

## Testimony of JOHN DORAN (former Roman Catholic): Introduction by ALAN DUNLOP (retired minister).

Many years ago, I was privileged to meet and fellowship with a man called **JOHN DORAN**. He had been raised as a Roman Catholic but the Lord had other plans for him and 'in the fullness of time' **JOHN** was gloriously converted to Christ.

In recent times I was asked by converted Roman Catholic friends in England about suitable booklets for sharing with Roman Catholic people that they come into contact with. They mentioned a particular booklet, but as I had no supplies of it, I sent them copies of the little booklet that details **JOHN DORAN's** conversion.

As my stock was running very low, I was able once more to make contact with **JOHN** and he left extra copies with me. In the course of our conversation, I asked if I could have his permission to print up the booklet as an article on my ministry web site and he readily agreed. I also made contact with **ALAN DUNLOP** who wrote the introduction to the booklet and he too was happy to give his permission. Our united prayer is that the Lord might use this testimony to bring precious Roman Catholic souls savingly to Himself.

### 'This Must Be True' John Doran's Story.

#### INTRODUCTION

The background story to this publication is as interesting as the publication itself. For many years I had always wanted a good clear presentation of a Salvation testimony written by a Roman Catholic, **in their own words**. Not a grammatically correct production carefully engineered to become a printed sermon. But a down to earth, man to man account of the struggles and trials that only a soul troubled by the question of their salvation could articulate feelingly. When I heard **John Doran** tell his story I knew then I had what I wanted. I first got permission to publish in December 2002. However, pressing work commitments led me to shelve it at that time, although it was never far from my mind in all those years. The brown envelope containing the original text often caught my eye and beckoned me to finish it!

#### THE STRANGER

On Monday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2015 I met a man on a train platform in Belfast. I had been at Hospital for a consultation; he had been there for treatment. He approached to where I was sitting and engaged in a casual exchange concerning the Logo on my baseball cap! Although I thought it somewhat strange that he should open this conversation 'out of the blue' so to speak. I answered him in a welcoming tone and we were soon engrossed like best buddies. He was a young man, fortyish, and was not very well health-wise. Friendly, very polite, well-mannered, articulate and well-read. It was not long till we had the measure of each other.

He was a Roman Catholic. I told him I was a Born-Again believer. I asked his name and, for a split second only he hesitated, and then, with something of a twinkle in his eye, said 'Paddy'. I saw at once the situation but was happy to allow him to remain anonymous.

Religion became the main topic, (no surprise in Ulster) and in the course of that conversation 'Paddy' revealed that he read the Bible regularly, had many questions concerning what he found there and asked me to say a prayer for him. A stranger asking for prayer! it dawned on me that here was a young man very possibly facing the 'Grim Reaper' and had begun to question the safety of his soul in eternity.

### **ONE THING NEEDFUL**

As I neared Lurgan Train Station I was conscious that my time to witness was indeed very limited and so I pressed upon him the urgent necessity of believing God's Word alone and forsaking the traditions of men whatsoever their origin. To put from his mind all thoughts and teachings of Catholicism, Protestantism or Denominationalism and to focus on the core issues of the Christian faith, Christ's death, burial and resurrection. His sacrifice on Calvary as the only means of our sins forgiven and heaven gained. For him to consider the personal and absolute necessity to apply this gospel of Christ to his own needs and condition.

He was torn between the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, with all its doctrines and religious requirements, and the things taught in the Word of God. He believed that both were to be honoured and he questioned my statement that God's Word alone demands obedience. I told him gently but firmly that the Word of God **does demand** absolute obedience to its own revelations, quoting **Revelation 22:18-19** to him "**If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book**".

I pressed upon him to read in the Gospel of John particularly and see for himself how salvation is offered and applied to individuals, personally and effectively. For him to devote his attention to considering Christ alone and the Blood Sacrifice He made for sinners. A message quite apart from and excluding the agency of any, be they cleric, priest or denomination.

As I stood to leave the now stationary train, I wished fervently that I had something appropriate in print to leave with him by way of further enlightenment, considering his religious background and circumstances, but it was not to be. Pressing the message of '**Christ Alone**' as my goodbye I took my leave of this young stranger. I determined however it would not happen again. That I would be prepared to meet a similar need should the opportunity arise. Thus, the little booklet you now hold in your hand. If you are concerned about eternal issues, may **John Doran's** story prove to be The Lord's providential light, beaming its message of hope and salvation to the innermost recesses of your soul.

**Alan Dunlop: January 2016.**

## **CHILDHOOD DAYS**

I was born into a devout Roman Catholic family. Our house was a little country cottage, and it was situated on the Mill Road, Annalong. My Roman Catholic Church and schooling served me excellently in all the temporal, social, ethical and moral needs a young lad required and discipline was the cornerstone of my life.

