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Life After the Catholic Priesthood

While it is most difficult to go back over my many years in the Catholic Church and its priesthood, I see that it is necessary. I remember, and I take courage from the words of the Apostle Paul; “...*in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us*” (Romans 8:37).

My parents were converts to Catholicism in their early adulthood. As a result, I was born a “cradle-Catholic” and into a family that dutifully followed every requirement set upon good and faithful Catholics by the pope. No questions were publicly asked of the rights or wrongs of his pronouncements, even when following such rulings resulted in hardship and unhappiness for individuals in the family. We were brought up, as Catholics, in a way that underlined the importance of the denomination, and that did not even allow me to realize that there was anything “else” out there. One early memory is of going to church one Sunday with one of my mother’s school friends. She attended the local High Church Anglo-Catholic service, which left me asking a question of my parents on my return home. “Why don’t we go there? It’s just the same.” Unsurprisingly, I received no answer. How could you explain the difference to an eight year old? The best of my youth, and much of my early manhood, has been spent in the Catholic Church and priesthood, but “*Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place*” (2Corinthians 2:14).

During my childhood, my experience of “faith” was doing the right thing, i.e., going to Mass every Sunday and giving some pocket money to the collection. On one occasion, it meant the priest came to our home when my father was ill—just once in six years in that parish, and just once in the fifteen years when we lived in our next home. I hope that reveals “the lie” to the great myth of Catholic clergy dutifully and regularly visiting their flock! The other side of my upbringing in “the faith” was schooling. For nearly my entire time in primary education, I attended a Catholic school, and from thirteen to eighteen years of age, I went to Downside School, a private boarding school run by Benedictine monks in the Somerset countryside. At both schools, faith meant doing the right things. Those who were “good Catholics” would attend the Sunday Mass and the Friday Benediction service. Those who were very good would become altar servers or choristers. Those of us who were “bad” would run off at these times and do things that made sense to us, like walking the nearby hills, come rain or shine. The pressure to conform and to do the required “works” was tremendous. Teachers would be sent out to drive around looking for those trying to escape “doing their duty,” and other pupils would treat you like dirt and even report you to the “authorities” for failing to fulfil your obligations.

It did, however, provide moments of amusement. One such occasion was when I and one of the other boys who constantly played hooky were the only two prefects from the whole school in a service, and therefore, to the amazement and disbelief of the rest of the school, got to lead everyone out of the Abbey Church after the service!

One positive thing about attending Downside School was the imparted sense that faith was personal. Whether this was intentional or not, it stood me in good stead later in life. We also studied for one of the “O” level exams (sixteen year age group exam) on the Gospel of Mark. From the little I remember, it was not done in the critical, hermeneutical style so beloved by the Catholic Church, but in a way that encouraged us to know what is said in it. Until I left the Catholic Church, I was never encouraged to look at the Scriptures again in this straightforward way! Although any doctrine given was that of the Catholic Church, in all its unbiblical glory, I—if no one else—left with the wonderful knowledge that I could talk to God and that the Scriptures contained truth. However, I always remained staunchly Catholic.

I understand that many people would find such an idea difficult, especially those who have never been part of the Catholic denomination. But, it is purely and simply because being a Catholic, in much the same way as being a Jew, is not just a faith issue but rather is a way of life. As a young person brought up in the Catholic denomination, I was steeped in this, and it never even occurred to me that there was any other way of thinking. Although we studied the European religious “Reformation” and “Counter-Reformation” in history classes at school, it never occurred to me that there were people in this country, i.e., Great Britain, who thought differently to the Catholic denomination. I was brought up, intentionally or not, with the impression that the only differences between denominations in this country were of style and presentation.

