

Charles A. Bolton

My Path Into Christ's Joy

I remember on one occasion working in a hayfield from morning until evening under a burning sun, and then, weary and with my skin seeming on fire, going off to a clear blue pool in a shaded woodland to throw off my sweaty clothes and to bathe in the refreshing waters, which were like a miracle of healing and made me feel a new man. That is how I have felt after leaving the Roman Catholic Church, after working like a slave for her and sweating in her service. Now divested of the clammy superstitions and false trappings of servility, I have been cleansed in the living waters of Christ's love. The healing joy and the peace of salvation, which we receive as a free gift of God and through no merit of ours, are like ointments poured over the wounded flesh - as by the Good Samaritan upon the body of the man left half-dead in the ditch by the roadside - and are a rejuvenation of the heart and mind. Thanks be to God for His saving mercy. I now repeat with a greater understanding the words which were printed on the souvenir card of my ordination: "*Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*" (I Peter 1:8).

Priest and Professor

I was born in the county of Lancaster in northern England and educated there at a Jesuit high school. Some of my best studies were at Oxford University, where I qualified as Master of Arts and Bachelor of Letters through historical research. I was also awarded the Oxford Diploma of Education as a qualified teacher. As a preparation for the priesthood, I studied at the Catholic Institute in Paris and at the University of Louvain in Belgium, which is a famous Roman Catholic center of learning, and I received there the degree of Bachelor of Theology. The Rector of Louvain, Bishop Paulinus Ladeuze, ordained me a priest on April 30, 1930. At this time I hoped to be a missionary priest and apostle of the Roman Catholic Church to the people of Russia, but this was always a vain hope because the Soviet government has never been willing to admit such missionary priests.

Therefore, it came about that for the next twenty years I was a professor at St. Bede's College in Manchester, England, where I became Senior History Master, although I also taught some modern languages. I thus became known over the years to many hundreds of students, and I traveled all over the north of England as a special preacher for charitable causes. Later I was in charge of a rural parish so that I could pursue my studies. Among other published works there was the official history of my diocese, and there were studies on St. Patrick and other early saints of the British Isles.

Vain Repetitions

Later my historical research made a deep impression on my mind and outlook, in particular when I studied the Jansenist Reformers inside the Roman Church during the 17th and 18th centuries. I shared their love for the Bible and for the primitive church, and I deplored the developments in theology and popular devotions since the Middle Ages. As a result, when I preached, I could never extol the power, the primacy, and the infallibility of the popes, which I found had already been denounced in the third century after Christ by the great Christian martyr, St. Cyprian of Carthage. I was never able to exhort congregations to go through the monotonous repetitions of the Rosary contrary to Christ's precept: "*But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking*" (Matthew 6:7).

Another Gospel

I discovered that several of the 14 Stations of the Cross, which are displayed on the walls of Catholic Churches, are not mentioned in the Gospels, for instance, "Veronica wipes the face of Jesus." Veronica is a character of fiction, yet is venerated in nearly every Roman church. I could find no value in indulgences, which are distributed like an inflated currency. One short prayer equals so many days or months of penance. I found that medals, statuettes, and scapulars were used like pagan amulets and totems. The burning of votive lamps and candles and the sprinkling of holy water seemed acts without any relation to true religion.

While we treasure communion, instituted by Christ at the Last Supper, as the memorial of His passion and of His offering of Himself on the Cross, there is surely no justification in Scripture or the early Church for making the communion bread into a white wafer to be adored like an idol, to be incensed and carried in public processions, as at the feast of Corpus Christi. Christ offered bread and wine as the sign of His separated body and blood, but for centuries the Roman Church has substituted a piece of dried biscuit which not even a starving man would recognize as food. This is how Rome maintains the tradition of Christ's institution: the tradition she claims to be the only rightful guardian.

Salvation in Christ Alone

My studies showed me that there is no true authority for doctrines such as the Immaculate Conception or the Bodily Assumption of Mary into heaven. The Roman Catholic Church has in recent years been yielding to a popular craze, fostered greatly by the so-called appearances at Lourdes and Fatima, which make Mary more and more into a supreme goddess, ruling heaven and earth. Many Roman bishops and self-styled Marian theologians are hoping to promote the doctrine that Mary redeemed the world, in spite of St. Paul's declaration, "*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*" (I Timothy 2:5-6). This declaration is also at variance with the attempt of some debased Roman theology to prove that all graces must come to us through Mary. The Scriptures, however, make it abundantly plain that through Christ alone we have our salvation: "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12).

