

From Darkness to Light

by A. J. Krause

Few people have ever loved or respected the Roman Catholic Church more than I. As we lived just a stone's throw from St. Dominic's Church and school, my sister and I were raised in the church. The Krause family, as far back as granddad could remember, were all good Catholics. We had a proud tradition to follow and the baton had been handed to me. In no way would I let our tradition down. What confidence I had in this awesome religion. Why, I thought, was everyone who claimed to be Christian not a Roman Catholic? This was my heart-felt belief. The following is my personal testimony of salvation.



Born Catholic, Die Catholic

My parents thought it very important that my sister and I receive a good Roman Catholic education, instead of one from a public or private school. So I spent my grammar, middle and high school years being educated by Nuns and Priests. I was well indoctrinated into the rules and doctrines of Catholicism. I was baptized as an infant, confirmed as a young boy and received my first Holy Communion at my school and church. I started confessing my sins to Priests at an early age. I had received four of the seven sacred sacraments by the age of 12, and felt my spiritual quest was headed in the right direction. After all, I was following the oldest and most organized religion in the world.

My Catholic school regularly challenged us to consider the possibility of becoming a Priest or Nun. Thoughts of dedicating my life to God in this way danced in my soul. What greater career path could I travel? So I spoke as someone who was interested in the path of serving God. Because of my obvious devotion and love for the Catholic Church, the nuns and Priests gave me special attention, especially because of my vocal desire to become a Catholic Priest. I was taught that the Priesthood is the highest calling for a man. I set out in a devoted path, desiring to do all that I thought pleased the Lord.

All devoted Catholics go to Mass as often as they can and further training taught me that going to Mass everyday would grant me special grace and fewer days in Purgatory (a Catholic doctrine meaning a temporary place after death where the body burns until purged of all smaller sins). I had zeal of God, but the Scripture as the Apostle Paul remarked concerning the devout Jews applied to me, *“for I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. (Romans 10:2-3)* I was ignorant of God’s righteousness. I believed that Catholicism was the way for righteousness, but the Scripture insists, *“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” (Romans 10: 4)* Believing on Christ for righteousness is the key. Without confidence in God, in His fidelity, His truth, His wisdom and His promises you have no security, as the Scripture maintains, *“without faith it is impossible to please him.” (Hebrews 11:6)* My faith and confidence were however in my beloved religion, which “I thought” to be God’s righteousness.

My Loyalty to the Mass

An absolute requirement of all good Catholics is the participation in the sacrifice of the Mass. The heart of the Mass, and central to the faith of all Roman Catholics, is the Eucharist. (A re-enactment of the last supper in the sacrifice of the Mass.) In my grammar school years, weekday Mass started at 7:00AM. My sister and I considered it a privilege to live so close to the church and to have the opportunity of making Mass with Holy Communion every day. We also ate a special breakfast at the school, because at that time it was a mortal sin (an offense that would send a person to hell) to receive Communion if you had eaten any food after midnight. Later this mortal sin rule was changed to no food three hours before receiving Communion. We liked the special attention we got from the schoolteachers and our classmates when we ate breakfast at our desk during class. I was committed to attending Mass every school day. I rose an hour earlier than my classmates. This was one of the only ways I thought I could please the Lord. If I had studied the Scriptures, the Word of God would have caused me to question my daily practice. Concerning Christ’s sacrifice and the continuing of it, the Scripture says, *“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 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.” (Hebrews 10: 10-12)*

This section of Scripture can certainly be applied in reference to the daily Mass. The practice of the Mass according to the Bible should not take place; Christ’s death on the cross for our sins was a onetime event, not to be ministered over and over. However, I, like most Catholics, was knowledgeable of my religion but ignorant of the Bible, and so followed our tradition.