It had never occurred to me that I would serve God in an “ordained” capacity, and it certainly never occurred to me that “I would come close to God simply through repentance and belief.” The only understanding of being faithful that I had was from the Catholic Church, and church meant doing works, attending Sunday Mass, and “being good.” And so, when I was almost sixteen and received what I “thought” was a clarion call to serve God as his minister, and because I knew only the Roman Catholic Church, it seemed obvious to me that I had to serve God in that church. The memory of this imagined call from God was seared into my mind when, the following day, Pope Paul VI died.

Because of this imagined call, I reacted by trying to do the right things. I went on a number of what are called “selection conferences,” which were run by the Catholic Diocese of Plymouth, where one talked to various priests and was assessed for “suitability” to ministry. I read relevant books; I became friends with the local parish priest; I regularly took part in one “sacrament” that I never understood and always filled me with horror, i.e., auricular confession. I attended alternative Catholic services to Mass such as “Benediction,” “Stations of the Cross,” and the “Rosary.” None of these gave me any spiritual enlightenment and all simply made my heart heavier. Much later, I discovered Martin Luther tried harder and harder to do these things in order to come to God, and yet, he found only that he was burdened even more through the actions. So too, I found them tiresome and unnecessary. Only the “Stations of the Cross” meant anything, as I understood clearly the journey of Jesus to death on the Cross. Yet, even the liturgical insistences of the Catholic service, and the non-biblical elements inserted into the story, began to destroy any real interest I had in knowing more, and spending more time thinking, on the Cross. They were burdens for me to attend, and later, burdens for me to officiate. In fact, I came to hate worshiping God because of these things!

Looking back now, I can see that my whole life has been a battle with the unbiblical doctrines and worship of the Catholic Church. If the true Word had somehow come to me at that time, I would have moved away immediately. However, because being a Catholic was “in my blood” as a lifestyle, I never heard that Word. It was as if God were holding His hand out to me throughout my whole childhood and early adulthood, and yet, I never saw it through the haze and fog created by the Catholic Church’s doctrines and indoctrination.

Training

The Bishop of Plymouth selected me to train for the Catholic priesthood, and it was agreed that I should go to seminary and train for the Catholic ministry in 1980. I arrived at St. John's Seminary in early September 1980. I have little doubt that God had any intention that I should begin training at the age of eighteen years and two weeks. I was still a teenager, and yet the Catholic Church accepted me! This early experience was extremely unpleasant for me. I knew none of the other students, but one, another eighteen year old from Plymouth who was equally immature. It took me three days to find the chapel; no one took the time or trouble to tell me where it was. The library and its importance were, on the other hand, drummed into me!

My constant experience of seminary was of education, exams, and information gathering. We were never really encouraged to be spiritual people, and a friend on one occasion made the following statement when a student with a poor academic record was asked to leave, "Next to his, my spirituality wouldn't even fit on the back of a postage stamp." It seemed that what was important was "showing" how good you were and "showing" through one's actions how fitted one was to be a Catholic priest. I gained brownie points because I was a sacristan for several of the years and good enough to be "in charge" of the sacristy (a room in a church where a priest prepares for a service). The importance of this was that it involved laying out all the vestments and paraphernalia needed for the various rites and ceremonies that the Catholic Church says are essential. It was as if the words of James had been turned around, and they had him saying, "We do not concern ourselves about the faith, but rather, a man's (in this case, a student's) works to show he is fitted!"

We were never asked about our beliefs or whether we could back up our beliefs using Scripture as our support. When information was presented in lectures, it was given to us as the teaching of the Catholic Church; if we did not agree, then we could leave. There was no debate. There was no encouragement to sit in chapel with the Scriptures opened before us as we were preached to. The Scripture lectures were based on the various theories that take apart the Word and divide it up into a variety of authors and timescales. Rudolph Bultmann, a noted demythologizing theologian, who does away with the divine action within the New Testament miracle events, was frequently referred to. The idea that the Scriptures could actually be correct, let alone be the infallible revelation of God, was never raised for discussion. These words to Timothy might never have been written, "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2Timothy 3:16-17).

