

CHAPTER II

The Light Breaks upon Me. After Much Struggle I Accept Christ and Eternal Life as a Gift. I Present the Gift to My People Who Likewise Accept It.

I remained twenty-five years in the Church of Rome as one of her most devoted priests.

During that whole time I sincerely believed that the Church of Rome was the only Church of Christ, and I did all in my power to extend the authority of that Church in America and other continents.

But when in that Church I had to believe and preach, with all the priests, that out of the Church of Rome there was no salvation; and my heart was very sad when, looking upon you, Protestants, I had to believe that you were all to perish and go to hell after death.

I thought that my duty was to convert as many Protestants as I could and bring them into submission to the Pope. It seemed to me that the best way to persuade the Protestants to become Roman Catholics was to study the Bible as well as I could, and challenge your Protestant ministers to a public discussion in order to prove to you that your ministers do not know the Holy Scriptures, and that they were deceitful and ignorant men, and that you ought not to pay any attention to their teachings, but that you should come to hear the priests of Rome and accept their doctrines.

With that thought in my mind I studied the Holy Bible more than the priests of Rome are accustomed to do.

Many times I spent, not only the whole day, but the night, in studying the pages of the Holy Book, in order that I might be able to show to the Protestants that they were deceived by their ministers, and that their duty was to sub-

mit themselves to the Pope of Rome, if they wanted to be saved.

I had a great love and respect for the Holy Scriptures. I never opened the Holy Book without addressing a fervent prayer to God to guide me in my study in such a way that I might be more and more every day a good, a faithful and a holy priest of Rome.

But, strange to say, I never read the Holy Book without hearing a secret and mysterious voice, in the bottom of my soul, troubling my faith, and telling me: "Do you not see that, in your Church of Rome, you do not follow the Word of God—but you follow and teach the lying traditions of men!"

That mysterious voice was telling me, "Are you not ashamed to invoke so many names of saints and angels when your Gospel tells you so clearly that there is only one name which must be invoked to be saved?"

"Are you not ashamed to say to the Virgin Mary, in your Breviarium, 'Thou art the only hope of sinners,' when the Gospel tells you that 'Jesus is the only hope—the only Saviour of the World?'"

One day that mysterious voice spoke to me as the voice of thunder, after I had said to my people that, after their death, their souls were to go and spend many years in the flames of purgatory to be purified from their sins.

"Shame upon you," said the voice, "to speak of a purgatory of which there is not a word in your Gospel!"

"Do you not read," said the voice, "that it is only through the blood of Jesus that the souls of men can be purified?"

"Come out! Come out from such a church, where you preach doctrines absolutely opposed to the teachings of the Holy Gospel!"

These voices were evidently the voice of my God! But I had to take them for the voice of the devil, for the Pope was telling me it was the devil's voice.

When studying the theological books written by St.

Liguori, St. Thomas, and all the other theologians, I had to believe that my Church of Rome had received from Christ the right to burn, imprison and kill all the heretics and the Protestants when she was strong enough to do so. But my Gospel was telling me with a thundering power that this was the devil's doctrine, opposed to the Gospel. For Christ had rebuked His disciples when they wanted to bring fire from heaven to punish those who refused to allow Him to go into their town.

So there was, many times, a great trouble in my soul. For those two voices were heard; and, to please the Pope and remain in the Church of Rome, I had constantly to take the voice of God for that of the devil, and I had to accept the voice of the devil for the voice of my God.

Thus it was that, during twenty-five years, my God with His merciful hand was trying to take me away from a false system of religion. But to obey the Pope I had to resist—I had to struggle against my God.

But in that long struggle, my God was to be the stronger—and the blessed day had come when my merciful Saviour was to come to me as a conqueror, with His mighty power.

That blessed day, I was alone in my little study room, reading my Bible, when the voice of my God spoke with such power that I could not be mistaken.

“Come out! Come out from the Church of Rome!” said that thundering voice, “You cannot be saved in that church where you make your own god every morning, with a piece of dough! No man can make his god with his own hands. Did not Paul say to the Athenians that God could not be made with gold and silver, or marble? He cannot more be made with a piece of dough! Come out! Come out from the Church of Rome!”

Falling on my knees with burning tears rolling down my cheeks, I was crying to my God: “O my God, if the Church

of Rome is not Thy Church, where is Thy Church? Where can I go to be saved? Is it possible, O my God, that the Church of Rome, so grand, so old! the Church of so many mighty nations! the Church of my mother! the Church of my dear country! the Church which has been so good to me, so high in the eyes of my fellow men, is not Thy Church!

"I beseech Thee, O my God, give me some more rays of Thy light, that I may see where is Thy Church, and that I may accept it!"