As a Roman Catholic I firmly believed what the Church taught, that the Eucharist (the bread and wine) was the actual body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Catholic Church teaches that the host is actually Christ's body and wine is His real blood. They called this transubstantiation. The Scripture teaches, *"I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people...Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, no soul of you shall eat blood..."* (Leviticus 17:10,12) Regarding His Last Supper it is important to read Christ's own words. His command in the institution of the Last Supper did not initiate a continual sacrifice but declared the institution of a remembrance of His finished work. His words declared, *"This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."* (1 Corinthians 11:25-26) The purpose is clearly given, to proclaim and publish His death. It is a remembrance of what Christ has done and suffered. In this remembrance, true believers are to declare His death to be their life and the cause of their comfort and hope.

After I received my first Holy Communion I made a vow to God to never miss Mass on Sunday or any holy day of obligation. Catholic doctrine clearly states that missing Mass without good reason is a damnable sin. I went a step further, no matter how sick I was, or where I traveled, nothing would prevent me from missing Mass. Some days I would run very high fevers on Sundays, crawling out of bed so I did not miss Mass. I believed this added to my good works, which were necessary for eternal life. I was the talk of the school, making such sacrifices as a young boy. "What a great Priest he could be for the Church", people whispered. Local Jesuit Priests courted me in my high school years giving me special attention. They enticed me with their private wine cellars in the basement of their rectory, and allowed me to play with their champion bird dogs. They explained to me how Priests received salaries, retirement programs and ample vacations. They even took me bird hunting on weekends. This looked like a pretty good life to a high schooler considering a career. Jesus warned the top religious leaders of His day, *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."* (Matthew 23: 15) In my early years I entertained the real possibility of entering the Priesthood when I became old enough.

Our Home and Holy Water

With my parent's blessings, as a child I gladly took the responsibility of keeping fresh holy water throughout our home. Attached to our bedroom light switches was a cradle that held holy water. It was common practice to dip our hand in this water as we turned on the light switch and by making the sign of the cross. This was a common practice in our home. As head altar boy at my parish I had a good opportunity to obtain holy water. Looking back, this seems like a strange practice but at the time we were taught to put great confidence in this, as protection for our home. In the pages of the Bible there is no such substance as holy water. The traditions of Catholicism bring into the worship of God "holy water", oil and salt, charcoal and incense, and many other physical objects that dishonor the true worship of God.

Mary, St. Christopher and Medals

The Rosary was another very special part of my life. The Blessed Virgin Mary dominated

my prayer life. My prayers to Mary were continuous, day-by-day, and year-by-year. The Rosary alone has 53 exaltations to Mary, and only 8 to God. A central truth in the Bible taught is, *“there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”* (I Timothy 2:5) The way to God is only through Jesus Christ, not Mary. However our home had several statues of Mary that we used as “aids to worship”. I always wore my special St. Christopher medal. It had been purchased at our nation’s national Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Washington D.C. and my favorite Parish Priest blessed it. I strongly believed it had supernatural powers until the Pope admitted that there was no evidence that St. Christopher historically ever lived. I continued to wear it because it also had on the reverse side an image of Mary. She, I reasoned, would protect me. What a terrible sin I was ignorantly committing, because of my lack of knowledge of the 2nd Commandment. *“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God.”* (Exodus 20: 4) I continued to break God’s Second Commandment every day. Ignorance is no excuse in man’s courtroom or in God’s judgment. I am attempting to tell you the truth of God’s law, not the “commandments of men”. This is one of God’s blessed Commandments. Do not take my word for it, read it for yourself, even in a Roman Catholic Bible.

Steadfastly a Catholic

While many of my close Catholic friends were questioning their faith, concerning the history of the Church and its doctrine...I remained steadfast. Steadfast into my adult years, who was I to doubt or second-guess the teaching of the “Mother Church”? However the history, tradition and loyalty of the Saints, humbled me. Even though I studied world history, the Crusades, and the Inquisition (the torturing of Bible believers who spoke against the Church, many being tortured and burned at the stake), I still would not speak against my Church.