During my time in seminary, I came no closer to God, and to be quite honest, I ceased to try after a couple of years. Instead of being an opportunity to work through God's Word, it became a hurdle to clamber over in order to begin the "real work" of parish ministry. I was not trained to be a pastor, a shepherd, a minister, or a preacher, but rather to be a performer of acts and do the work of an administrator. During the first couple of years, there were a few occasions when they could have taken the opportunity to guide us into sharing the Gospel with others, particularly when we had a Youth Day held at the seminary for the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. Instead of an occasion to teach Scripture's truths, it became a battleground where students, who objected to the "modern" music being used in the closing Mass, knelt in the organ gallery and recited the rosary while the music went on below them. Furthermore, they then came down to the chapel after the service finished, and as "real"

bread had been used, proceeded to scuttle around on hands and knees searching for any crumbs that may have been dropped on the floor. Is God present in such behavior? Is there love there? I now look back and wonder how the words of the apostle John could have been so meaningless to a company of men who were supposed to be preparing to serve Christ. John said, *“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death”* (1John 3:14).

Still, the most frightening aspect for me remains the attitude towards the teaching of the Catholic denomination. For instance, when we studied the Catholic teaching of the Eucharist and their unbiblical theory of transubstantiation, we used philosophy to learn about it, not the Scriptures. I understood most of what was being taught during that year, but the majority of the class failed to comprehend. There was no realization by the faculty, or the students, that philosophy is the way of man and not God. There was no contact, or connection, with the Word of God; as He says, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD”* (Isaiah 55:8).

We would perform “practice confessions” on willing “human” guinea pigs, and yet, in five years at the seminary, I never once gave a practiced or real sermon! And, never once did we try to justify why we told people they did not have the ability to speak to God themselves—nor that God alone has the power to forgive sin. We just merrily misused John 20:23, and we practiced at being walls between God and man. The words of the apostle Paul penned to the Romans may as well have been left unwritten when he says, *“For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Romans 6:10,11). And likewise, the words of Hebrews 7:27 speaking of Christ offering Himself, *“Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.”* The words of Scripture were just not listened to; the words and laws of the Catholic Church were all that mattered.

This unbiblical attitude carried over to our relationships with other people that we encountered. We had a wonderful lady who taught us voice-work. She was very elderly, and later died, after I had been at the seminary for three or four years. Some of the students went to her funeral service at a local church and came back, not full of the joy of the Lord and his promises, but instead bemoaning the fact that the church was so “low” that there were no candles in it. The Word preached had not been heard, and they had simply seen what they regarded as a failure to perform the right works. A Catholic lady came in to speak about what it was like being married to an Anglican Vicar, and the comments made to her and about her, and her husband, were not about the doctrinal difficulties the two must have encountered. Instead, she was verbally pilloried, because every other Sunday she went to his church, rather than being a good Catholic and attending a Catholic church every Sunday.

When one of the students left, I nearly saw the Catholic Church for what it is: a secular organization with secular aims hidden under religious trappings. The student had gotten as far as being ordained a deacon, and then, I praise God, he began to question transubstantiation. He sought out the relevant Scriptures, and he found that the Bible does not say what he was told by the Catholic Church, nor does the Bible support what the Catholic professors told him. Not surprisingly, he was “thrown out” of the seminary within two days, presumably, to prevent the rest of us from being infected with the “twin ills” of Scripture and the Holy Spirit. Other students were quite incredulous and said many utterly scandalous things—not about how he was treated—but about him! For my part, I had wanted to speak with him before he left, but never had the chance, as he was gone so quickly. I felt sorry for him; I had sympathy for him, for I had never really accepted transubstantiation—

and never would. I hope and pray that he, a truly brave and courageous young man, has come to know Christ and has been able to minister God's Word to others.

