



ALBERTO RIVERA

THE TRUE STORY



ROY LIVESEY

EDITED BY SHAUN WILLCOCK

ALBERTO RIVERA – THE TRUE STORY

Roy Livesey

Edited by Shaun Willcock

Bible Based Ministries

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The cover photograph of Alberto Rivera was taken by Shaun Willcock, 1985

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Roy Livesey trained as a Chartered Accountant in England and graduated from the University of Bristol in Economics and Politics. A career in business and finance took him all over the world.

He had early leanings to the New Age Movement. In later life he conducted an extensive search of the occult. Out of that he was converted to Christ. He began writing about deception from a Christian perspective in 1983, and authored a number of books. With his wife, Roy Livesey published *New Age Bulletin* which had a worldwide circulation and provided regular updates on the New Age, the New World Order and deception in the professing Church.

This book marks a further step. *Alberto Rivera – the True Story* exposes a master deceiver.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

This book by Roy Livesey is a devastating and unanswerable blow to the false claims of Alberto Rivera, one of the greatest religious deceivers of modern times, indeed of all time. Others have written shorter exposés of him (including myself), but none did such a thoroughly researched, exhaustive job. He travelled extensively to conduct his research, accumulating a massive amount of documented information. The result is this definitive exposé of a master deceiver, manipulator, liar and fraud.

Not only did I correspond with Roy Livesey for many years, but I knew him personally, as he stayed with my wife and I for a couple of weeks in our home in 1996. Although disagreeing with him on certain issues, I considered him to be a friend and Christian brother, with a sincere desire to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. It was with much sadness that I received the news that he had passed away in 2016.

The draft for this book was completed in 1992, although my own personal manuscript copy, given to me by the author, has a few notations which he added in 1993. However, this is the first time the book has been published, as far as is known. Although he always wanted to publish it, for various reasons he was unable to do so. It has remained in manuscript form only, copies of which are owned by just a handful of people, until now.

My reasons for editing this book, and publishing it as an ebook, are as follows. Firstly, Roy Livesey passed away before it could be published, and I, along with many others, believe it to be an exceptionally important, thoroughly researched work, the fruit of years of labour and investigation, which should not be lost to the world, for the message is vitally important. Secondly, I knew Alberto Rivera personally, having spent three weeks with him and some of his co-workers in Los Angeles in 1985; and for a time afterwards, although I never officially became a part of his A.I.C. Ministries, my ministry, Bible Based Ministries, acted as his representative for Africa and other parts of the world. And thirdly, I personally knew, and still know, some of those who were part of Rivera's organisation and members of his church, and I was privy to much that transpired in those memorable days when they forsook Rivera and expelled him from the pastorate and membership of his church in Los Angeles. I have therefore always had a close personal interest in the stranger-than-fiction story of Alberto Rivera.

The fact that this book was completed in 1992 must always be borne in mind when reading it, for Rivera was still alive at the time. He died in 1997. But it would be a grave mistake to assume that his immense influence died with him, for it did not. Considering how many multiplied millions of the Chick comic books bearing Rivera's false testimony are in circulation all over the world, and are still being published, his influence will be felt for a very, very long time to come. And this book will be sorely needed as long as the extraordinary *myth* of "Dr Alberto Rivera, ex-Jesuit," circulates. For myth it certainly is. Yes, there was a man named Alberto Rivera; but he was never a "doctor" of any sort, he was never a Jesuit priest, and he was never truly converted to Christ. He was a con-man of the first order.

This book is being publishing for its wealth of factual information exposing Alberto Rivera. Therefore, concerning the many and various sources referred to, or quoted from, in this work, it is important to bear in mind that what is relevant here is what these sources *knew* (factually); what light they could shed on Rivera and his astounding claims. Reference to a particular source in this book is by no means necessarily an endorsement of that source by Roy Livesey. To give just one example: when he quotes from such magazines as *Christianity Today* and *Cornerstone*, which are certainly not doctrinally sound, he was in no sense suggesting they are.

Even so, when he wrote this book he himself was still coming out of much deception which had plagued his early Christian walk, a protracted process not at all uncommon for many new converts in this day of abounding doctrinal confusion; and thus he made certain statements, or expressed opinions, in this work, which were not quite doctrinally sound. A number of these he would have rejected in later years, and they would not have been included if he had been able to publish the book. In editing

it, some statements and opinions have been deleted, when they had no bearing on the *facts* of the case concerning Alberto Rivera. But others could not be removed without a loss to the factual value of the book itself; and therefore I have drawn attention to these below. Allowances must be made for a Christian's level of spiritual growth and understanding at any given time.

* The author, at the time when this book was written, was still emerging out of Arminianism; and thus there are Arminian statements in this book which he would not have made later in his Christian life, when he was better taught in the Word of God on this important doctrinal matter.

* Most of the ministries "evangelising" Roman Catholics in the United States when this book was written were Arminian in doctrine; but the author accepted them as doctrinally sound, as he himself was still misled by Arminianism to some extent. Doubtless a number of these men were truly converted and thus brethren in Christ, who sincerely and earnestly desired the evangelisation of Roman Catholics; but even so, on this matter their doctrine was faulty.

* During the course of research it is necessary to obtain information from a wide variety of people; but Christians must be very discerning, and not accept, nor attend the services of, an institution calling itself a Christian church, without first ascertaining that it really is so. Interviewing all kinds of people is necessary, but attending the services of false churches is never right. At the time of writing this book, Roy Livesey was not always very discerning in such matters.

* True Christians must also be very discerning with regards to all who profess to be Christians. The author accepted as brethren in Christ some who should not have been accepted as such. Others, although they may indeed have been truly converted, were unsound in certain doctrines; but he did not always point these out, and was not even always aware of them at the time of writing. In editing this book I have at times added the word "professing" before the word "Christian", or put the word "Christian" in quotation marks, where the person referred to was either not a true Christian, or where solid biblical evidence is lacking for any reason. As the author himself did this on occasion, in this book, he clearly knew the value of it, but did not do so consistently. This is what I have sought to do, wherever needed.

* I have retained the author's references to Rivera's "paranoia", which needs a word of explanation. Although it is true that this word is frequently applied to the concept, popular in psychology, of a "mental illness", this is not biblical, for illness is only physical; the mind cannot be "ill". Sinful behaviour can never be excused by blaming it on some "mental illness". But "paranoia" is also defined as an extreme, unreasonable feeling that others do not like one, or are going to harm one; a strong tendency to feel that one cannot trust other people. And by *this* definition, without any connection to psychology's myth of "mental illness", Rivera was paranoid.

* It must also be said that although Jack Chick may have had a paranoid belief in Jesuit assassins out to get him and Rivera, in that his belief was without foundation in fact, there most certainly have been Jesuit assassins. Just because there were none chasing after Rivera and Chick does not mean they did not, or do not, exist. Roy Livesey, unfortunately, does not make this fact clear.

* The author at one point writes: "With the twentieth century church so apostate and blind, Rome has precious little need for [Jesuit] 'under cover agents.'" However, he immediately goes on to state: "Even so, their existence is not denied". There is therefore no question that he certainly believes in their existence; he merely wonders whether, having done their work so well in past centuries, the Vatican still needs them today. However, such undercover agents certainly *are* at work today, just as in the past.

* Although it may be true concerning other priestly orders, when it comes to the Jesuits the following

statement by the author is naive: “if a man who claims to have been a priest is not listed in his appropriate Roman Catholic directory, then we can consider him bogus, and he is eliminated right from the start”. The Jesuits, the secret army of the Papacy, cannot be relied upon to leave their own records intact, if at any time it suits them to alter these. Roy Livesey failed to fully appreciate the lengths to which Jesuit duplicity and deception would be prepared to go. Nevertheless, the Jesuits certainly did *not* alter their records with regards to Alberto Rivera, for, as this book documents thoroughly, he was never a Jesuit or any other kind of Romish priest, and therefore they had absolutely no need to do so.

*Christians are to call no man “father” in a religious sense (Matt. 23:9). At the very least, then, they should put the word in quotation marks when referring to a priest of Rome, to indicate that he is not a “father” and should not be called one. Although Roy Livesey did at times do this, at other times he did not, even when referring to the same priest. In editing this book, therefore, by *always* following this practice (except when it is in someone else’s quotation), I have not made him say what he did not intend to say, but have merely “standardised” his own practice. Likewise with the Romish “saint”, Francis de Sales.

* Although the author referred at times to various Protestant ministers as “Mr”, at other times he followed the unbiblical practice of giving flattering titles to those in the ministry, such as “Dr”, “Reverend”, etc. (Matt. 23:8-12; Psa. 111:9; Jn. 5:44; Job 32:21,22). Again, therefore, by *always* using “Mr”, or the man’s actual name, or placing the title in quotation marks, I have not made him say what he did not intend to, but have “standardised” his own practice.

* Correctly, he at times placed quotation marks around the word, “conversion”, when applied to Rivera, to indicate that his “conversion” was a false one; but at other times he did not. Once again, therefore, by seeking to *always* do so, I have not made him say what he did not intend to.

* I have placed the name “Sister Charlotte” in quotation marks, not because Charlotte was not her name (it was), but because, as a Pentecostal and as a false female “minister” for many years in direct contradiction of Scripture, as well as the uncertainty concerning her claim that she was an ex-nun, she is not to be simply accepted as having been a sister in Christ.

* Chick used Avro Manhattan’s books to attempt to prove Rivera was an ex-Jesuit; whereas in truth Manhattan’s books have nothing to do with Rivera and prove nothing about Rivera. Rivera himself simply read Manhattan’s books, as he did others, and used the researched information of these men to assist him in spinning his fanciful yarn about himself.

Roy Livesey expresses surprise that Manhattan was taken in by Rivera at one point. But the fact is that Manhattan was neither the first intelligent man, nor by any means the last, to be duped by Rivera. That a man who is an historian is duped by a clever con-man does not have to cast doubt on a man’s abilities as an historian.

Chick claimed that Manhattan’s books were on the Index of Forbidden Books in the Vatican, which, as the author shows, was impossible. But this is no reflection on Manhattan himself. There are in fact a number of possible explanations for Manhattan’s silence about it. Here are two: Manhattan may not have been aware that Chick did this before the book was published; or, he may have asked Chick to delete it but Chick did not do so. I highly recommend the researched, factual information in Manhattan’s works exposing the Vatican in world politics.

* I have not included the Preface written by Samuel Vila in anticipation of Roy Livesey’s publication of this book in the 1990s (which did not happen). Some of the comments in his Preface detract from the strong message of the book itself.

In conclusion, we give thanks to the Lord for this exhaustive, well-researched, and unanswerable

exposé of Alberto Rivera, a man whose past reveals that he was never a Jesuit priest, and whose life after his professed “conversion” reveals that he was never truly converted to Christ either. Alberto Rivera was a fake Jesuit, and a false Christian. Here is the evidence.