In my world a Priest’s word was held in high esteem, especially his opinions and understanding of spiritual matters. I, as all good Roman Catholics, was taught to trust the “Priest” to interpret scripture and the Church doctrines. But the Scripture teaches, *“in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men...Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition.”* (Mark 7: 7, 13) Mankind loves tradition and superstition. All ancient religions are steeped in delusions and rituals. Carefully I asked the Jesuit Priests about the millions tortured, killed or burned at the stake, by my Church. Their answers were unsettling, but I wrote it off, because my Church admitted she had made errors in the past. I trusted these men’s word. Who was I to ponder or doubt the Church? I believed my Church was started by Christ Himself, Peter being the first Pope.

Was Peter the First Pope?

One of the few verses we were taught to memorize in Catechism was in St Matthew chapter 16. *“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom*

of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.” (Matthew 16:16-20)

We were taught to believe that Peter was authorized to start the Church by Christ Himself. We were educated that all other Christian churches, religions and denominations were offshoots of Roman Catholicism. This gave Catholics a great superiority over other faiths. No other Christian Church or world religion, in my understanding, could rank with my Church. What pride I had in my religion. Catholic teaching states that Peter was the first Pope. (The word Pope is non Biblical and is a man-made title). The Catholic Church teaches that Peter is the rock in Matthew 16. What does the Bible say about this? This rock is to be the foundation of our faith, so let Scripture define who it is, Peter or Christ.

In the passage we are taught that the disciples had a distinct knowledge of Christ, expressed by Peter on their behalf. The Lord says that this knowledge, that He was “*the Christ*” and “*the Son of the Living God*” was a revelation from His Father in heaven. It is this revelation, the Lord declared, that he would become the rock, or foundation stone, upon which He would build His Church. This was the very concluding subject of the Lord’s summons to the disciples, “Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.” To hold the view that Peter himself is the rock is to deliberately pervert the plain sense of the Lord’s own words. Then the word “Peter” by definition means pebble, not rock. The Bible again and again calls God “the rock” of His people. For example, “*then they remembered that God was their rock.*” (Psalms 78:35) “*O come, let us sing unto the LORD...the rock of our salvation.*” (Psalms 95:1) “*There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.*” 1 Samuel 2:2 “*The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer.*” (2 Samuel 22: 47) The Apostle Paul proclaimed, “*for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that rock was Christ.*” (1 Corinthians 10:4)

Even the Apostle Peter himself warned of a false “rock of offense”, “*Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.*” (1 Peter 2:7-8)

There is no doubt that the revelation of Jesus Christ, given by the Father, is “*the rock*” in Matthew 16, not Peter or any Pope. When faced with the truth, a choice has to be made. I ignorantly chose my religion over the Bible. I believed that Peter was the first Pope and all the infallible teachings of the Popes throughout history were equal to the Gospel. There have been over 1000 official edicts of Popes. If I were to list some of them you would be in shock with horror. I, ignorantly, had blind faith in this religious church system. My faith was not in *Christ as the way, the truth and the life*. My faith was in the Church as the way, the truth and the life.

My parents bought my sister and me a Roman Catholic Bible. This I carried throughout my high school and college years. As most Catholics, we had great respect and fear of this “mystery book”. In my years of Catholic schooling I cannot remember one time ever being required to read the Bible. Maybe this is because it raised more questions than answers relating to the Catholic Church. Instead we were taught to trust the Priest to interpret the Bible for us. This is very interesting; the middle verse in the whole Bible is

Psalms 118:8 *“It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.”*

One official Catechism declaration, that we were required to memorize, taught us the Catholic stance as it relates to the Bible and tradition. It states, “The scriptures and tradition are one in the same but when contradictions arise, tradition is to rule over the Bible.” The Scriptures teach against this position in many places. For example the final commandment of the Bible, in the final book, and the final chapter is, *“and let him that heareth say, come and let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”* (Revelation 22:17-19) God uses men to tell other men the good news and the bad news of His Holy Word. I have a responsibility to warn you of these things as I tell you my story.

My Fellowship with Non-Catholics

My college years took a distinctive career path. I got very involved in athletics, and had an active social life, therefore my desire to become a Priest dwindled, but my love and devotion of the Church stayed strong. My first association with Bible believing Christians, or non-Catholics, was when I joined the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and Campus Crusade for Christ at the University of Alabama. It was strange for me to see people carrying Bibles and quoting scripture and having devotions around Bible passages. This was a peculiar lifestyle for someone whose only exposure was the Catholic faith. I could see a zeal for God at these get-togethers where genuine open hearted prayer abounded. It is usual for Catholics to recite from a book of prayers rather than pray from an open heart, directly to God. This new form of worship fascinated me.

