a similar way in the Apostle John’s writing, eternal life is in Christ and it is by believing on Him. *“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life”* (I John 5:20)