These events, and this man's dignity, nearly broke through—revealing the “way of life” of the Catholic denomination and the hold it had over me. As I write this, I do so with anguish, for I still did not see the truth. The words of Isaiah, quoted by Jesus, were as true of me as of all those there, *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain, they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men* (Matthew 15:8,9). This is, to be quite clear, not condemnation of the individuals led astray, but a condemnation of the Roman Catholic denomination that promulgates its errant and unbiblical teachings in full knowledge of the errors contained therein.

Ministry

I served as a Roman Catholic deacon for one year and as a priest for more than six years. During that time, I ministered in a number of parishes throughout Dorset and Devon, and I met many good people, so many, sadly, led astray by the unbiblical doctrines thrust upon them. I spent one year as a deacon in Paignton, Devon. This is a seaside resort on the “English Riviera” where the number of Sunday Masses went up in the summer because of the number of holidaymakers. These numerous Masses began the struggle I had all through my ministry, which although I was not to realize it fully until after leaving the Church of Rome, was due to the difference between my personal beliefs and the demands made on me as a priest.

In Paignton, the two key elements of required work were (1) to celebrate the Sunday and weekday Masses, and (2) to take communion to the housebound. As a deacon, I was “allowed” to baptize, and so, I ended up being given many of the baptisms to do (hidden away on a Sunday afternoon). I had already begun to grasp that this round of “works” was not helping to spread the Gospel. I felt unfulfilled; the work seemed pointless. On one occasion, I was called in to “catechise” and then baptize two youngsters (6 and 9 years old) who had been accepted into the church primary school. When I eventually said that it would be pointless to baptize them, since I thought they had no concept of God, and neither were responding to my “catechising,” the headmistress, a nun, became very angry because they had only been accepted into the school on condition that they would be baptized into the Roman Catholic Church (not baptized as Christians—mark you!). There was no interest in helping these two to be “built up in the faith,” nor in helping the children come to knowledge of God—but simply in “doing the right thing,” which meant making them into Roman Catholics.

It left me confused, and it continued to push me along my gradual path away from Rome. During my time in Paignton, I also had several difficulties in my relationship with the curate. His attitudes and behaviors often left me uneasy, and, on occasion he publicly humiliated me during church services. It was without great shock that I later learned he had since been convicted of pedophilia, with some offenses dating back to my time there. Due to the Roman system of parish governance, there had been no opportunity or encouragement to go to anyone about some of my concerns, nor was there training in an understanding of our responsibility, on a physical level, for the children and adults who were also in our spiritual care. Had they not just been personal concerns about the curate, but also included knowledge of his immoral and unchristian actions, I would not have known what to do or how to deal with it. Even worse, I would not have had the knowledge of the Scriptures to guide me in

any actions I should have taken. Even the words of Paul to Timothy would have helped me had I been told that the Scriptures are God's revelation and guide. *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2Timothy 3:16,17). I was, instead, naked in the world, with no known support from God, or His word, to help through such difficult times.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephesians 6:13-18).

In many ways, this continued to be my experience in all the parishes where I ministered. Although there were, by human standards, good people in all of them, there was never anyone who guided me to the Scriptures, nor encouraged me to look to them to find my salvation—nor for the way to live life in this world. I spent three years in Poole, Dorset before my nagging doubts and problems led me to ask for a move. I would walk around and around the inside of the church, there begging God to show me answers to the struggles I was experiencing, but answers seemingly came there none; for he had already given me the answers if I had simply looked into His Word. I went to Plymouth Cathedral where I suffered mightily at the hands of the Administrator who saw everything in terms of "works."

The criticisms and bullying by the Administrator drove me away from the Catholic Church, but as I knew no other place to look for answers, I returned after a few weeks. Initially, I went to the home of a supportive parishioner and later to a "retreat" in the monastery back at Downside Abbey. Although the parishioner was helpful, and the Abbot also gave of his time, the final outcome did not help me think through the issues—even with Scripture in hand. It was, instead, my ability to once again celebrate the Roman rituals that indicated to them my "alleged" return to spiritual health. I returned to the Cathedral, and the associated bullying and criticism strengthened me in my resolve, but not in my knowledge of the truth.