I started going regularly to the Christian fellowships but also continued to attend Mass. I can remember many Bible believing Christians asking me why I was Catholic and I jumped at the chance to defend my faith and exalt my Church. Although a few people did make me question my faith in my religion, a few words with a Priest always comforted and lead me back into their fold. The Church teaches that the Priest must interpret Scripture for us. They were the experts and I was taught to trust their interpretation. After all, were they not the vicars of Christ? Many years of schooling and special training convinced me to trust them. After talking to a Priest, his words would reinforce my faith and keep me loyal. Christian speakers on the campus pricked my heart with Bible based messages. My soul longed for what they had; surely I could search and find that kind of faith and peace in the Church. Scripture Verses like; *“Christ hath forgiven us all trespasses. The blood of the LORD Jesus Christ has cleansed us from all sin.”* and *“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,”* impressed me. How could these verses be true? I believed it was necessary to confess sins to a Catholic Priest before someone could be absolved from sin. What about a forgotten sin? Bible based Christians claimed to have forgiveness of ALL sins. They professed to be born-again and to already have salvation. I reflected on the confidence and freedom they seemed to possess. I had to keep record of

my sins for confession. After one campus meeting I was bold enough to ask if I could talk with the speaker. I felt compelled to meet him afterwards in his hotel room. He questioned me about my salvation and put me in conviction for a short while. He showed me in the Bible where it says, *“for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”* (James 2:10) I asked, “You mean one small sin is like committing murder or adultery?” “Sin is sin” was his answer. The Bible does not teach such a thing as mortal or venial sin. This is a man-made concept, created by religion.

A Challenge from a Christian Girl

I started dating a Christian girl who had a zeal and love for the Lord Jesus Christ like none I had ever seen. She questioned my faith and my salvation. “When were you saved?” she asked. “Saved” was a strange word to me because it was not found in Catholic vocabulary. Even though it is used over 200 times in the Bible. This girl gave me my first Christian Bible. She highlighted key verses, and I challenged myself to read. There is Power in the Word, and I felt the conviction of the Holy Ghost as I read God’s Word. What a testimony she was when she stopped dating me because I was neither a true believer nor a spiritual leader. The Bible teaches, *“be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”* (1 Corinthians 6:14) That passage later in my life gloriously guided me to my wife and later to my business partners. I now understand what it means to be equally yoked together with Christ at the helm.

Most Roman Catholics consider themselves spiritual people, as did I, but looking back I was on the outside looking in. I now understand I was imitating the Christian life. Catholics tend to believe their faith is a private thing, not to be examined, but the Bible says: *“examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.”* (2 Corinthians 13: 5) Now I realize that in my former faith I was a reprobate. When have you examined yourself in the light of God’s Word and not man’s religion? The Holy Ghost will lead you to only one truth.

I often caught myself in a wrestling match with others trying to convince them I was a good Catholic and that all good Catholics were saved. Bible based Christians continued to doubt my salvation. This greatly troubled me, but I still kept faith in my Church and tradition. Jesus said, *“full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition...Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition.”* (Mark 7:9,13) Verse 13 has been quoted twice in this testimony for a good reason, for there was where I lived.