We were never rich, some might even say we were poor, but we wanted for nothing as far as food and clothing was concerned. Above all, our home was a happy home. Although strict Catholics, my parents did not let religion take the place of parental love and affection and I can look back on my childhood with fondest memories.

Every month, (the last Saturday of every month) I was sent along to confession and duly received absolution from the priest. My sins were now gone I was told, even though I would go and commit those very same sins and more before the next month came round. I truly believed all those things I was taught and it never occurred to me to question this ritual, indeed it would have been unthinkable to do so.

I never doubted it when we were told that our Church was the only true church, and outside of it there was no salvation.

## **WILDERNESS YEARS**

In my late teens I took a decision that would have profound consequences in my future and life. At that time in Northern Ireland work was very difficult to find, especially for a Catholic lad and, at the age of 18 years and two months I left home and set up for myself in London, where I found work in Customs & Excise, Heathrow Airport. I would not see my home again for 11 years.

During those years in London my childhood religion fled from me and I actually came to the point of disbelieving in the existence of God. It was not a happy time, but this was my spiritual condition when I married Rita, and in the course of time our family came along. By the late '70s, when we returned to Ulster, Rita and I now had children to care for, and we settled back into the routine of most working-class Catholics families, work, school and Church.

It would be more accurate to say they settled into the routine, for I did not attend chapel. I waited outside in the car reading the Sunday papers.

It was an empty time for me, and when both my parents died within five months of each other it was even more so. For various reasons my relationship with my family was not good and I found myself almost an outsider with seemingly no one to help and this loss of my parents and family was one that I felt very keenly.

My life seemed meaningless and worthless.

## HOPES and FEARS

In my troubled state I began to take walks in the mountains and along the sea shore with Rita and our children. When I saw the beauty of the mountains and the power of the waves, more and more I thought about God. There must after all be a God. Who or what could create such natural beauty?

One day quiet and serene, next day raging and wild. Yes. There must be a living God, but how could I get to know Him? Can a man know God personally in this life? Know Him in reality like a father? Not in some emotional, notional, fictional or religious way only, but as a living reality?

I was convinced in my heart that there must be more to knowing God than having a religion, or tradition or system to adhere to. I was no longer satisfied with being told by others what to believe, and I felt that if indeed there was God He must be known as a personal living reality in my life.

In my frustration and helplessness, I began to pray again. Not to the saints, or Mary, but just to God. Perhaps He could hear me in my own words. Maybe not though! In my quest for this knowledge, I was given a book called **“In God’s Name”** by David A. Yallop. It was an investigation into the death of Pope John Paul I whose term in office only lasted 33 days from his election.

The contents of that book shocked me and baffled me. I was amazed and disconcerted. Many a night I lay reading to the small hours, trying to come to terms with the revelations that book contained. Was it possible that the R.C. church, my church, my childhood foundation, was involved in political, social and religious intrigue? Could it be, that accusations of corruption and even murder could be levelled at her?

The last remnants of my early faith were now shaken to the very foundation and I was left in a state of hopelessness. How could someone publicly claim these things if they were not true?

I became bewildered. Where is truth? Who can tell me the truth and nothing but the truth? Is there anybody out there who can help me?

## A NEW DAWNING

It was about a year after this that I met an old childhood friend. A man whom I had not actually talked to from the 1960s. We grew up together, played together. We were almost like brothers, but there was one vast difference that set us apart. He had the religion of the Bible. I was a Roman Catholic. That was my view of us as we played together as children. Our meeting after over 20 years came about so simply.

In January of 1987 I was working in Newcastle, Co Down, and, as is the habit of many working men, I sat in my car eating my lunch. I was sitting one day, thus engaged, when my childhood friend came round the corner. Apart from a greeting at a funeral, I had not spoken to him for over 20 years. Now he was leaning in my car window.

I had no time to hide the book and he saw I had been reading. Very soon the subject of religion came up. We were very open and frank in our conversation. He gave me literature about the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. From then on, I would meet him often at lunchtimes and he explained to me what the true Gospel of Christ is.

My friend was a Christian, a Born-Again believer as he called it. He talked about being 'Saved', and knowing the Lord Jesus Christ in a personal way. Everything he said he proved from the Bible. He did not berate the R.C. Faith. He did not mention Protestantism or push to the fore a denomination, nor did he ask me to attend or join a church. He simply left me some Gospel booklets that told of Jesus Christ and one day he gave me a little New Testament.

It was the first Bible I ever owned. I had never read the Bible, knew nothing about the Bible, but now I began reading God's Word for myself. I read what it said about repentance, about forgiveness of sins, about the true meaning and extent of the sacrifice of Christ at Calvary.

I saw for myself what God meant when He spoke of Faith and Salvation. My friend would explain many things to me and always demonstrated from God's Word that what he said was true. After all my years of searching I could hardly take it in. I had never heard anything like it before, never in my life, never in my church.