Not too long after this, the Administrator drove himself into serious health problems with his "uptight" attitude, and eventually was moved to Cornwall. As the only active priest working in the Cathedral, I was given the position of acting Administrator. One of the first decisions I made underscored the thoughts going through my mind about the Church of Rome and its doctrines. There was a 6 a.m. Mass on a Wednesday morning that had but two attendees, one of whom came to a later Mass as well. I, therefore, informed my two colleagues that it was henceforth "cut"—unlike Roman doctrine and understanding, I never accepted that the more one "did" such things the better it was. They both complained until I asked which of them would be saying the Mass, as I had no intention of doing it! It hardly needs to be said, neither of them offered! That decision cut down the number of daily Masses in the Cathedral parish to a mere five! How I now wish I had seen, read, or been directed to scripture. The following verses would have made sense of my confusion and shown me the untruths at the heart of the Roman church, *"And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified"* (Hebrews 10:11-14).

It should come as no surprise to hear that we were always given the impression—even taught in some way—that we should regard the letter to the Hebrews as untrustworthy and not of great importance. No wonder! If you do not want people to see the truth, the best plan is to frighten them away from it. Ironically, hidden away in Rome’s set readings for the 33rd Sunday of the year, this exact passage is to be read that day. There do not tend to be too many 33rd Sundays in the Roman calendar, and if someone did read it, I am sure the truth of this passage would have been ignored or gone unnoticed. God has “purposely” slipped it in; there is some hope that other clergy may see it, study it, and preach on it.

Departure Approaches

My move from the Cathedral was to a small parish on the edge of Plymouth. It was small in attendance, although it was in a large area with a high population. It was here, in the parish of St. Thomas More, where as parish priest and on my own as a minister for the first time, I was able to begin a process of thinking for myself and acting according to my own conscience—even if the director of that conscience, the Holy Spirit, was still unknown to me.

Within three short years at St. Thomas More, I had in many ways overhauled the church, the events, and the services within the parish. I did not have auricular confessions except “on demand,” and let us be honest, no one is going to come to the church’s door and ask for confession! The church was reordered from its very dominant Roman style to a style more recognizable within other denominations. The altar (not yet a table) was lowered from its “lofty” position and simplified. The wooden lectern, hard against one wall, was replaced with a far more dominant stone lectern placed further out into the middle of the church. The idolatrous statue of Mary (Deuteronomy 5:8-10), mother to the humanity of Jesus, was removed from the front of the church and placed in the entrance lobby. The tabernacle was moved from the main church building and placed into the side chapel. Much of the time, I ignored the issues of required “color changes” for vestments and hangings that Rome demands for the different seasons and feast days.

One of the key changes I brought in is something that, although it is in the Roman liturgy, is ignored by the vast majority of parishes throughout the world. In the liturgy for Good Friday, the Roman church has the “Adoration of the Cross.” Note carefully the word Cross, for although it is still idolatrous in its Catholic concept, the liturgy does not call for a crucifix to be used, although the vast majority of Roman churches still use a crucifix. I refused to use a crucifix and made a cross to be used for Good Friday instead. The idea of people coming up and kissing the feet of the figure on a crucifix worried me even then. Many people did not like their rituals changed, and I got a number of comments and complaints about this, as well as about the changes to the church buildings. Despite all this, the numbers attending the church grew steadily. Looking back now, I can see why it was that I continued to struggle mightily in my ministry there. For despite these many little signs, that in myself I was being led elsewhere, I failed utterly to understand the problems at the heart of the Roman church. For three years, I ministered there with growing uneasiness; although the parish was growing in numbers, and I was to all intents and purposes doing a “good job,” I still felt unfulfilled. I still sensed that there was a deep emptiness at the heart of all that I was doing. I could not find within the Church of Rome any sense of the power of God that I told the parishioners about. I was like a “whited sepulchre” with the appearance of godliness on the outside, yet with nothing but sin and guilt inside gnawing away at me. I had no assurance in what I did; and the more I did—that which I was told to do—the more I grew in doubts. *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres,*

which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:27).

