

Why I Became A Protestant

by

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CHAPTER NINE

IN MY OWN DEFENSE

In view of the numerous slanders which have been spread because of my abandoning the Roman Catholic religion, true friends and sincere Christians have asked me to add to my book *Why I Became a Protestant* an appendix "In My Own Defense," refuting the ignominious slanders which have so foully stained the prestige which, until my conversion to the gospel, no one ever disputed.

It has always seemed to me little Christian to spend time and energy in one's own defense. But in my case the good name of the evangelical cause is involved, and for its sake I ought to reply to those who are well-disposed and who desire serious information on the case.

I must state that I am adding this appendix with considerable embarrassment and profound skepticism. The evil which defamation causes cannot be repaired; and those who are determined to discredit a cause do not hold back even in the face of evident proofs.

There has come to my hands a series of newspaper articles calling me "Judas," "criminal," "lewd fellow," and "impostor," and saying that I played all these parts like a stage villain.

Is this Jesus' way, even with the most sinful, and what He ordered us to do with them? He calls Judas "friend" and gives him a kiss of peace. He seeks for the lost sheep and does not rest until He finds it to carry it fondly on His divine shoulders to the Good Shepherd's fold.

But in our day the one who seeks for the truth in the gospel and wants to practice it at all costs is pitilessly insulted.

"Judge not, that ye be not judged," says Jesus (Matthew 7:1).

They have spread the idea that for a long time I had lived an evil life and that the superiors of the Company of Jesus were getting ready to expel me from the order; and that when the decree of expulsion became imminent I fled, breaking the most sacred obligations of my religious profession. To understand how false this accusation is, the letter I sent to my Provincial will help, which I transcribe below. And I should like to publish the reply just as fully, abstaining from it only by reason of discretion, since it was written confidentially and not to be given publicity.

Barcelona, January 31, 1951.

Rev. Father Provincial:

Dearly Beloved in Christ, Father:

I regret in my soul to have to give you a great displeasure, for Your Reverence deserves only sincere affection and profound gratitude. But there are circumstances which oblige one to do what he does not want to do. And this is one.

I have decided to leave the Company as soon as possible. Ever since I studied theology I have felt disillusionment about the Catholic faith. The proofs did not turn out convincing to me. The professors might believe that I had no talent or that I lacked fondness for theology. But the truth was that I was fooling myself more and more. Our arguments are full of sophistries, and Catholic dogma very far from the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have studied and read much, and with a real passion for the truth. And the more I go ahead the farther away I see Catholicism from the Christian religion. I have discussed a great deal with all those who say they know Catholic theology thoroughly, and not only have they not convinced me but they have driven me farther and farther away from our dogmatic statements.

So it is useless to discuss the matter. What theses, Catholic books, and professors have not accomplished in thirteen years, they are not going to achieve in a few months. I know the arguments they will set before me as well as they. It would be a loss of time. I must be sincere with my conscience before God and I cannot keep on playing a part, pretending and preaching what I do not feel or believe.

Immaculate Conception week was decisive for me. I performed the exercises and dedicated them entirely, with full intensity, to the solving of this my problem. I felt a peace, a joy and an inner light such as I had never felt before. I want to follow the gospel in its purity, and what the Apostles taught, without later additions. I see that the Catholic Church is very far removed from the Word of God. I see the "Holy Mother Church" put in the foreground, occupying the place that belongs only to the Holy Scriptures; and the "Roman Priesthood" occupying the place that belongs only to Jesus Christ.

A fruit of the exercises of this year was that I became confirmed in the truth of Jesus Christ and determined decisively to abandon the Catholic religion.

Since my activities as a preacher to large crowds have caused a great deal of commotion in all of Spain, if I were now to carry out such activities in an evangelical sense it would bring about conflict and disturbance. So I think the best thing is for me to leave Spain, and from abroad the news of my leaving the Company will arrive in due time.

If I can now say that Your Reverence gives me permission to make a trip to South America to study, a great deal of evil and unpleasantness would be avoided. Do not think, dear Father Provincial, that it has anything to do with women. If so I would tell you. It is neither a problem of chastity nor a momentary seizure.

When our people are informed they will say, as they have said about Father Carrillo de Albornoz, that I have gone crazy; others, that I have fallen in love with some woman. Others, that my little theological knowledge has not been able to withstand the attacks of the Protestants. And there won't fail to be someone, and this is what I am sorriest for, who will say with satisfaction that Your Reverence is to blame for having given me so much liberty and having trusted me so much.