Shaun Willcock
2018

INTRODUCTION

The *Alberto* 32-page picture books and 22-page picture tracts from Chick Publications make compelling reading. When I first saw them, and read the stories of “former Jesuit” Alberto Rivera, my interest in Jesuits was aroused. I looked up the dictionary: “Jesuit – equivocator, dissembling person, one who uses ambiguous words to conceal the truth.” Was Alberto an ex-Jesuit revealing the facts of the Jesuits? Protestant leaders told me that he was. Eventually, I began to hear different warnings from others. I determined to find out all about Alberto Rivera.

Three very full years were spent on research. I needed evidence of Rivera as a Jesuit. If he was genuine, then Chick’s *Alberto* stories were important. I too was an author exposing Rome, and I found no such evidence. However, because of the popular view of the Jesuit as cunning and dissembling, Rivera might nevertheless be genuine. Was he a Jesuit cloaked with some special disguise? His was a voice that either needed to be heard widely, or refuted. I began the task of gathering details of his life. Forty years of Rivera’s life had to be accounted for. Apart from establishing Rivera’s true life story, I have consulted with many who knew him to determine whether his testimony at any time during this long period afforded any possibility that he could have been a Jesuit even for the briefest period.

Jonas Shepherd, General Secretary of the Canadian Protestant League, ought to know something about Jesuits. He wrote *The Babington Plot – Jesuit Intrigue in Elizabethan England*. On behalf of the League, the General Secretary made enquiries about Rivera. His Report has covered the world in the pages of *Is Alberto for Real?* At first I accepted the League’s conclusion that Rivera had been a Jesuit priest, and that his extraordinary information, given to author and publisher Jack Chick, was sourced in his experience as a Jesuit when he had access to the secret information in the archives of the Vatican.

Many are ready to believe Rivera’s stories. This is because of his own plausible testimony on the one hand and the peculiar position of the Jesuits, their reputation, and their cunning, on the other. Furthermore, and to my great surprise, I have found the not-infrequent belief that Vatican agents are attempting to discredit Chick and Rivera. Such people, Chick himself included, regard this author as an agent of the Vatican. As one who aims to write facts about Rome, I once had a good rapport with Jack Chick. However, believing I may have been duped by the *Alberto* message, I began investigating Rivera, and the climate changed.

Eventually, I provided Chick with a copy of my manuscript. I attempted to see him and called at his office in California, but the only word I can now receive is second-hand. In particular I have noted with sadness Chick’s words to one correspondent: “I believe the Vatican has financed his [Livesey’s] trips to create this book.”

Alberto books have been published since 1979. Probably the best-selling publications against Rome for all time, the tracts and books contain within them a message – a compelling one – which itself heaps credibility on its source. The stories describe the infiltration by Rome in such a way that authors like myself, and any who actively oppose the *Alberto* falsehoods, fit the description of the infiltrator.

Roman Catholicism has certainly gained in influence, even if not in the manner *Alberto* describes. One result is that few oppose her. Despite the good ministries evangelising Roman Catholics and producing sound tracts, all of this is small compared to the enormous impression made by Chick. His total production of 22-page tracts alone has been advertised at a massive 100,000 copies per day.

Meanwhile, those who know Rome well, whether by practicing its religion or understanding its ways, mostly ignore or despise the Chick output. Yet they discount Chick’s importance at a cost. Many Evangelical leaders are unclear about Jesuits, or about Rivera, or both. They do not know the answer to the question, “Is Alberto for Real?” and, while more and more innocents are deceived, they allow the subject to pass them by. They do not warn.

“Is Alberto for Real?” is an important question because Chick’s presses continue to roll, printing in more and more foreign languages. Rivera’s own work continues.

More important than Rivera himself is the information to which his false status as a former Jesuit priest lends weight. Much of this information is at best false, and at worst ill-advised, or very dangerous. An example of the latter is *The Deceived*. Here we find a picture of two angry Muslims who feel they have been duped by the Vatican. The second picture takes us back in time when Mohammed was selected by a priest in the market place in Mecca to serve the Vatican purpose. The third shows Khadijah, “a beautiful Roman Catholic”, who lived in a convent. “Under orders, she married Muhammad, and the trap was set.” Author Chick’s conclusion is as devilish as the system he seeks to expose. It is from the father of lies, and is based on *The Prophet (Alberto, Part Six)*. Jack Chick wrote *The Prophet* where we read:

“If the demonic conspiracy had worked, the Arab world would soon be serving the pope.”

Chick Publications’ newspaper, *Battle Cry* (Nov/Dec 1992), reports “many irate phone calls from Muslims...” And well they might.

When Rivera himself is long forgotten, Chick’s false, but powerful, graphical promotion of a distorted history of Rome (as well as the Jews and Islam) will remain both in print and in the minds of many. We pray this book will encourage readers to consider for themselves whether Rivera really is who he says he is, and whether he really could have uncovered secret Roman Catholic history when a Jesuit priest at the Vatican.

Alberto Rivera – The True Story makes no concessions to Roman Catholicism and the Jesuits. Originally it was the intention to deal with both Rivera and the Jesuits in order that the latter be not overlooked. However, it has become increasingly clear that Rivera’s web of deception has been spun over many years, and more detail than originally foreseen has been necessary in order to present a relevant and balanced biography. The present volume is the true story of Alberto Rivera, based upon my research.



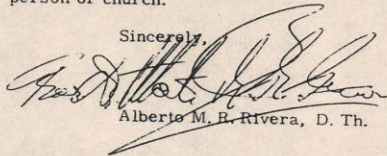
Antichrist Information Center
P.O. Box 179, Covage Park, CA 91305
January 30, 1980

To Whom it May Concern:

I have been requested to make a statement concerning the validity of the account of my life story in the book, "Alberto," published by Chick Publications, Inc.

"Alberto" is a true and actual account, and I will face a court of law to prove the events actually took place. I hereby challenge anyone who would refute or try to prove the facts and information in this book are untrue. I will defend every statement made regardless of the embarrassment it may cause any person or church.

Sincerely,

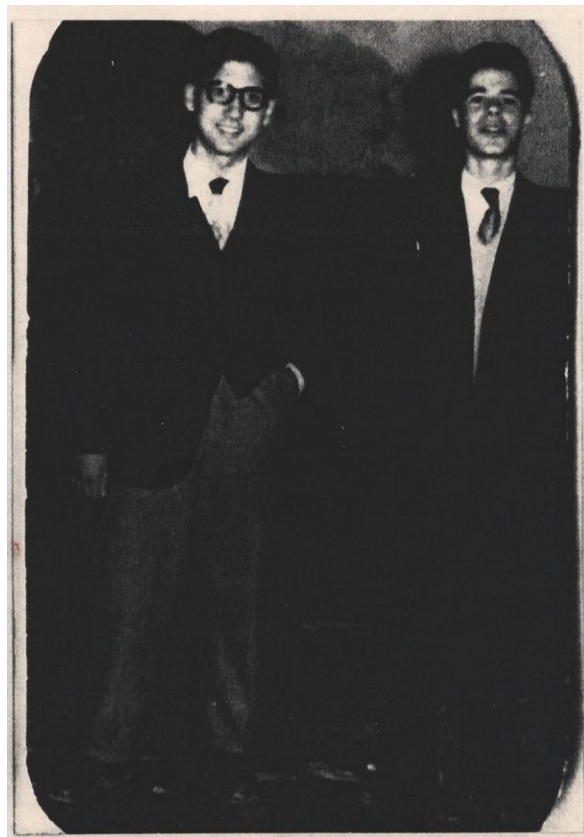


Alberto M. B. Rivera, D. Th.

A NON-DENOMINATIONAL, NON-PROFIT, CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATION

The Watchtower of the Christian faith to inform you of the prophetic works of the antichrist in preparation for his marriage with his bride, the harlot and mother of harlots (Rev. 6.13.17)

1. Statement by Alberto Rivera 1980.



2. Alberto Rivera and Jose Luis Medina.

Entry in the Church Register

Number 70 - Alberto Rivera. Single. Member by Baptism on 3 April 1953
Son of Mr Alberto Rivera
Elders: Jaime Carder and Gregorio Bonilla

He left the church membership when he went to Costa Rica to follow studies in 1955
Expelled because of scandal on Dec 1, 1967

Núm. 70
D. Alberto Rivera Rivera
de estado soltero
con D.
el día
nació en
el día
hijo de D. Alberto Rivera
natural de
y de Doña
natural de

EL ANCIANO,
Jaime Carder

ES MIEMBRO POR:

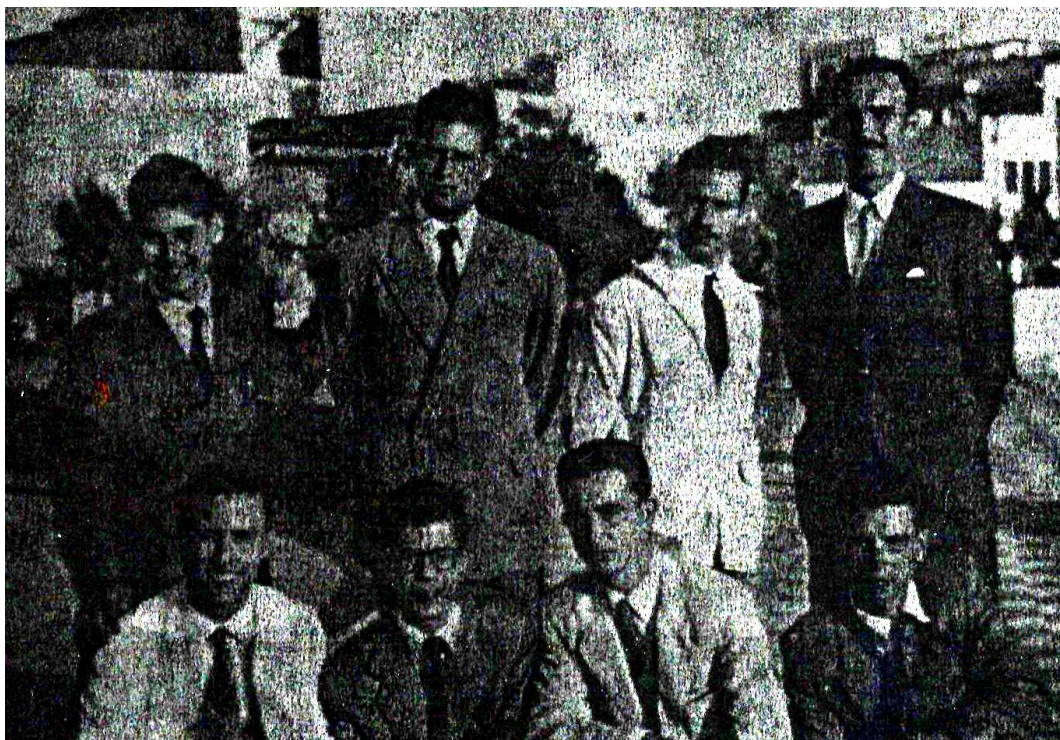
Bautizado el 3 de Abril de 1953

EL ANCIANO,
Gregorio Bonilla

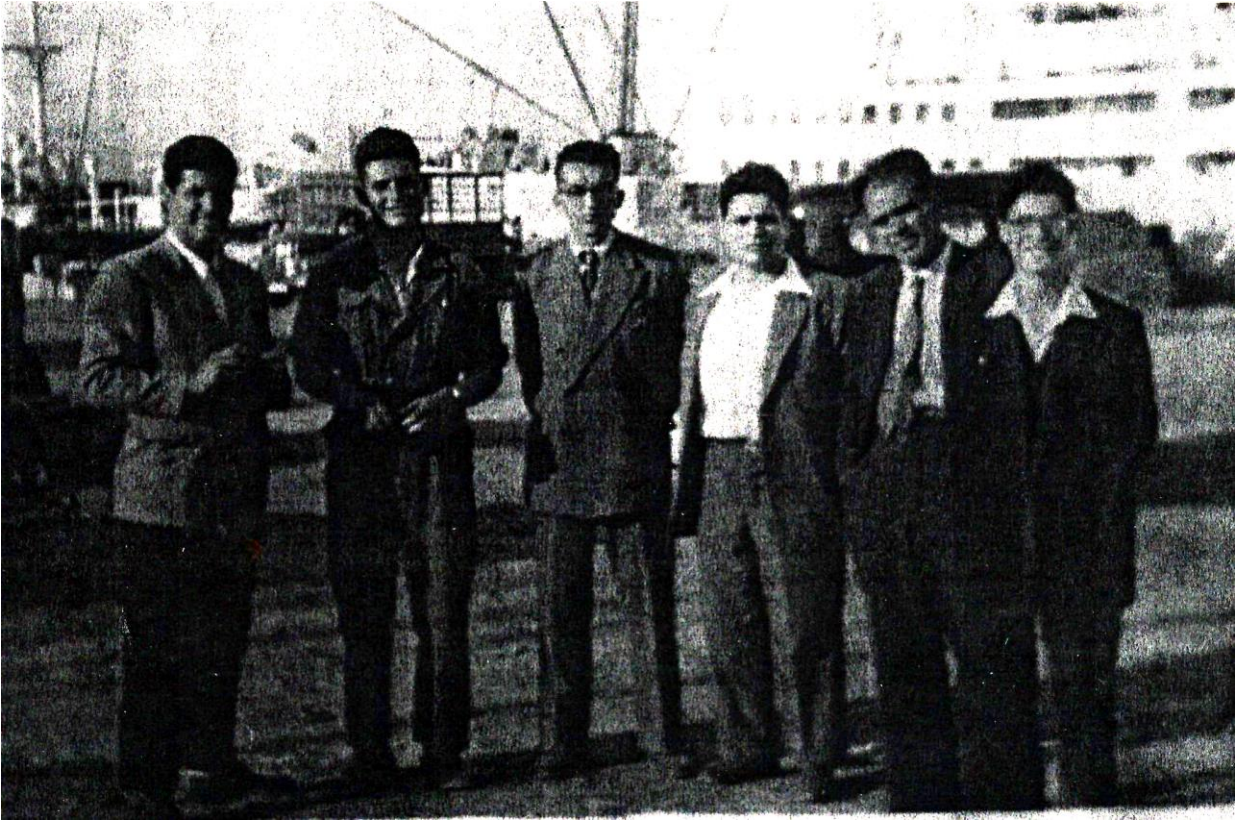
OBSERVACIONES

Dejó la membresía al marchar a Costa Rica a estudiar en 1955.
Excluido por escándalo el 1 de Diciembre de 1967.

3. Church Register of the *Eglesia Cristiana Evangelica*, Las Palmas, Canary Islands.



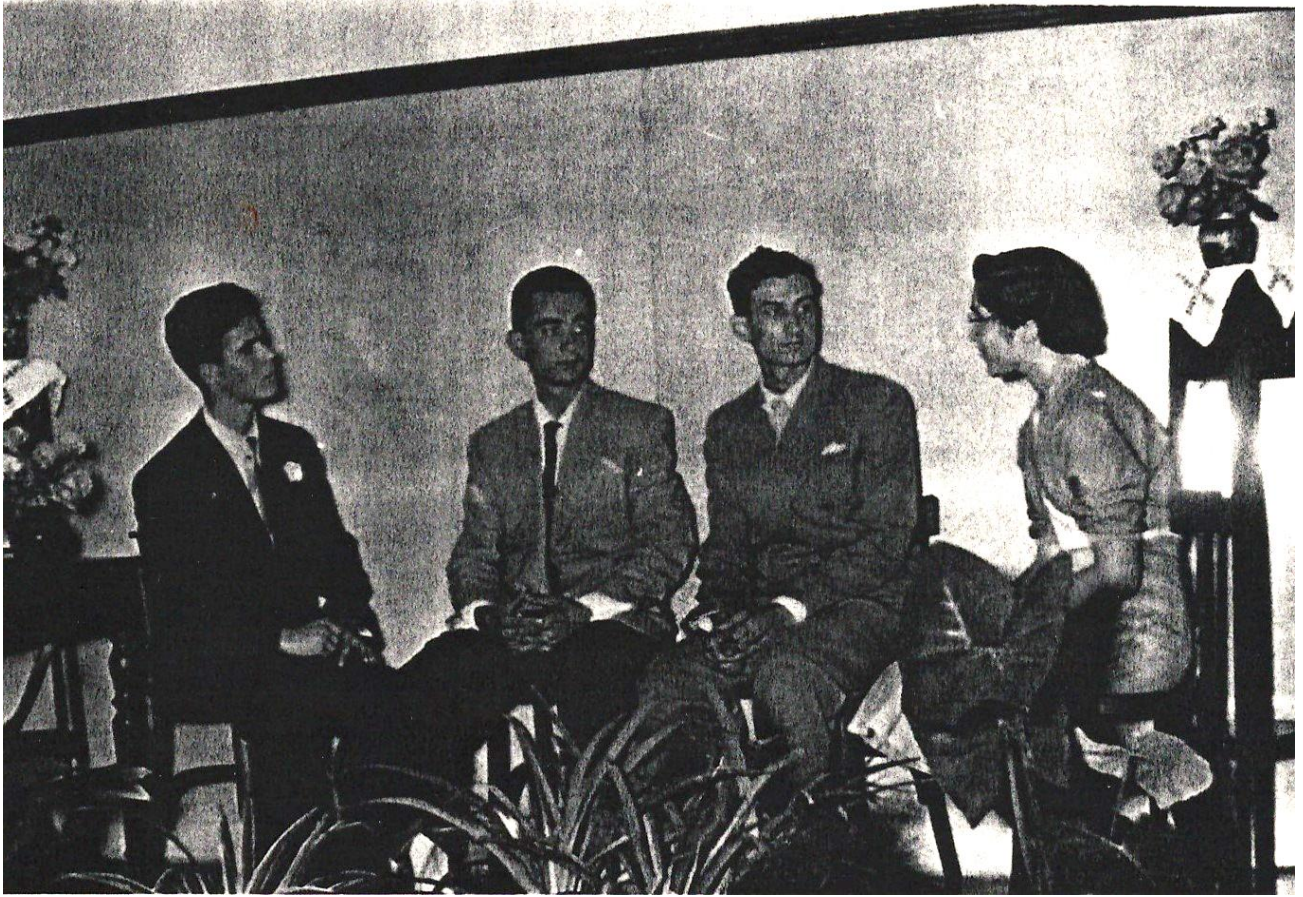
4. Young People's Group, *Eglesia Cristiana Evangelica*.



5. At the quayside.



6. Alberto Rivera, Las Palmas Evangelical Church.



7. Rivera on stage (1).



8. Rivera on stage (2).



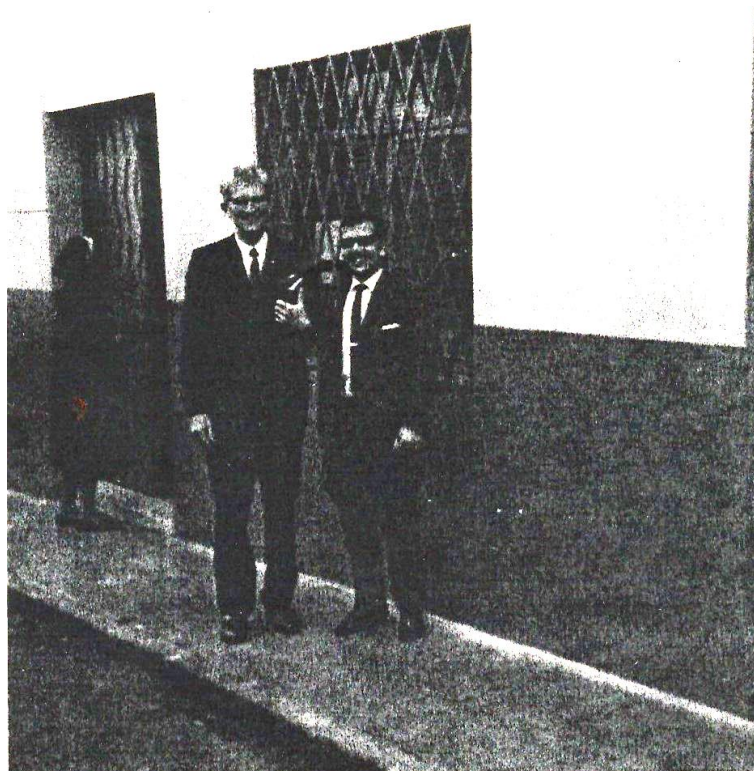
9. Rivera, Clara Montalban and others.



10. Rivera, third from left.



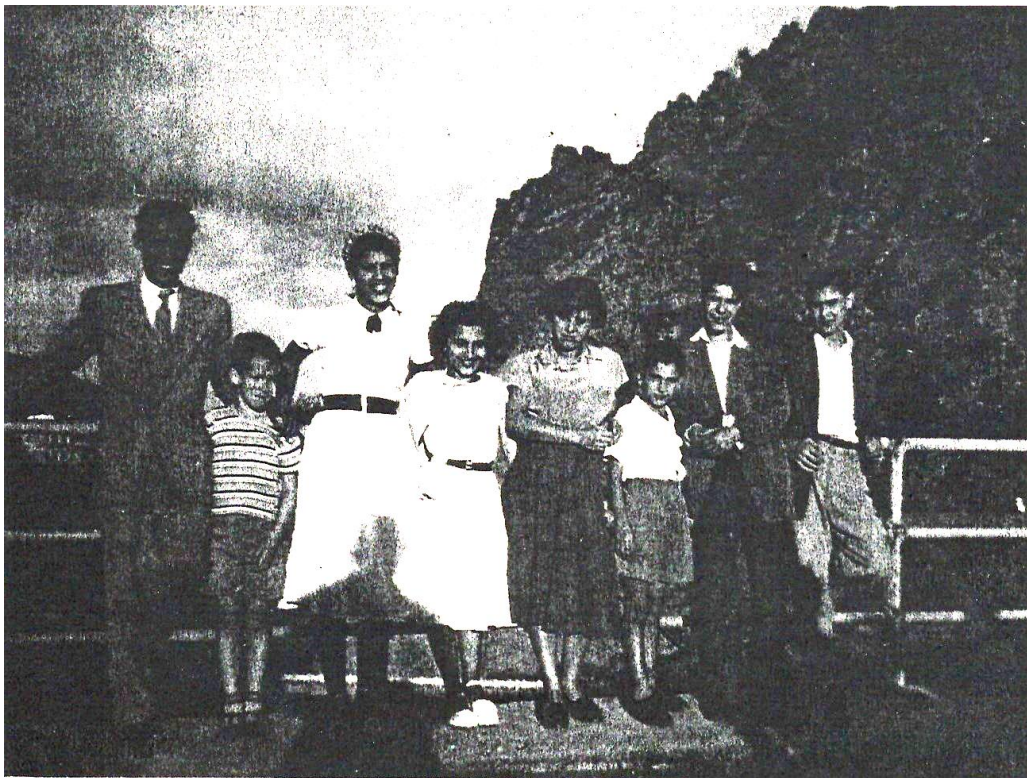
11. Roman Catholic priest outside Las Palmas Evangelical Church Building.