But for more than one hour I prayed in vain for light!

Instead of light my God was wrapping my trembling soul with the darkest clouds.

But after more than an hour of the most unspeakable desolation I felt that my God had heard my humble supplications.

Suddenly before the eyes of my soul there was something very strange, but marvelously amazing.

It was a light! And in the very midst of that light, my Saviour was nailed to the cross!

Oh I could not be mistaken! It was my beloved Saviour which was there! The crown of thorns was on His bleeding brow—His hands were nailed to the cross—and His body was covered with bleeding wounds!

And He was coming to me! . . . When very near I heard His sweet voice telling me:

"My dear friend, I have heard thy cries—I have seen thy tears, I come to bring thee eternal life as a gift.

"My Father has so much loved thee, that He has sent Me, His eternal Son Jesus, to save thee by dying on the cross!

"On that cross I have paid thy debts to My eternal Father's justice, and I have paid them to the last cent!

"On that cross I have asked and obtained thy pardon! On that cross I have bought for thee an eternal life which I bring thee, just now, as a gift of My eternal love! Look up and see the crown of glory I have brought for thee."

And when my dear Saviour was speaking to me these marvellous words, He was giving me grace to understand them as much as a man can do.

I looked up and I saw, what I hope every one of my readers will see just now, if you look up with the eyes of your soul. For the crown was not only for me, it was for everyone of you also.

Yes, I looked up, and I saw with the eyes of my soul, a crown! But what a rich, what a precious crown!

And on that crown I saw my name written with the blood of the Lamb!

And my beloved Saviour was telling me, "I present thee that crown as a gift of My love; . . . take it. . . . The only thing I want from thee is thy faith, thy repentance, thy love!"

My Saviour said again, "Look up."

And I looked up again, and I saw what every one of you will see, if, with the eyes of your soul, you look up to Christ. I saw a throne! But what a glorious throne! No! Never any mortal king or emperor has sat on such a glorious throne!

And my name was written on that throne with the blood of the Lamb! And my beloved Saviour was telling me: "I present thee that throne as a gift of My love. I have shed My blood to the last drop. I died the most horrible death to buy that throne; . . . take it.

"The only thing I want from you is that you believe in My love—repent and love Me!"

It was then, that more with my tears of joy than with my lips, I said to my beloved Saviour:

"Oh, dear Jesus—Precious Gift—how sweet Thy words are to my heart. Yes, I will love Thee to-day, to-morrow and forever. . . . Oh! Precious Gift! Beloved Jesus! Come and abide in my heart to make it pure. Abide in my soul to fill it with Thy love. Oh! Precious Gift! Dear Jesus, abide

in me to-day, to-morrow and forever, that I may be one with Thee the few days I remain in the land of pilgrimage."

To make a long story short, I must tell you, my dear readers, that I opened, for the first time, the hands of my soul, and that I took possession of the gift—the precious gift, the immortal gift, which our eternal God had sent to me!

It is then that, for the first time, I understood that great mystery of the love of God, which the Pope ignores, and which is so sadly concealed from the eyes of the honest but so cruelly deceived Roman Catholics, that eternal life is a gift. . . .

No human words can tell you the joy of my heart when, for the first time, I opened the hands of my soul and accepted the gift, the great gift, the immortal gift.

It was then that, pressing that new Gospel to my heart, and bathing it with the tears of my joy, I swore that I would never preach anything but that Gospel, in which I had just found that eternal life is a gift.

It was then that I said to my dear Saviour, "By offering me eternal life as a gift, Thou hast forever taken away from my shoulders the heavy yoke of the Pope. Thou hast saved me. But I do not want to be saved alone! Save my people. Grant me ever more to show them that eternal life is a gift of Thy love; . . . grant me to help them also to break the heavy and unbearable yoke of the Pope.

"Oh, that my dear people may know, to-morrow, that Jesus has saved them! That Jesus has paid their debts, that Jesus has bought for them an eternal life, on the cross—and that He wants nothing from them but to repent, believe and love!"

This marvelous revelation was given to me on a Saturday afternoon. I spent a sleepless night.

I was too happy to shut my eyes and sleep. When a man has just received such a gift, how can he forget it and sleep?

Many times during that happy night, with tears of joy, I said with David: "Oh, my soul, bless the Lord! and let all that is within me bless His holy name."

The next day was the Lord's day—the weather was splendid—and I had never seen so many people in my large church as on that day.

Addressing them I said in substance:

"French Canadians:—The very night before our adorable Saviour was to die, He said to His apostles 'I will offend you this night!'