A Christian Business Couple lead me to the Bible

My adult years provided me success in private business. I recruited and trained many talented people who marketed health products through the country. One of my most talented managers was a preacher who had a rare zeal and excitement about life and the Bible. As I spent time with him, he questioned me about my salvation. He always seemed to carry a Bible where ever he went. That was strange and uncomfortable for me. After a business meeting, I found myself at his home, with him and his wife. They had been praying for an opportunity to witness to me about my salvation. It was one of the few times someone had taken out a Bible and showed me truth. They took me to Scriptures

such as: *“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”* (Romans 10:1) It was their desire for A. J. to be saved! I had a zeal but not according to Bible knowledge. I had looked for righteousness in a religion and not in the Person of Christ Jesus. *“for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”* I was under the law and this verse spoke to my heart. I was under rules and rituals, imposed by a religion, to gain my righteousness. I was keeping the law for my righteousness. My faith and confidence was in Christ and in my keeping the Church law and in living a good life, not solely in the finished work of the Savior at the cross. Nowhere in the Bible did it teach me to go to Mass or Church in order to have eternal life. It declared the opposite, *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us..”* (Titus 3:5) Salvation and eternal life are God’s free gift. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”* (Ephesians 2: 8-9): Boy, I could boast in my supposed good works. I had great pride in my faith. Having a strong faith in the wrong religion will send a man to hell. Consider the faith of Muslims. Only faith in Jesus Christ will save a man.

My Day of Salvation

That Christian couple witnessed to me out of the Scriptures but I quoted a memorized catechism statement. The words of the catechism however could not match the Word of God. Verse after verse revealed that my religion and faith was not based on the Bible. This totally stripped my faith in my Church. I had always believed my Church was Biblically based, now I saw that this was not so. The choice was clear, either my salvation was in my religion or my salvation rested on Christ and His sacrifice on the cross. It could not be both. I went home to a lonely house and that night lay in bed looking up at the ceiling. I truly *examined* myself, realized I had never had a time in my life where I put ALL my faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone. My confidence was always in my good works, the Sacraments of my Church. I especially had confidence in Holy Communion and in keeping the Commandments. I had hoped to persevere enough grace at my death to obtain heaven. But there before my eyes were the words of the Lord, *“verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”* (John 3: 3, 5)

At that time four verses stood out in my memory, after I had been shown them in the Scriptures, *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”* (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) All of my sins! *“Christ died for our sins.”* The heart of the Gospel is contained in those five words. Christ died for my sins! I was always worried about having them confessed. Another verse that stood out in my memory from the Scriptures was one of the most quoted verses in the Bible. *“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* *“Whosoever shall call”* did that mean even me? In the privacy of my bed, between God and myself, I called upon the Lord Jesus Christ believing that he would save me. Why, because I had His Word on it, not religion’s word or man's word but God’s Holy Word. January 22nd 1981 was the day

I received the salvation God had provided me. God saved me! *“We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”* (2 Corinthians 6:1-2) Nothing did I do but put my faith in what He had done for me. I trusted Christ’s sacrifice as payment for my sins. The Bible teaches there is a day of birth, a day of death and a day of salvation. Remember the eternal commandment *“ye must be born again”*. When was your day of salvation? Please call me or write. My email address and telephone number are given at the end. Feel comfortable contacting me about your faith.

Seek the Lord and His Peace

The Bible says, *“the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:7) I now have that peace. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* (2 Corinthians 5: 17) All things are new now! This is my heart’s desire for you! Why would I take the time to put this in writing? Many of you have a love for God and zeal for God like I did, but maybe not according to Bible knowledge. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh.”* (John 1:1, 14) Put your faith in the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, and not in the word of any man. *God chose the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe.*(1Cor 1:21) *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.* (Acts 16:31) *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”* (Proverbs 3:5-5) Ask God for the truth! His Word is His promise! That is why His Word, Christ Jesus, became flesh!

When a man desires truth, seeks God for answers and is willing to forsake all, God will lead him into His truth. The Lord said in the Scriptures, *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”* (James 1:5) This was my plea, I asked God and He answered my search. A man can know that he has eternal life while living on this side of eternity. The Lord’s word in Scripture says so, *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”* (I John 5:13) I had never known with confidence I could have eternal life. Now I know. A personal testimony will be required of all men at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Christ Jesus Himself is my surety! My eternal destiny hangs on my faith in Christ’s perfect sacrifice...only that has made me right with God. Your eternal destiny likewise must rest secure, for *“it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*

Please feel free to call me with any questions, toll free:1-888-643-7374 or email me at:
AJKrause1@aol.com