12. Vincent Phillips, Pastor of *Eglesia Cristiana Evangelica*.



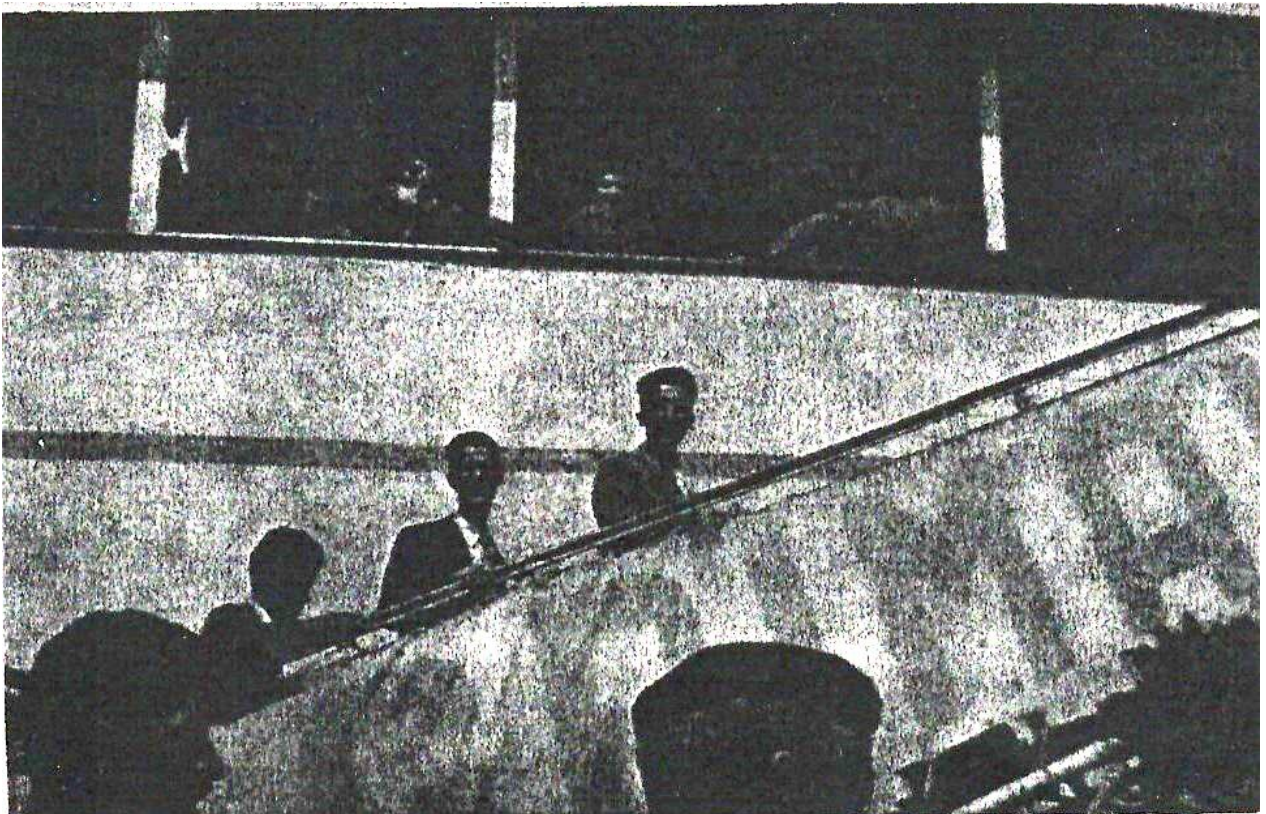
13. A Jesuit infiltrator?



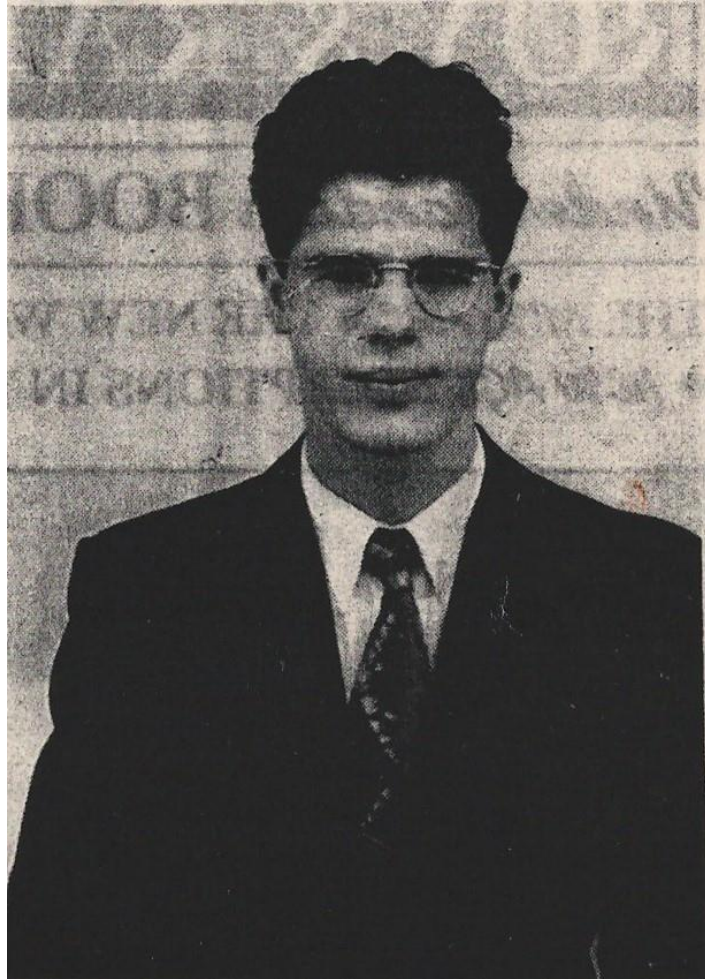
14. Rivera, some years later.



15. Rivera, Plutarco Bonilla and others.



16. Rivera and Plutarco Bonilla.



17. Alberto Rivera at the Seminary 1956.

STATE OF TEXAS
 PLACE OF DEATH
EL PASO
EL PASO
EL PASO
R.E. THOMAS GEN. HOSPITAL
5001 MARIE TOBIN PL.

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH
 COUNTY
TEXAS
 CITY
EL PASO

NAME OF DECEASED
JUAN ALBERTO ROMERO

SEX
MALE

COLOR OR RACE
WHITE

DATE OF BIRTH
JULY 27, 1965

AGE
10

USUAL OCCUPATION
CHILD

FATHER'S NAME
ALBERTO ROMERO

DEATH CAUSE
External hydrocephalus
Microgyria

OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTING TO DEATH
Microgyria

CAUSE OF DEATH
External hydrocephalus
Microgyria

OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTING TO DEATH
Microgyria

WAS AUTOPSY PERFORMED?
YES

ACIDENT
NO

DEATH CERTIFICATE
DATE OF DEATH
JULY 27, 1965

PLACE OF BURIAL
EL PASO

STATE
TEXAS

BURIAL
AUGUST 8, 1965

EL PASO TEXAS

18. Death certificate of Juan Alberto Rivera.

PAUPER BURIALS AT MC GILL COUNTY CEMETERY

SEC.	TIER	GRAVE	NAME	BIRTH DATE	DEATH DATE
B	23	39E½	Infant Wheeler	4/1/65	4/1/65
		40E½	Baby Rios	4/20/65	4/20/65
		40W½	Infant Campos	4/8/65	4/8/65
		41E½	Infant Tarango	6/2/65	6/3/65
		41W½	Infant Ceballos	5/19/65	5/19/65
		42E½	Martha Elena Grady		7/5/65
		42W½	Johnny Grado	6/25/65	6/27/65
		43E½	Infant Ortega	7/6/65	7/7/65
		43W½	Francisco Jordan	7/2/65	7/2/65
		44E½	Sylvia Hayes	7/24/65	7/25/65
		44W½	Infant Cadena	6/25/65	6/25/65
		45E½	Juan A. Romero		7/27/65
		45W½	Infant Girl Lopes	7/26/65	7/26/65
		D	8	17	John Doe
18	Charles J. Stohr			10/18/04	4/4/65
19	Jeronimo Carrasco			1889	4/10/65
20	Glenn Satterfield			1921	4/8/65
21	Pedro L. Gonzalez			9/24/27	4/20/65
22	Sam Sivert			12/12/07	6/13/65
23	Tomas Perez			12/8/1855	6/22/65
24	Consuelo Lugo			1930	7/20/65
25	Trinidad Cornejo				7/23/65
26	Domingo Bustos			4/11/20	8/2/65
27	Artie C. McNeely	1902	8/2/65		
		Jose Madrid Saenz	3/30/38	8/11/65	

19. Pauper burial of Juan Alberto Rivera.

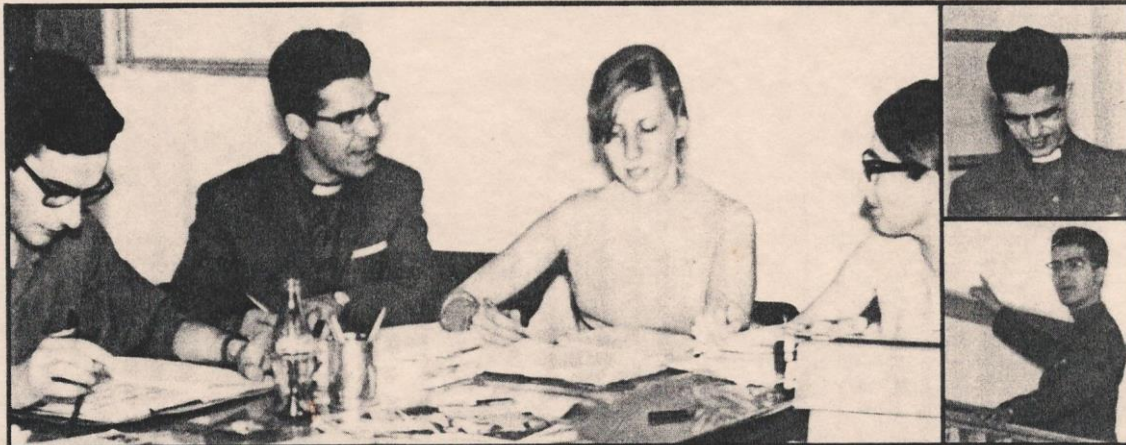
ALBERTO

The unforgettable story of a Jesuit priest and his conversion to Christ.