My friend showed me in the Bible how the True and Living God provided a way in which a simple, uneducated man like myself could be forgiven. That I could receive eternal life, and know of an absolute certainty that when I die, I will go to heaven. God calls it salvation and it comes only by Jesus Christ. I read verses like "**Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners**" (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:15) and "**The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin**" (1<sup>st</sup> John 1:7).

### **NEARING the KINGDOM**

I began to ask myself questions, many questions. Questions like, Who was and is Jesus Christ? Why did He have to die? Did He die for everybody on earth? Will everybody on earth go to heaven? Who will go to hell? What is hell?

If Christ has already paid for all sin, what sin can be left for purgatory? And why pay for a Mass if the sin is already paid? The thought came to me also, who will pay for me when my loved ones have passed on, and what then will become of me in purgatory?

I was very confused at these conflicting teachings for obviously both they and the Bible could not be right.

In my New Testament I saw that there was only one sacrifice for sin, so clearly revealed in **Hebrews 10: 11-14** “**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 forever, sat down on the right hand of God .... for by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified**”.

So, if this was true there could be no Mass, for this personal sacrifice could not be repeated or imitated. If what I was reading were the very Words of God, how could there be priest involvement when salvation was clearly declared to be a matter between the sinner and Christ alone?

Moreover, I saw this must be true, for there is only one Bible for Catholics and Protestants alike, in that there is no dispute, so it must be true, this is God's book, these are the words of God. Amazingly I thought, God has given us all the answers in the Bible, which He calls 'The Word'. I had found the answer: I had indeed at last found the truth.

I was amazed. Here in this little book, my New Testament, were all the answers to all my questions.

My friend showed me from the Bible that God had indeed provided a way in which I, **John Doran**, could receive eternal life and know of an absolute certainty that my sins were indeed forgiven for Christ said –

**“He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).**

### **THE LIGHT SHINES AT LAST**

I could see now from the Bible that Jesus Christ, on the cross, became the actual substitute for me, the guilty sinner, and that by the shedding of His own blood redeemed me to God by paying the price of my sin in full.

The more I read the Bible the more I could see that this simple message of God's forgiveness never once mentioned the mass or confession to a priest, nor did it say anything about praying to the Saints or to Mary.

Purgatory, the Rosary and Penance were likewise absent and the whole subject of salvation centred on Christ and His work.

These very words of God in my New Testament taught the very opposite to all my previous religious schooling and, as the light of God began to enter my heart, I was struck by one verse in particular.

It was already quoted in another little booklet I had been given by this childhood friend, a publication of the conversion of a R.C. Priest, **Bartholomew Brewer**. In the book, Brewer quoted **Ephesians 2:8-9** “**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**”.

It was these words that now gripped me and became the very cornerstone of my confidence.

### **Grace - Saved - Faith – Gift.**

This was all so simple and uncomplicated that I knew in my heart that I had indeed found the truth, found the answer.

My salvation would not be in any act of mine, not by my works, not by my church, not by my priest, but by my personal acceptance of the work of Christ on the cross.

### **FORGIVEN**

I called for my wife Rita and said “**Listen to this, this is what we have been looking for**”. I thank God He used the same truth to the enlightening of her heart also.

It was in February of 1988 that we both simply did as the Scriptures asked, confessed our sin to Jesus Christ and accepted by simple faith His forgiveness.

We simply flung ourselves on the mercies and promises of God as revealed in His word, and knew immediately that our prayers were heard and our confessions accepted.

**“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37)**. We were indeed Born-Again spiritually; we were now Bible Christians. We were Saved sinners.

That was 27 years ago, and Rita and I have been kept and preserved by His Grace alone since that time. Our children also have trusted Christ for salvation.

We have not turned to be Protestants, that was not our experience, nor indeed would it have interested us. We wanted more than a name, more than another denominational title; we wanted a living spiritual reality.

We now know we have been brought into God’s redeemed family, and all the merit of Christ’s life and death has become ours by faith alone.

We now worship God, not according to the customs of any religious tradition, but according to the manner His word commands.

**“True worshippers shall worship the father in spirit and in truth: for the father seeketh such to worship him” (John 4:23)**.

I am glad my childhood friend was concerned enough to seek my soul for the Gospel's sake. Through his faithful witness we found the answer and I write these words that you might find it too.

**John & Rita Doran (January 2016).**

**Concluding thoughts by Cecil**

I hope you have been blessed as you have read of God's gracious dealings with both **John** and **Rita**. I have a number of copies of the booklet '**This Must Be True: John Doran's Story**' and if you would like a free copy, or copies, for personal use or to pass on to someone, then please just ask by writing to me at **29 Edengrove Park, Ballynahinch, Co Down BT24 8AZ** or by emailing me at [takeheed@aol.com](mailto:takeheed@aol.com)

**Cecil Andrews – 'Take Heed' Ministries – 6<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