Catholic Censorship

As a student of the Bible and of the history of the Church, many secrets were revealed to me that are ignored by most Christians and by many Roman Catholic priests. I could not previously publish such secrets because of the Roman laws of censorship. When you see a book with an Imprimatur, there is no certainty that this represents the original thought of the author and that it has not been tampered with by Roman censors, eager to play safe. If any book escapes the censors, it can be put on the Index of Prohibited Books by decree of the Inquisition or Holy Office, against which there is no appeal. The implacable dictatorship of the Inquisition, which still maintains supreme power in church government, is only one example of the brutal totalitarian and eminently un-Christian methods of Rome. Nobody is safe from its spies, who are in every diocese, and who are commissioned to denounce anybody suspect of disobedience to Rome.

Today, we combat in Rome one of the wealthiest international corporations of the world. It is rich with the millions of the offering called Peter's Pence, with the sale of canonizations (first expenses are supposedly fifty thousand dollars and actual canonization fifty thousand dollars). Bishops on appointment pay large sums, and Monsignori are reputed to pay several hundred dollars. Many dispensations, though enforced by church laws, have to be paid for, and offerings are made for papal blessings, etc. Relics may not be sold, but offerings are made for reliquaries or capsules, and nearly all Roman churches have altars in which are embedded the reputed relics of martyrs. These are fragments of bones from the catacombs of martyrs unrecorded, although already in the 17th century learned churchmen denounced the Roman habit of falsely concluding that bones from the underground burial places were those of martyrs. Undoubtedly, a tremendous number of "consecrated altars" contain quite spurious relics.

Abuse of Power

What has turned my soul against Roman abuse of power is the way in which it has tortured and burned so many like Joan of Arc, hundreds of the Albigensian martyrs in France in the 12th century, the Knights Templar, John Hus, the Dominican Savonarola, the Dominican Giordano Bruno, and the Anglican Bishops, Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer. The Inquisition has promoted at least two wholesale massacres, that of thousands of Protestant Waldensians in northern Italy, and thousands of Protestant Huguenots by the massacre of St. Bartholomew in France. More than 30,000 of the most cultured Protestants of France were put to the sword on the night of St. Bartholomew, August 24, 1572. At the news, the pope had cannons fired, proclaimed a jubilee, ordered a Te Deum of thanksgiving to be sung, and struck a special medal to commemorate the glorious "victory." For a long time I observed the feast of St. Bartholomew as a day of special prayer and intercession for Protestants, as an act of love and reparation. *"And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration"* (Revelation 17:6).

Grace Alone

I thank God for having brought me to read the great Lutheran teacher Professor F. Heiler, a converted Roman Catholic priest, who taught me the value of faith in Jesus and in salvation through His grace alone. Heiler's *Mysterium Caritatis*, a wonderful book of sermons, was the subject of my meditations for many years before the Spirit gave me the final courage to act on that teaching for my own salvation. To leave the church of one's birth and of one's accustomed labor, to turn away from family and friends, is a hard struggle, but it is also a wonderful grace of God.

Some of my friends, who had already left the Roman Catholic priesthood and had found a welcome from others in the brotherhood of Jesus Christ, had told me how different is the atmosphere of a Christian church that knows no intrigues, spying, delations, and condemnations as practiced under the Roman Catholic system. "*Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them*" (Matthew 7:20). Rome must bear the responsibility before the tribunal of history in this world, and before the judgment seat of God hereafter, for founding, promoting, and maintaining even today the iniquitous Holy Inquisition, and later the Jesuits, suppressed once but, sad to relate, only restored to greater power later.

My path to Christ's joy has been long, and sometimes difficult, but it has been a pilgrimage well worthwhile. I must record my gratitude that after teaching in Washington, D.C., and elsewhere in the U.S.A., I have been led into the fullness of joy in Christ as my personal Savior and everlasting Redeemer, and into the company of truly Christian friends, Ministers of the Gospel and their faithful people, both young and old, who have been a great source of strength, help, and understanding. Among Evangelical Christians, born again in Christ's redeeming love by faith in His one perfect blood sacrifice, we have charity, joy, peace, patience, meekness, mildness, and mutual trust. We have that simplicity spoken of by Jesus Christ: "*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light*" (Matthew 6:22). That light, which is from Christ, is the gladsome light of truth that fills us, the redeemed and enlightened, with unspeakable and most glorious joy.

For all these reasons, I have committed myself to Jesus Christ as my all-sufficient Savior and, receiving Him, have passed from the death of sin to life: "*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God*" (Romans 5:1-2).

Dear Reader, if you do not already have the firm assurance and joy of your salvation, if you still put your trust in rites and ceremonies and in pious works, come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ as Savior. Pray for the supreme gift of faith in your heart by which you may give yourself to Him completely and without reserve, and He in return will accept you and keep you now and for always: "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, THOU SHALT BE SAVED*" (Romans 10:9).