DR. ALBERTO R. RIVERA - 1985

Dr. Rivera was assigned to stay at the address on the above I.D. card pending the decision of his ecclesiastical trial in 1967, just before his conversion to Christ.



Above are some of the last photographs taken of Dr. Rivera as the Director of the Parish School in San Lorenzo, Tarrasa, Spain.

ALBERTO, DOUBLE-CROSS, THE GODFATHERS, THE FORCE and THE FOUR HORSEMEN are based on portions of the life story and other information given to Chick Publications by Alberto Rivera. All questions relating to Roman Catholicism, his personal life and experiences, or the content of this testimony should be directed to Dr. Rivera at A.I.C. Ministries. Dr. Rivera is now fully involved in historical and Biblical research

relating to the Roman Catholic institution and her associates according to Biblical prophecy. He is available for the preaching of the Gospel to the Roman Catholic people and for evangelistic campaigns, and when schedule allows, for speaking engagements in churches, schools, universities, and for lectures to governments and government institutions in the United States and abroad. For further information, contact Dr. Rivera at A.I.C., P.O. Box 31340, Los Angeles, CA 90032



Robert V. Julien
(Ex-Maryknoll missionary)

"As a former priest, I consider Dr. Rivera a precious brother in Christ. His testimony is true and he genuinely loves the Catholic people. He tells them the truth, risking their anger and his life that they might know salvation."



Donna Eubanks
(Ex-Sister Superior)

"I am now a true Christian, by the grace of God, after 23 years as a nun of the Sisters of St. Joseph. I can state, from personal knowledge, that Dr. Rivera is telling the truth about the Roman Catholic system."

Clark Butterfield
(Ex-priest)

"After reading ALBERTO I realized that I was not alone in my desire as a former priest to bring salvation to the millions of captives of the Roman Catholic system. I am honored to associate myself with the ministry of Dr. Rivera."



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ARCHBISHOPRIC
OF
MADRID-ALCALA
CHANCELLERY-SECRETARYSHIP

His Most Reverend Excellency the Auxiliary Bishop and Vicar-General of this Archbishopric is pleased to authorize Mr. Alberto Rivera Romero, a priest that dwells in this Archdiocese, to go into foreign countries in the cause of his ministry

Madrid, September 14, 1967

Chancellery-Secretary

Seal Of The Secretary

Of The Archbishopric Of

Madrid-Alcala-Spain.
State of Tennessee |
Bradley County |

I, Daniel G. Abrego, make oath in due form of law that the foregoing is a true and correct translation of the instrument attached hereto.

Daniel G. Abrego

Sworn to and subscribed before me
this 20th day of April, 1968

[Signature]
Notary Public State at large

21. Letter from the Roman Catholic archbishopric of Madrid-Alcala.



Alberto Rivera Romero

Approx. 5' 4"

Approx. 36 years of age

D. O. B. 12/19/?

Post Office Case No. 140-89476-F elg

The above person is known to have stolen a BankAmericard credit card in the name of Meta G. Averill of Ormond Beach, Florida. It is known that he took, without authorization, a 1965 Rambler station wagon (License Number: 8-36307) from Mr. [redacted] of Daytona Beach, Florida. There are two warrants pending as of this time against the above. They are as follows:

1. Unauthorized use of an automobile.
Judge Charles Luke
Ormond Beach, Florida
Warrant Number: 3095-c
2. Forgery of a credit card
Judge J. Robert Durden
DeLand, Florida

Romero alleges to be a converted Priest and stayed in the Averill home while conducting lectures in their church. He is traveling with a woman by the name of Lydia Torres, aka, Mrs. Lydia Romero and a small child, (male, approximately eight months old) named Luis Marx Romero. Romero is from Barcelona, Spain. If you have any knowledge of the whereabouts of this person please contact; Mr. G. Nolan Kenner, P.O. Box 2077, DeLand, Florida.



THE OLD ROMAN



CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Most Reverend James C. Hedley Thatcher
Archbishop and Metropolitan

The Cypresses
78 Derby Way
Stevenage
Herts
SG1 5TH

Mr Roy Livesey
Bury House
Clows Top
Kidderminster
Worcs. DY14 9HX

Telephone: (0438) 728509

14 July 1991

Dear Mr Livesey,

Thank you for your telephone call and for sending me the literature concerning Alberto Rivera Romero.

I personally have no knowledge of this person and most certainly he has never been ordained into the Old Roman Catholic Church.

From our own approaches to Rome I know that, while they accept our Orders as valid, they would not accept us into communion with them, and the statement that he was made a Bishop of the Old Roman Catholic Church cannot possibly be true, particularly as the appointment of an Old Roman Catholic Church Bishop has nothing to do with Rome, except informing them as a matter of politeness.

I am sorry not to be able to help you further.

With every good wish and Blessing.

Yours sincerely,

J C Hedley Thatcher
Archbishop & Metropolitan

Registered as a Charity No. 232764

23. Letter from the "Old Roman Catholic Church."



24. Rivera's business card.



25. Nury, Alberto and Albertito Rivera.

IN THE MUNICIPAL COURT OF
LOS ANGELES JUDICIAL DISTRICT-
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

FOR COURT USE
ONLY

PLAINTIFF : OREA, CARLOS
VS
DEFENDANT : RIVERA, ALBERTO

JUDGMENT BY COURT TRIAL

CASE NUMBER
90K32554

In Division 013,
Honorable MEL RED RECANA

, Judge Presiding

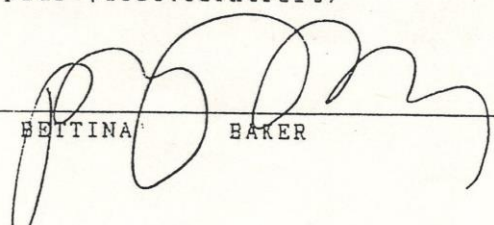
The court, after having considered the evidence,
ordered the following Judgment: It is adjudged that on the complaint,
plaintiff(s)

CARLOS OREA
AN INDIVIDUAL
DONALD R BLANTON
AN INDIVIDUAL

recover from defendants

ALBERTO RIVERA
AN INDIVIDUAL
DBA AIC INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN MINISTR
AKA LOS ANGELES BIBLE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
& SCHOOL

the sum of \$ 16200.00 , \$.00 attorney fees, and \$ 3520.00 interest
with costs as provided by law in the sum of \$.00.
breakdown as follows- as to Orea \$8700.00 principal plus \$1930.92 intrest
to Blanton \$7500.00 principal plus \$1589.58intrest)


BETTINA BAKER

Deputy Clerk

FILED AND ENTERED
ON 8/22/91
Edward M. Kritzman
CLERK OF THE ABOVE NAMED COURT

By: BETTINA BAKER , Deputy



27. Outside the Municipal Court. Left to right: Dr Ismael Guerrero; Donald Blanton; Carlos Orea; Roy Livesey (author); Dino Badaracco.

Chapter 1

“ALBERTO” – A JESUIT-TRAINED TEENAGER DESTROYING PROTESTANT CHURCHES?

“The spiritual fruit of the *Alberto* series has been phenomenal. There have been so many letters come in telling of conversions, and in some instances, entire villages in Africa, including priests and nuns coming to Christ. God has truly blessed the material”.¹

Thus writes Jack Chick. He is one who has been responsible for broadcasting the *Alberto* story. We now begin that story. The one we present here is the true story. We begin at the beginning – in the Canary Islands.

Marcial Robayna, and Oneida, his wife, were contemporaries of Alberto in his youth. They returned from Australia where they had met Rivera once again. Now they were visiting the Canary Islands in February 1991. I was there also. I was checking the facts about Alberto Rivera. I started in the city of Las Palmas where he was born.

Why was the story of Rivera so important? Deceiver of the brethren for nearly forty years, his lies about his own testimony of infiltrating Protestant churches, about the facts of Roman Catholicism, and about the history he was supposed to have uncovered in documents in the Vatican when he was a Jesuit priest, are widespread through literally millions of 36-page illustrated books and multi-millions of 22-page tracts. Some of this information even gets recirculated in the writings of godly men. It was past time that something more was done to warn more effectively about it all.

I met the Robaynas after we had all attended a service in the *Iglesia Cristiana Evangelica*, the Evangelical church in Las Palmas where Rivera had been a member at the same time as the Robaynas. The couple recalled how, several times, Alberto had cried because he stole money from the fares collected on the buses where he worked. Marcial remembered that Alberto’s father was a supervisor of the fare collectors. The young Alberto didn’t sound like a potential Jesuit priest, nor, as he claimed, to be a product of the impressive Loyola Jesuit School in Las Palmas. But still I didn’t know which school Rivera attended. Neither did the Robaynas. The search for the answer to a vital question had begun.

Did Alberto Attend a Religious School?

Another out of many professing Christians still living in Las Palmas who remembered Alberto back in the 1950s was Jose Luis Medina. Alberto was a close friend of his at that time. The photograph of the two of them together (see Picture 2) was provided by Don Jose. He has said it was Alberto’s own idea to go to the church. He met him there. He does not believe Alberto had infiltrated the church on behalf of the Jesuits as the Chick books claim.

An important question I put to all who knew Alberto from the age of seventeen when he joined the church related to the school he attended. Did he attend a religious school, “a priests’ school” as some called it? In particular, did he attend the Loyola School? I had various meetings with the directors (headmasters) of the School (*Colegio* in Spanish) of the Salesian Order, *Colegio Salesiano*, and the Loyola Jesuit School. Both schools are mentioned in *The Force (Alberto, Part Four)*.² Both these directors were very cooperative and helpful, but the name of Rivera couldn’t be traced in the records of either.

The claim in *Alberto (Alberto, Part 1)*³ that Alberto went to a Jesuit school is one that has been consistently addressed to all the relevant people in the course of the investigations. To establish beyond doubt that Alberto did not attend such a religious school would collapse the *Alberto* fable from

its very outset. The message begins on the cover of the first part of the *Alberto* series. This cover carries a picture well known to millions, even among those who may not have troubled much with the book's message. We see the young boy in black religious clothes.

Andres del Pino and his wife, Eloisa, like the Robaynas, home in the Canary Islands from Australia in 1991, did not believe Alberto went to the Loyola School. The school had a fine academic reputation. Still another professing Christian contemporary of Alberto's, Jesus "Suso" Gonzales, living in Las Palmas today, does not believe that Alberto went to the Loyola School.