"Now I just tell you the same thing. I will offend you to-day. But as the offense which Christ gave to His apostles has saved the world, I hope that, by His mercy, the offense which I shall give you to-day shall save you.

"I was a priest of Rome till yesterday—and I was your pastor—but, yesterday, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, a new light came to me, and there was an irresistible force in that light!

"Through that light I have seen clearly that the Pope and the Church of Rome are the two greatest enemies of Christ the world has ever seen. Through that fraud I have been deceived, and I have deceived you. But by the help of God, yesterday, I have given up the Pope and the Church of Rome, and I am no more your pastor!"

The last words had hardly gone from my lips, when a cry of desolation went out from every heart. "Dear Father Chiniquy! Is it possible that you have left our holy Church?"

I answered them, "Dear countrymen, I do not come here to tell you to do the same thing. Do not trouble yourselves about me, in this solemn hour do not look to me, but look to Christ alone."

"I did not die on Calvary to save you, I did not shed my blood to cleanse your souls and buy a crown of glory for every one of you. But Christ has done it—look to Him and Him alone in this solemn day!

"Will you allow me to tell you why I left the Church of Rome, yesterday?"

They all answered, "By all means tell us that!"

There was then in the front pew, a most beautiful child about six months old, in the arms of its happy mother. I said to the people:

"Look at this beautiful child. See his bright eyes, his rosy cheeks, his smiling lips! See how he is stretching his little arms around the neck of his happy mother, to give her one of his angelic kisses.

"Surely there is life in that child!

"But what has he done to get that life? Has he moved a straw to get it? Has the Pope of Rome done anything to give that life to this child? No! that life is a gift of God. The child has done absolutely nothing to get it. It is a gift of God. The Pope of Rome has had nothing to do with that life.

"But if the child could speak and say to his mother: 'Dear mother, how happy I feel in your arms, how kind and loving a mother thou art to me. From morning to night thou art busy with me. It is from thy breast that, many times a day, I get the life which is in me. What can I do, dear mother, to show you my gratitude? What do you want from me for that life which is in me from thee?' What would the mother answer?"

"She would answer: 'Dear child, I want nothing, but a kiss from thy angelic lips. Press your dear little heart on mine, that I may feel by its pulses that you love me as much as I love thee.'

"Mothers, who are here: Is it not the only thing you would ask from your dear child?"

They all answered, "Yes, sir."

Then I said: "Come with me to the feet of your dying Saviour, on the cross. . . . Look at His crown of thorns. . . . See the nails in His hands and his feet—count if you can the bleeding wounds—hear the agonizing cry,

‘Father, Father, why hast Thou forsaken Me?’ See the horrible death! And then ask your Saviour: ‘Why that crown of thorns on Thy head? Why those nails in Thy hands and feet? Why those bleeding wounds? Why that horrible death on the cross?’ And He will answer, ‘To buy you an eternal life!’

“But ask Him again, ‘What do you want from me for that eternal life which you buy at such a price?’

“And He will answer: ‘I want nothing but your hearts and your love! That eternal life is a gift I offer you.’

“Now, if you go to the Pope and his priests and ask them: ‘What must we do to be saved?’ They will tell you—you must go and confess your sins to a priest, very often more guilty than yourself; you must abstain from eating meat all Fridays and Saturdays, and many other days of the year; you must gain or buy indulgences; pray to the Virgin Mary, to the saints, to the angels; . . . you must go into the flames of purgatory or give a great deal of money to get out of them.’

“But all those things are deceitful human inventions.

“For what did our dear Saviour answer to the young man who asked him what he had to do to have eternal life? Did He speak of Auricular Confession in His answer? Did He speak of abstaining from meat, of indulgences, of purgatory?

“No! He left those inventions and deceptions to the Pope. Our Saviour answered, that day, what He answers you, to-day, in His Gospel. For He has not changed His religion or His doctrine. He answered, ‘To be saved, my young friend, you have nothing to do but to love My Father, who has so much loved you that He has sent Me, His eternal Son Jesus, to save you. Love your neighbour. Repent, believe in Me; invoke My name, and you are saved; eternal life is a gift.’”

For more than one hour I spoke of the gift. I showed its greatness, its value, its beauty.

I soon saw that I was not alone speaking of the gift. My beloved Saviour was with me in His spirit. For my people

were beside themselves with admiration and joy when hearing, for the first time, of that marvelous gift.

And when I asked them: "Who will give up the Pope to follow Christ, among you? Who will give up the debasing and so costly religion of the Pope to accept the religion of the Gospel of Christ who offers you eternal life as a gift?"

Without a single exception they were all on their feet.

The heavy, unbearable yoke of the Pope was forever broken and rejected.