

Conversion to Christ of a Roman Catholic

By Juan del Rio Rivera.

[The writer of the following article, "Conversion to Christ of a Roman Catholic," is a Porto Rican and was formerly a student for the priesthood, lacking only one year of completing his education. At present he is engaged in teaching in the public schools at Rincon, where we have an organized church. He is an elder in the church and also is superintendent of the Sabbath school at Rincon and also conducts the Bible school at Corsega, one of our out-stations.

He is willing to help in any way he can and asks nothing for his services, although he has to sacrifice much time and personal comfort. In many ways he is making his influence tell for righteousness among the people of these smaller towns, who are slaves to their Roman Catholic and Spiritualistic superstitions.

The following is his own personal experience, written by himself, of how he was converted from Romanism.]

I am going to tell something about my youth in order that I can be more clear in my account and to beg of our Lord his divine mercies.

Almost in a dream I remember a thing of my infancy; we carried to the Roman Church of my town the corpse of a little brother, and after having done the ceremonies and songs proper of these cases, and after having buried the corpse I came home and said, "How many mistakes and lies did the priest say?" That ceremony did not fix on my mind, and my elder brother reprehended my ignorance. That was a concealed seed which remained without germination.

I grew and then I began to serve in the church as an acolyte to gain something for my support. That was a thing I could not explain,—many ceremonies and rites which did attract my attention, filling my mind with fear, they only filled the sight,—the heart remained empty.

At fourteen years old I began to study to be a priest in the Theological Seminary. There all changed: that life of prayers, masses, rosaries and processions, saints of wood and mysteries did attract me, but each day I saw that the burden was very difficult for me to become a good priest,

so many things Rome has imposed on them. . . . In my course there were thirteen students and nobody came to be a priest. I believe to-day that the Almighty God has mercy upon us.

A Being within me obliged me, without knowing why, to abandon the studies and hang up the robe.—"God protects that Being." I left the Theological Seminary and took a place in teaching the public schools, and I continued Roman Catholic without conditions. So I continued my life with a fanatic belief in the Virgin of the Carmen, by means of which I could get all that I asked for.—I confess that my way, as I thought, was good, but something was deficient to me. I thought that with that belief and doing all the good possible I should gain the Heaven.—All the amusements of the world and the evils that frequently come with them to men I believed them good, always begging the protection of my protectress.

I preached the doctrine and boast to be a Christian, but I did not improve my life, I could not oppose my vices.

The moment came when the Almighty God took pity on me and called me. A brother presented to me the occasion in which my son could study to be a minister of the Presbyterian Church. My answer, I remember at the beach of the sea,

"I prefer to sell water before be a Protestant—"

That was a calling from the Almighty God. Those words remained impressed in my mind and I said, "I will go to see a Culto (church service) the first time," and something that I did not find in my church remained in my heart. Then I began to pray to God that he would lighten me; I began to read the Holy Bible; and then a new idea began to grow in my heart, I was changed, a new life came to me, and I knew my miseries and the desire of getting any of that happiness of which the Christians will get some day was born in my mind.