I know, too, that on reading this letter Your Reverence will immediately think what you can do to dissuade me. I tell you it is altogether useless. Besides, the heart ailment which I have will not allow me to undergo the strong emotion it would be for me to have to appear before Your Reverence or the Father Superior. To avoid this, I shall not return to the Residence. Since I am frequently away, no one will notice anything. The things which are in my room, books, notes, and so forth, if they want to put them in the trunk and send it to the Loyola Institute of Barcelona, I shall be much obliged, for they may be useful to me. If they don't want to do it, they may keep everything.

Concerning how the Loyola Institute stands, Your Reverence will receive within a few days a copy of the Statutes, so you can appoint a substitute to take the directorship if you wish to appoint one. The Company has no obligation. If within a month Your Reverence has not said anything, the Board of Patrons will appoint another director or will liquidate the Institute.

Let this letter serve also as my resignation, for I shall not go to sign one unless you want me to sign it in America. From this moment on, I am leaving internally the Company and the Catholic Church. Externally, if Your Reverence cares to give me permission, I shall continue as a Jesuit until I have my passage arranged.

The bearer of this letter awaits for Your Reverence to tell him in writing simply "yes" or "no." He does not know anything about the matter. If Your Reverence says "yes," I shall leave Spain as quickly as possible, as if in obedience, without anyone's suspecting my change. If you tell me "no," or delay the affair, I shall understand it as "no," and then I shall have to make the truth known. If the Superiors should put hindrances in the way of their granting me exit and passage, I would set to work among my acquaintances in Spain as an evangelical, with the inconveniences mentioned before. I believe that Your Reverence will prefer that I go to America.

I beg as a last favor that you do not look for me or try to discuss the matter with me. The decision is irrevocably made. Also that you will be willing in the future to receive other letters from me on the plane of friendship.

I think, Father, that I shall keep as long as I live pleasant memories of you with profound gratitude. Your Reverence and Father Artigues deserve only kindness and gratitude.

God will repay you what you have done for me, and be convinced that the liberty which you have given me I have employed as a good Jesuit should. In this regard I have nothing of which to repent. I have been extremely diligent in observing the rules and in my relations with the others and in home visitation. I have loved and do cordially love that which is essential in the Company, but I clearly see that this is not my road.

A farewell embrace from one who was your son and will continue being, with the same affection, a brother in the Lord until death.

Luis Padrosa, S.J.

The reply of the Father Provincial does not make the least allusion to the charges which are now imputed to me, but on the Contrary it expresses the deepest regret and respect, as the following paragraph shows:

Rev. S. J. Padosa:

“You can well imagine the sorrow with which I am writing. This morning, on reading your letter of the 31st, I was stunned and unable to react and to give you an immediate reply. For this reason, and so I could calm down and think, I told the bearer to return at six in the afternoon.”

Just this is enough to prove that my superiors not only were not thinking of putting me out, but that they held me in high esteem.

I do not think one needs to be very intelligent to understand that if I had been living wrong and wanted to keep on living wrong, I did not need to change my life, losing my prestige, leaving the distinguished Loyola Institute, and being left without the sincere esteem of so many distinguished and unqualified friends. If anyone enjoyed freedom to live without scruples within the Order, it was I. Only the fear of God and the burden of very deep convictions acquired during long years of study and meditation can determine a decision like mine. Other motives cannot; not in any way.

If anyone thinks the Protestants blinded me with their promises, let all my detractors know that nothing was offered me, and that three months after my leaving Spain I still did not have work or a home.

And since I did not bring away from Spain, anything but my clothes and my books (although evil tongues have wanted to talk about this too), it was necessary to live the first months on the charity of the evangelical brethren.

In Loyola Institute funds were left to pay the rent and all its expenses from the month of February, when I left, to the month of May inclusive. Since Loyola Institute had no funds, it was necessary to solicit some donations so that, while the Board of Patrons was deciding, about the furniture of the institution the rent and all the bills that came could be paid without sacrifice to anyone.

I am ending this appendix convinced that, in spite of what I say, which can also be proved slanders of all shades and colors will continue.

I can offer a single word of advice to the one who wants to possess the truth:

Read as frequently as you can the Holy Gospel and the Epistles contained in the New Testament. There you will see what it is that the one who endeavors to be a Christian ought to believe and practice.

“Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” (Matthew 15:3).

“Well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth 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 15:7-9).

Let us leave men, then, and listen to the Lord Jesus, for He alone has words of everlasting life.

Buenos Aires, July 1, 1951

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