Moving On

And so, it was these gnawing doubts about the question of the truth that caused me to make the decision to leave the Roman church. I had been talking with a number of parishioners and giving them a gentle form of counseling, and time and time again found myself saying to them, "If things are like that, then you must get out of that situation." And eventually, after a particularly hard day, I found myself applying that advice to myself. I had been told to do all these things by the Church of Rome, and so, I had done them. How could this be, if what I was doing was so right? Therefore, I determined to leave. Even though I had not found God, He had found me, and I could no longer resist His call to do so! "*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10).

Others will no doubt tell you of the difficulties that can be involved in leaving, and for me, it was no different. When I went to the Bishop and told him of my decision, I made certain that I had a sympathetic clergy friend along with me. This proved vital, as I was told that I was mad and needed to be sent away to one of the clergy houses where they "straighten out" those who have gone off the rails. Had I been alone, I may well have been cajoled and bullied into following that path but, thank God for His guidance, that did not happen. I left the church property within five days. Although I left a farewell letter to be read to the parishioners, I do wonder sometimes whether it was actually read to them, as there may have been fear that it would have stirred up the same response in them!

The one thing I was "given" by the diocese was the deposit on a small bedsit. There was no help, no advice, not even thanks for the seven years service that I had given them. Then, for about twelve months, I was adrift with no church, no understanding of where to go to find the truth, or how to find it, and without "hitting the bottom," I would still be rudderless even now.

Seeing God

The one contact I had left was with a rugby club, and through a foolish friendship with another member, I found myself in conflict with "the law." Despite the unpleasantness of much of the experience, there was one thing that occurred again and again that made me start to search for the truth of God. The first solicitor I was appointed to, *happened* to be a Christian, and I am not afraid to say so. The Barrister (lawyer) appointed to me was a Christian. The psychologist, who affirmed my confusion and depression before the court, was a Christian. The recorder who gave sentence was a Christian. They all, unfailingly, understood and supported me, and I wanted to know more, not just about the reason for their attitude, but also about why God had placed them in my path. So, I started to go to various churches in the area to try to understand more. "*And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you*" (Luke 11:9).

The first few churches I tried did not "work," and they somehow were missing something. Even though they were nominally evangelical, I did not hear anything being said that I considered as of any help or an answer to my questions. Some five months after leaving the service of Rome, I met someone who suggested to me to attend St. Andrew's Church in the center of Plymouth. Although a part of the Anglican Church of England, the

members are of the “Reform” group and are staunch evangelicals. The simple service and the clear message from scripture caught my attention, and I began to attend regularly. I also attended another Reform church in Exeter, St. Leonard’s, where the same preaching of scripture struck a chord.

Although I knew that I had found “the answer” in the Scriptures, I had not yet found my way to Christ. That happened on two separate days not too far apart during 1995, but under totally different circumstances. The first was when I was out walking with a student, Gérardine, who I had met in my “social work” university course, and who later became my wife. While walking across part of Dartmoor, we were discussing faith and issues involved with it. My first conversation with Gérardine had been as a result of an “Ichthus” fish symbol on the back of her car which had led us into deeper and deeper conversation on many subjects. This walk was one of a number we took before and after marrying in 1996. During this particular walk, I began to play the “truth” game with her, which if memory serves me aright, comes from the film, “Truly, Madly, Deeply.” I began to talk about those issues which had constantly been problems for me during my time in the Roman Catholic priesthood; including their doctrines of the Eucharist, auricular confession, compulsory celibacy, and many other disconcerting issues. While having this discussion, I was able, for the first time, to discuss the issues and cast these errant and unbiblical doctrines away—as well as throw away the psychological security blanket that they can provide. Leaning on the Scriptures, I remember feeling a sense of freedom as I dismissed each one after outlining the human arguments used to justify them. As if I had previously been looking through a net curtain, I can remember fully understanding for the first time the idolatry of Benediction, the Rosary, and Roman Marian theology, in a way so clear as not to be denied. On that special afternoon, I can remember really understanding for the first time that human arguments and ideas could be of no use in finding God and salvation. “*There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD*” (Proverbs 21:30). Blessed be the name of the Lord for giving me His wisdom, as I needed it for my salvation.