I spoke to Mrs Clara Montalban de Perez who was a leader in the *Iglesia Cristiana Evangelica* in the 1950s. She said she had been told then by Rivera that he attended the Salesian School, and when Alberto first began to go to their church he told the other young people that he had been an altar boy at the Roman Catholic Church of San Pablo.

A visit to this church was arranged, and, with the help of the priest, I established from the register that this was the Rivera family's church. It was near to the home, and the priest in Rivera's day was "Father" Abraham, the same name as we find used in the Chick *Crusader* book.⁴ The story, well known in the *Iglesia Cristiana Evangelica*, of how Alberto with his usual youthful enthusiasm went back to witness Christ to "Father" Abraham, had obviously not been passed down to his successor. The present priest told us he didn't know of Alberto Rivera.

Clara still lives over the same corner shop, close to the church of San Pablo, close to the home where Alberto was born and where he lived until leaving Las Palmas. Alberto visited her often. They were close, and Alberto was only a teenager; yet even then, can we rely upon what Rivera told her about the school he went to?

Overall the picture presented by Alberto seems to have been one of a boy to be sorry for, the loner, even the poor boy. It partly fits the Jesuit profile. He also told the young people he went to the Salesian School. Mostly poor boys went there in those days. This description was at the other extreme from the splendid home presented in *Alberto*.⁵ On those picture book pages the Rivera home is seen to be impressive.

Typical of the 40-year long Rivera story, the real names of "Father" Abraham and Alberto's sick mother, Teresa Romero Padron, give only a brief concession to authenticity. Like Alberto's sister, Maria, "Father" Abraham is a real person and his name appears on his sister's baptism certificate. Yet even the statement that Teresa Romero Rivera died at age 33 is not correct. Alberto's mother, according to her death certificate, was 27 when she died. But such is not to be considered a grave error.

Mrs Eloisa del Pino almost certainly strikes the right balance. She puts the Rivera family mid-way between the extremes of wealth and poverty. She used to see him walking down the street with his sister when he was young. That sister was Rosario and Mrs del Pino tells us that his sister attended the same school as Mrs del Pino's brother, a school virtually next door to the del Pinos' home. Rivera's father was not a wealthy man, just an ordinary working man with a home and an income, but no different to that of the people in the neighbourhood.⁶

To help avoid confusion, and to add to the picture of life in Las Palmas in those days, Mrs Mildred Phillips, the widow of Vincent Phillips, the American missionary who was Rivera's pastor in the mid-1950s, has written: "As we arrived here almost forty years ago, things were in very bad condition economically. Staples were rationed. That included rice and bread... In any neighbourhood there were children who would run errands. Little girls would wash floors on their knees. In the household of Rivera there could well have been little neighbourhood girlies doing such tasks and he could later mentally have placed them as servants."⁷

I have walked past the home where it is likely that Rivera was born. Streets and numbers are clear from copies of birth certificates. It is worthwhile to note there are only three names given to our subject. He is "Alberto Rivera Romero," and there is no name of Magno (meaning *magnifico* in Spanish; magnificent) which Rivera later adopted. These and other certificates are made available free of charge from the Court House in Las Palmas. There remained the possibility that streets had been re-

numbered, and also the possibility that houses have been converted into flats. It is for this reason I was hesitant to comment as to the property now to be found at *36 Calle Nicolas Estabanez* in the Port district of Las Palmas, the address according to Rivera's birth certificate. Eventually Mrs del Pino wrote that the number was the same and the Rivera house had since been converted into three *pisos*, or apartments.

Did Alberto Attend the Jesuit School? – Interview at the Loyola School

It was the prompting of Clara Montalban de Perez which took me first, not to the Jesuit School, but to the Salesian School, a building I already observed to be the most grand and imposing of all I had seen on the island. The building is impressive, but the Salesian Society, taking its name from its patron, "St" Francis de Sales, has the real object of educating the young, "especially of the poorer and middle classes".⁸ The Salesian headmaster, Don Felipe Acosta, kindly wrote me a letter of introduction to the head of the Loyola School, his opposite number, Don Celso. Well-known as our subject may be among believers through millions of the *Crusader* books and tracts, including in Spanish, I believe both directors (headmasters) had never before heard the name of Alberto Rivera.

At the Salesian School I spoke about Alberto to one of the teachers. He ventured the reason why, in the picture book, Rivera might have switched to the idea of attending the "Jesuit School." In *The Force (Alberto Part Four)* Jack Chick writes, quoting Alberto, who tells of his extraordinary and bizarre experiences as a fourteen-year-old: "... our group from the Jesuit College visited the Salesian Monastery... to study how that Order was run."⁹ Such seems an unlikely assignment for a fourteen-year-old in any school. However, the teacher I spoke to suggested it would increase Rivera's standing to have been to the Jesuit School. At the very least it may be sadly observed that here is but one small clue among many to the paranoia evident in Rivera's behaviour throughout his life.

The Loyola School did have records of past pupils and the headmaster personally checked for the name of Rivera. He did that at our meeting and assured me that Alberto Rivera did not attend the school. The head of the Salesian School had also spent a long time looking, but didn't have records back that far.

Many, whether knowing stories of Jesuit deceptions, or believing in the conspiracy as Alberto presents it, would not find testimony from Jesuit school records to be acceptable against the bold statement in the picture book. It still remained to be certain beyond all reasonable doubt which school or schools the young Alberto attended. The answer would have to be found by contacting members of Alberto's family. It would be proper to do this with the co-operation of those from the church who remembered them, and who remembered Alberto himself.

A Problem with the Research – the Church Members Already Knew for Sure Alberto was Never a Jesuit!

My enquiry in the Canary Islands was not easy. Leaving aside practical difficulties, which were mainly overcome, the problem was one of quite a different kind.

Helpers during the two weeks of hard work in both the islands of Grand Canary and Tenerife were members from the two Evangelical churches in these places. Such churches are surrounded by the inherent Roman Catholicism which abounds in Spanish society. All the members there were polite and helpful, but the underlying doubts were evident. Who needs any more convincing of the problems of Roman Catholicism? Who can possibly believe what Chick writes about Alberto? In other words, to such a people, what possible attraction can the books have? Who can possibly believe them? It is quite obvious Alberto is a fraud; who can possibly believe either him or the books? What was the point of writing about it all?

This was a barrier I struggled to try and break down. I spoke of the millions of books and tracts sold, of the translations in various languages, and of those Christians in many countries all over the world who did believe what was written in the picture books. I pointed to the powerful message of very

lively and readable so-called comic books. I reminded them of the dishonour to the Lord in exposing the false ways of Rome by false methods. Yet my sympathy was with these people. I was constantly prompted to reflect, particularly as I looked at all the photographs of the young Alberto that were produced. These people just would not need any convincing about Alberto. Although impossible to document, these neighbourhood instincts were indeed another part of the evidence against him. At home Alberto would remain just a “local boy”! He was born at an address close by! His mother came from the same city!

All the people I know and hear from who have been with Alberto in recent years tell me that he didn't allow them to really get to know him, deep down. Yet these people in the Canary Islands *did* know Alberto. He was a personable young member of their church. He was not then the isolated platform figure known today. I reflected upon how these people in the Canary Islands were unfamiliar with the picture books and the damage these were doing. All they knew was that they knew Alberto. They remembered him well. He was never a Jesuit! He was never even a student for the priesthood!

Yet still my need was for the evidence of the kind acceptable in any court. That is not to say it would be a criminal offence to lie about the school you attended, nor indeed about much that is relevant in discovering Alberto's deceptions. Nevertheless, on the matter of the school Rivera attended, the evidence needed for the Church had to be of substance, such as would stand up in a court.

The school records of a highly efficient Loyola School would stand up in any court in the world. They can testify he was not there. However, if the galloping *Alberto* message is to be stopped, those Christian leaders who would not heed such Jesuit testimony had to be persuaded too. Such is the purpose of this book. Continuing the court room analogy, no sensible prosecuting counsel risks wearying a judge with an excess of evidence that isn't needed. There is an enormous wealth of evidence dug from nearly forty years of the Alberto story. The report of the investigations sensibly starts with one question. Which school? In a courtroom situation, if the prosecutor went right to the start of the story where Alberto trained to be a Jesuit priest, and if he were able to show this to be a lie, then the whole basis for the stories which follow would be destroyed. The prosecutor would wave *Alberto* (Part One) in the air before the judge and for all to see. Without even opening the book, the young nine-year-old, crying beside his mother's grave, is to be seen on the cover. He is wearing a full-length black religious gown. But did he attend a religious school?

My enquiries continued. Did Alberto *ever* go to a religious school?

Talking to Alberto's Family, Old Friends and Acquaintances

The driver and interpreter for much of my time in Las Palmas, the capital of Grand Canary, were Fernando Romero Santana and his daughter Eva, both members of *Iglesia Cristiana Evangelica*. Fernando is a few years younger than Alberto. The big question mark over Alberto's honesty with the bus company where he worked arose time and again. It is normally difficult to obtain evidence of an employee's relationship with a company after so many years. Added to this, the bus company, *Asociacion Patronal de Jardineras Guaguas*, is now out of business, yet Fernando testifies that as a small boy and a member of the same church, he was allowed by Alberto to travel free when he was the fare collector. In Fernando's own words: “Always I remember him as the bus fare collector, the one that winked at me to let me know I was riding free. At that time for me that was great and something nice to remember about him.”¹⁰

Fernando was there at the airport to meet me when I arrived at Las Palmas. His other passenger was the lady who helped make my visit possible, Mrs Mildred Phillips. Her late husband, Vincent, had been the pastor of *Iglesia Cristiana Evangelica*. No doubt some things have changed in all these years since the time of young Alberto. Certainly, I found a fine modern building, and perhaps the people are more prosperous, yet not too much has changed. Mrs Phillips still plays the organ. What is abundantly clear is that church life was made no different by Alberto, in spite of his claim that he destroyed the church and all the other picture book claims we shall examine.

Certainly Vincent Phillips' church hadn't been destroyed by Alberto, nor had his marriage. Apart

from the Chick books, Mrs Phillips had never heard of Alberto's strange stories and Jesuit connections. She had never heard of Alberto attending the Jesuit School.

I met with James Carder, an American missionary, another former pastor of *Iglesia Cristiana Evangelica*. His pastorate preceded that of Mr Phillips. He baptized Rivera in 1953. The baptism was recorded in the church register. See Picture 3.

We look in more detail later at the important testimonies of Rivera's Evangelical pastors in the context of other parts of the Chick books. Suffice to say here, Rivera didn't damage the church when Mr Carder was the pastor. Mr Carder's marriage wasn't damaged by Rivera either. Once again the man James Carder remembered was a young fare collector on the buses, a fairly ordinary young man in his church. Even knowing Alberto when he was seventeen, he too had no knowledge of Alberto having attended the Jesuit School.

With Fernando's help, at last we were able to discover some members of Alberto's immediate family. We had good meetings with them. Still we were left without an answer to the question. Which school?

In the home of one of the younger members of the Rivera family, I met with a full-sister and the only full-brother of Alberto. I met Alberto's other full-sister much later. There were always just the four of them, including Alberto. Alberto was the eldest.

Eloisa del Pino, now 64 years old, was somewhat older than these and knew the half-brothers and sisters, all by the previous marriage of Alberto's father. These were Miguel, Salvadora, Juan, Rosario and Emilia. Would not these older children in a big family better remember which schools the younger ones attended? We drew a blank on this until further enquiries were made by Eloisa del Pino. She discovered the answer.

Eloisa had been good friends with Alberto's half-sister, Rosario. She was the same age and these friends met again during May 1991. In the words of Mrs Phillips, writing to me from Las Palmas on the outcome of this meeting between Eloisa and Rosario, "Alberto *never, never, never* attended any school of the priests. He was always in a private school." In Eloisa's own words (translated): "Rosario told me that Alberto was never in a school with priests and that his father always had him in private schools. She also told me that Alberto was never in a seminary for priests, so that is false that he was ever a priest."¹¹

Conflicting Profiles of the Young Alberto

Ambrosio Medina Sanabria was one young man, older than Alberto, who knew him during his first years in the church. Ambrosio is seen with Alberto in the group photograph. Also included are Adrian Perez and Andres del Pino (Picture 4). Ambrosio, along with children and grandchildren, is a member of the Las Palmas church today. I met with them there in 1991 and the following is taken from "Some Notes about Alberto Rivera"¹² which Ambrosio made for me:

(Translation)

"... I met him (Alberto) at the beginning of 1953 and saw him until the end of 1954... My relations with him were the same as with any of the fellow members of the Youth Mission of our church. We used to go on visitation, on evangelistic trips, or we held business meetings about organization or on public services of the Youth Mission. He was eighteen years old when I was twenty. Rivera tended to keep to himself, never communicating with us about problems or about his relatives as we other young men used to do. Physically he looked weak and light-weight. I never saw him to sustain violence, neither physical nor verbal, nor to promote tempered discussion. He had an amiable way to conduct himself, always with a smile on his lips. I didn't see in him any intellectual bent that would make him conspicuous in some way, even less as someone with a double intention like a plant introduced among the Christians.

"As to character, I believe Alberto was a genuine disaster. He wouldn't submit to any discipline. He never kept his appointments and would say he forgot about them. He told me he had made notes but

had forgotten to look at his notes. For us he was not a dependable person, a man without discipline, without schedules, and not able to keep any.”

Writing of how Rivera came to go to seminary in Costa Rica, Ambrosio went on to state:

“I believe that Alberto had presented himself as the poor maltreated child without a mother, but having a lot of gifts. His immature life was completely out of order. He knew how to get the confidence of people by touching their weak spots.”¹³

Clara Montalban de Perez remembers Alberto as a nice young man when he came first to the church. Clara worked closely with the pastor’s wife, Helen Carder, and ran the church Christmas programme. A photograph from one of these events, together with others from the annual “Day of the Bible” event, appear in Pictures 6, 7 and 8. I found Alberto to be one of the most photographed according to the church album for 1954, from which these are taken. Clara recognised Alberto’s gift of reciting poetry and of good speaking.

Clara related that she got a sense of sadness from Alberto. She thought he got some help by visiting her. He spoke little of his family but felt a persecution at home. She believed the family were devout Roman Catholics. Alberto never spoke badly of his sisters but neither was he in agreement with them. Clara had visited Alberto’s mother before her death, and afterwards visited Alberto’s sister.

Alberto always behaved somewhat differently towards Adrian, Clara’s husband. Adrian saw a different Alberto from the one presented to his wife. To Adrian, another leader in the church, Alberto appeared rebellious and rude. He told us that Alberto went with him several times when he was holding services. One Sunday morning they were going to have a service on the mountain of Bandana. It was discovered that the previous Sunday, very soon after Alberto’s “conversion”, he had visited the home of the local farmer. He had told him that the devil was in his house – in his idols. These people were open to the Gospel, Adrian told us, but when they arrived on that Sunday the farmers chased them off with hoes and implements. Such was not a story against Alberto. Yet it spoke at least of his youthful enthusiasm as one who professed to be a new convert.

Adrian’s view of Alberto was that he always wanted to take over a situation, and yet he did not view him as at all well-endowed intellectually. Adrian described Alberto’s intellect much as one would expect to find in a fare collector of that time. He recalled how many times Alberto went back to argue with “Father” Abraham Gonzales, the one who had been his priest. The couple agreed that Alberto was aggressive with Adrian, and probably with Abraham. Yet he was calm with Clara. “Adrian brought out the gift of rebellion, Clara brought out the gift of poetry,” they told me.

Adrian made it clear that he didn’t consider Alberto’s level of education to be high, with writing ability not even beyond the first grade. I didn’t ask him if he knew how many doctorates and degrees there were to which Alberto laid claim today, neither did I mention that in all my researches I have never found anyone who had seen any personal letter Alberto had written.

All who knew Alberto acknowledged his abilities in other areas. His sister Dolores told us she considered Alberto to be “clever.” She spoke of his practical skills. Indeed he was seen as the clever one of the family, at least in that regard. Clara described his speaking ability; others were quick to put emphasis on acting. Some in the church who knew him were aware of this on stage at Christmas-time. Others knew of it when it came to pleading for something he wanted, or when it came to money.

There was divided opinion about Alberto in the church. Apparently this hadn’t surfaced by the time of the departure of Alberto from the Canary Islands in 1955. The different views seen by Clara and Adrian were also reflected in the church. Back in the 1950s, some believed Alberto should not have gone for a seminary education in Costa Rica. Others in the Las Palmas church were left with a favourable impression after he departed. Either way, he is not one who is forgotten. This is not because the brethren in the Canary Islands are avid readers of the Spanish language editions of *Alberto*.¹⁴ It is not because he destroyed any church, because he did not. It is not because he was responsible for their pastor being in prison, as the picture book tells us.¹⁵ This didn’t happen. It is not because he became a famous Jesuit, for he was never even a Roman Catholic priest. Nor is Alberto Rivera remembered because he is a Christian celebrity exposing Rome.

Alberto is not remembered for any of these things in the Canary Islands, nor because everybody (nor indeed anybody) heard of Alberto's exploits in the Canary Island village as described in *The Force* (Alberto, Part Four). Here we see pictures of Rivera, now the young priest, flying in the air with his vestments cut to shreds. Two young women are flying also, one upside down amidst floating furniture, another (according to the caption) is "vomiting a green substance." It is not for these famous exorcisms carried out by "Father" Rivera that he is remembered. Indeed, there is no knowledge that he ever returned to this small island until after he claimed conversion. Rather, Alberto is remembered in the Canary Islands because, then as now, he somehow makes a lasting impression wherever he goes. Do we find here the secret of Rivera's phenomenal success?

One who spoke to me of favourable recollections from Alberto's youth up to 1955 is an older man, Francisco Cruz Jimenez, also known as Papa Luis. He gave me one of the group photographs reproduced here. He remembered Alberto as one who was always doing things. Reports were kept of evangelism efforts. At the meetings on Saturdays to learn how to evangelise, Alberto tried hard, and he was the best. Papa Luis recalls that Alberto was popular. He too remembers that Alberto's family were against what he was doing. Politics wasn't discussed but Alberto, again evidencing technical skills, was, according to Papa Luis, able to broadcast on his own equipment from his house. He spoke on the air of things that were bad in politics. Papa Luis hadn't seen anything wrong with Alberto in those days. Whether Alberto told him fact or fable I don't know.

However Alberto is remembered, he is known as an ordinary boy from an ordinary family who all lived a normal walking distance from the Evangelical church. Alberto was born there. He worked on the buses as a fare collector. His father worked in the bus company. Some might say he disrupted the church in a small way. Others might say he brightened it up. But for all his complexity, and whatever his personality pluses or problems, I have met none in the Canary Islands who, even with the benefit of hindsight, tell me that there is even the remote possibility that Alberto could have been anybody other than who he seemed to be. Unlike those who come new to a town, is such not the usual way with "the local boy from up the road"? Is such not the way with those whom we have seen grow up?

As with many young men, adventure stories don't really start until the time comes to leave home and for them to make their way in the world. Papa Luis told me the change in Alberto came when he went to Costa Rica. James Carder, the pastor, writes of how Rivera obtained a place at the seminary in Costa Rica:

"No church or churches nor any organization sent him to Costa Rica or any place else. When he learned that Plutarco was going to go in a very short time, he made a special trip (from Grand Canary) over here to Tenerife, where we lived, and with real tears begged my wife, Helen, to write to the widow of the founder of the seminary to admit him too. I am sorry to say that out of compassion she did so without consulting the Las Palmas church. I am sure that had she gone slower and investigated more she never would have done so. Friends, individually, gave him money for the steamship passage."¹⁶

Mr Carder's letter followed long after my researches in the Canary Islands, and he pointed out that my account in *New Age Bulletin*¹⁷ about Rivera reflected misunderstanding on my part. I wrote: "Rivera went for further education to a seminary in Costa Rica. The *fact* is that he was sent by the Canary Islands Protestant church. The photograph shows him about to leave by ship with another young church member..." The photograph of the two young men cannot lie but evidently it escaped my attention that one was sponsored by the church and one was not. I am pleased to acknowledge that new fact.

However, there is no evidence of any great problems caused by Alberto in Las Palmas. At least there was nothing on the scale to be seen in Costa Rica and thereafter.

Before we travel with Alberto to the seminary in Costa Rica in 1955, we shall look at what the Chick book says as regards the damage Alberto claims he caused before leaving. It will be necessary to set

the Spanish scene. Spain in the 1950s under Franco was unlike anything known to most of the readers of this book. To make a comparison with the situation Rivera describes we have the valuable account of the pastor at that time, now 85 years old, James Carder. First of all, what did the two pastors, James Carder and Vincent Phillips, have to say about Alberto? And also, how did Rivera himself later speak of his time in Grand Canary?

His Former Pastor Writes of the Need of Jail for Rivera

James Carder, Rivera's former pastor, writes: "... (Alberto) seemed to have some natural gifts and did well in the Christmas and other programs the Sunday School and Young People gave. I believe that his mother died when he was very young. His father and other relatives showed no interest in the Gospel, and Alberto seemed to be quite a bit on his own. I do not remember anything bad about him, much less scandalous, or Mrs Carder (now deceased) would never have recommended him to go to Costa Rica, as she did two other young men who have turned out very fine. In 1954 I left the pastorate in the Las Palmas church to come to the island of Tenerife and pastor the church in Santa Cruz.