I also know that I still did not yet understand where the whole truth was to be found, though that knowledge and inspiration was not too much further away. I was now, however, free from Rome in a way that I had not been before, and free from dependence upon the unbiblical and ungodly demands the Church of Rome makes upon her adherents.

The Day of Recognition

Shortly after this, we went and stayed with Gérardine’s brother, an Anglican evangelical minister. On Sunday, the church service completed their parish children’s “Holiday Club,” and it was unashamedly evangelistic in style, aiming its message at any parents who may have brought their children along but who were still themselves unbelievers.

The speaker gave his message—the details of which I have forgotten—but which spoke of the need all of us have for Jesus Christ in our lives and of His saving act on the cross. At the end of the service, I felt drawn to believe on Jesus Christ for my right standing before God and for the forgiveness of my sins; it was as if I were drawn to it and unable to resist it. Although there was no magic moment or great emotions then, I knew at that moment that my life had changed. I repented of my sins and trusted in Jesus Christ for my salvation.

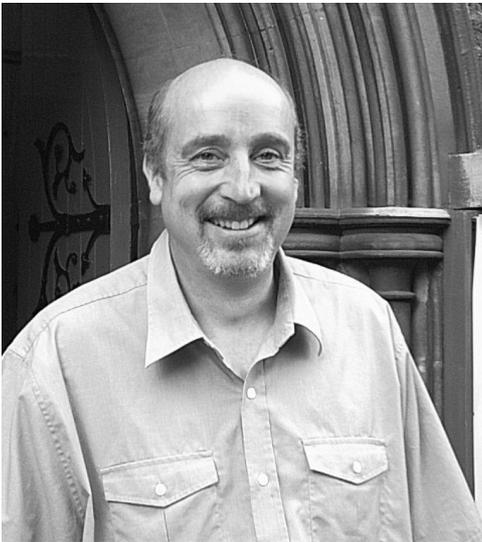
The following week we went to church in Exeter, and as a hymn started to be sung, I was overcome by what had happened, and by the reality of my salvation. The words of the following hymn spoke to me directly.

Such love, pure as the whitest snow,
Such love weeps for the shame I know,
Such love, paying the debt I owe,
O Jesus, such love....

Such love, fountain of life to me,
O Jesus, such love.

I now understood that my sins were forgiven through His death on the cross. I understood that for all those years that I had been told by the Church of Rome that I had to earn such forgiveness through works and acts of my own and through the so-called sacraments of the Roman Church, I had been living in delusion. *“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of (in) Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified”* (Galatians 2:16). For weeks after this, I found myself in the same position—weeping my way through much of the service—not tears of

pain, loss, or anger, but tears of relief and joy that finally I saw and understood the words of Jesus when He says to us, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6).



A Heartfelt Plea

I am a minister of the Gospel in a small, reformed, liturgical, and most importantly, a ‘faithful to the Bible’ congregation. I preach and teach the Gospel as the sole source of faith and practice for Christians. I endeavor to help others understand that only by God’s grace can we receive salvation (Ephesians 2:8), and that, thanks to His grace, we are cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. The Lord has blessed me; I

know Jesus Christ is my Savior. I repented of my sins and now rest in his mercy. For those people who read this, who have not been brought to this point by God’s grace, and who are still enmeshed in the Church of Rome, think and pray on this following passage, for Rome is separating you from the truth of Christ. *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, “For thy sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:35-39).