"In March of 1955 Alberto came over to Santa Cruz, as his ship was leaving from this port. At the last minute there was some difficulty. I think it was lack of funds and I remember that he wept like a little boy and on that occasion seemed not to be emotionally very stable. When the difficulties were overcome and just before he left, we heard that he owed the bus company for which he had been working in Las Palmas, but that his father was taking care of the matter. I have not seen him since he sailed from this island in 1955 nor do I think Mrs Carder ever saw him again either. It would look like his gift of the gab. He ought to be put away – either in jail or an insane asylum – and for a long time to keep him from confusing and fleecing people."¹⁸

In the same year of 1981, Mr Phillips also wrote:

"I have been here in Las Palmas since January 2nd, 1952 and pastor of the *Iglesia Cristiana Evangelica de Las Palmas* since 1955. Alberto was working as a fare collector on the city bus line when he made a profession of faith. With his gift for 'gab' he at once began with enthusiasm to evangelise, visiting villages. He did cause some doors to be closed to visitation by his disregard for discretion in those difficult days, but they were by no means church doors!

"... Just before leaving here for the seminary in Costa Rica there was a scandal about Alberto involving, as well as I remember, some false dealings in money matters, but in some way it was resolved and after many tears by Alberto, he went off to school."¹⁹

Alberto was born on 19th September 1935. Picture 9 shows Mr Phillips in a group photograph with Alberto and Clara Montalban. Picture 10, also from the church, shows Alberto when he was younger. He was 20 years old when he left for Costa Rica.

Rivera Speaks of His Time in the Canary Islands

We look now at how Rivera himself describes those days in *Iglesia Cristiana Evangelica* in the Canary Islands.

In 1981, as his former pastors penned their thoughts for researchers, in an interview with Walter Martin and Brian Onken, Rivera was asked about the pastor, James Carder: "He is saved? He is a believer? Is he a Christian?"²⁰ The language in which Rivera couches his replies can often be difficult as we see in his answer:

"Let me tell you one thing about Reverend Carter. I believe that he and his wife, they were taken because what I did... this man and this woman, they came as missionaries. They wanted to destroy them to the last drop of blood they have in their system. They hate them to death. The Roman Catholics hate Mr Carder and his wife to death. They drove them to the point almost of insanity who are ever they are now doing... they don't even know why even happened what happened. That is my

concept of the people that I knew and I have to be fair here and fair there when it's called for fairness.”²¹

As we consider the example of Alberto Rivera, a deceiver gaining support among professing Christians the world over in these days, we find him to be inarticulate. Yet paradoxically he is a master of debate when it comes to promoting himself and his causes. His listeners, Chick's readers, Alberto's public – if not the frustrated articulate interviewer – are readily brought back to the subject that attracted them to Rivera in the first place. They are brought back by him, time and again, to the idea of a Roman Catholic conspiracy. Rivera knows what his followers are interested in. He knows how little his listeners already know about other personal matters. He knows they don't know Mr Carder personally as he did.

By 1981, as Rivera presumably knew, the interviewers had heard from Mr Carder. Rivera told them: “It was a Spaniard, not James Carder who ended up in jail, a pastor on the island of Tenerife.” He adds, “This pastor was murdered by the Roman Catholic institution. He went to an asylum.”²² Again, listeners' attention is brought back to Roman Catholicism. The truth is that at that time the young Alberto was an active member of the church in Las Palmas on the island of Grand Canary. The island of Tenerife is several hours' boat journey away.

In another interview in 1990, Rivera was in more difficulty. His confusing statements were in a radio programme.²³ The debate brought him to the place where the interviewer was able to ask: “why would you infiltrate a church that was working for the Vatican?” Rivera replied that his purpose was to “make them” work for the Vatican, as they are doing now. Rivera said his work in Las Palmas (approximately from 1952 and until 1955) had been accomplished.

Now a “Christian” minister, Rivera displayed no regret and no remorse. Indeed no apology has been received by Mr Carder and the people of the Canary Islands. Rivera presented himself as self-assured then, in 1990, as he typically does in these days. He was sure that *Iglesia Cristiana Evangelica*, the church he had led Romeward, was now “working for the Vatican.” Two weeks in January/February 1991, spent with the pastor and people of that church, left me clear that nothing could be further from the truth.

The church's Affirmation of Faith confirms that. From my discussions with Rivera's 85-year-old ex-pastor, and other members of the church from that generation, the church situation was not at all as Rivera described it. Las Palmas was, and still is, an international port. It was unique in enjoying different opportunities from the rest of Spain in the days of Dictator Franco and Alberto Rivera. This status stems from the fact of the island's position as a remote stopping-off place in mid-Atlantic. In the Chick books Rivera writes of metropolitan Spain, some of which is found in the text books, but it was in Las Palmas that Rivera was a fare collector on the buses. It was in Las Palmas that Mr Carder was his pastor. It was in the Evangelical Church in Las Palmas that he had his membership. Under Franco, Las Palmas was treated somewhat differently from metropolitan Spain, and in any case the Canary Islands are far distant from metropolitan Spain.

***Alberto* Mistakes the Difference between Las Palmas and the Rest of Spain Under Franco**

In the course of many enjoyable hours spent with Mr Carder, he told me of his arrival as a United States missionary, transferred to Tenerife from Venezuela in 1935. That was the year Alberto Rivera was born; the year before the Spanish Civil War. Mr Carder remained in Tenerife until the end of 1941 and during that time many liberties were lost. Significant, however, was one whom Mr Carder calls the “good governor” of the island. He gave the church a permit for meetings.

The Roman Catholic bishop objected, complained about the governor, and had the governor removed. Until 1965 none of the governors of Tenerife would recognise the permit, but even so the church had the permit and the Evangelical work continued in Tenerife. The principal restriction was on the numbers allowed to assemble together at the same time. Meetings were in homes. Twenty could

gather without an authorisation. There were no real problems, and Mr Carder said he asked people to attend only one service. That was on the island of Tenerife, not Las Palmas (Grand Canary) where Rivera was. The Las Palmas church did not even have such difficulties, which were themselves trifling compared to mainland Spain.

My meeting with Mr Carder was in Tenerife, where he lives in an apartment adjacent to the church he pastored after getting the Las Palmas church well-established. Still today this church has doctrines and affiliations similar to the church in Las Palmas, indeed similar to the Evangelical church where my wife and I worship. In the late 30s and early 40s, Mr Carder's work was mainly in Tenerife but in those early days, when asked, he also went to work in Las Palmas for the Sailors' Society.

In 1948 Mr and Mrs Carder were returning to Tenerife on a freight boat from America. It docked at Las Palmas. In the end it didn't continue its voyage to Tenerife because there was no freight for that island. While in Las Palmas, the Carders learned that the governor was putting two Christian girls belonging to the World Evangelism Crusade (WEC) out of Tenerife, because, the governor claimed, they were Communists. The Carders learned it was no use their going to Tenerife. A Plymouth Brethren group in Las Palmas asked them to remain in Las Palmas. After a short time Mr Carder was asked to become an elder of the group. He worked alongside another he had known since 1937, and also Gregorio Bonilla, the father of Plutarco Bonilla who in 1955 would accompany Alberto Rivera to Costa Rica. James Carder suggested the three elders each take on a separate responsibility. On that basis, he took on the pastoral work. As Mr Carder put it, he emerged as pastor. He remained pastor until 1954.

Mr Carder spoke of the time when there had been some persecution in Las Palmas. This was before 1941 when he was in Tenerife and before his main work in Las Palmas. The hall was broken into, chairs were damaged and Bibles torn up. However, this is all well before the years relevant in Alberto Rivera's church experience. When the Carders were in Las Palmas on a permanent basis, in 1948 or 1949, meetings were started at *La Puntea* (the Point). The church had had a permit for meetings dated 1936, and this was now transferred to *La Puntea*. Mr Carder recalls that the Roman Catholic priest, Antonio Mayor y Mayor, of *Iglesia de la Luz*, a Roman Catholic church near to *La Puntea*, announced from the pulpit that he would get rid of the Protestants or take off his robes. In those days a priest, the chief priest of Isletas, would walk through the street with boys from two Roman Catholic boys' schools. They would be shouting, "Down with the Protestants." This priest made an image and hung it from the tower, saying it was Luther.

The same priest got other priests to do a kind of guard duty outside the Evangelical church. A picture of one of these priests appears in Picture 11. The couple walking past the priest don't appear unduly concerned by his presence. The priest merely stood there. He was there during Alberto's time in the church. Perhaps some believed he was taking names. Perhaps his purpose was to intimidate. Yet it doesn't seem that his presence was a matter of much concern to the Evangelical people attending.

Mr Carder reports that there was some trouble, but never because of the priest standing outside. Because Roman Catholic boys waited outside the women's meetings to make insulting remarks, the professing Christian men would wait also for their women folk. On one occasion the pastor was warned that a scrap was brewing, with the Evangelical men being pushed to their limit. Again we have an example of another helpful Governor. As the result of an approach to the governor, a policeman was posted outside the church.

In Mr Carder's words there was "religious liberty from 1965 in Tenerife." Significant here, as we weigh the testimony of Alberto Rivera, Mr Carder recalls the situation of religious liberty in Las Palmas: "Las Palmas never lost it so far as the meeting place was concerned." Proselytising was forbidden and there was permitted no sign outside, but every Christian on the island knew where the church was. Alberto's picture of the Las Palmas church in Franco's day is a false one.

A New Church Building

The church building in those days, the one seen with the priest standing outside, was on *La Puntea*.

This is perhaps the most prized site in the whole of the Canary Islands, with exceptional tourism, hotel and development potential. This headland section of Las Palmas is in the main hotel and beach area. It was eventually cleared for development. For years now the buildings have been demolished. The church was long ago paid well for its site. Yet still nothing has been built on it.

With the compensation the church was able to build a fine, large and modern church building with every facility, located nearby. As *La Puntea* remains undeveloped, and indeed as church members look back still further, they see God's hand in the witness of Las Palmas Evangelical Church over more than 50 years. Picture 12 is the photograph showing the new church building. This is after Rivera had left; Mr Phillips is seen standing outside.

Alberto Rivera was a member of the local church body for two or three years, so he cannot be insignificant. However, the people don't doubt that Alberto had little, if any, lasting influence there. Even Dictator Franco himself didn't unduly interfere with the work. As for the Roman Catholic institution, it has served its purpose too. Far from *Iglesia Cristiana Evangelica* "working for the Vatican," as Rivera told the radio interviewer in 1990, God has used the experiences of both Evangelical churches, in Las Palmas and Tenerife. They have kept His people in mind of the dangers of Rome and ecumenism. From a visit to both churches this author can testify, against Rivera, that these are deceptions into which they have *not* fallen.

Chapter 2

FROM ROME TO CHRIST – EARLIER TESTIMONY AT ODDS WITH ALBERTO STORY

In the previous chapter we have related facts from the first twenty years of Rivera's life. He was born in the Canary Islands in 1935, and no evidence was found that he left those islands until he departed for the seminary in Costa Rica in 1955. Rivera lied about being a Jesuit teenager destroying churches. Rivera's testimony in the phonograph record, *From Rome to Christ*, is a lie also.

From Rome to Christ is a recording made by Rivera in the 1970s. Our purpose now is to show that here we have the first of his deceptive testimonies. Significantly too, it was made after his professed conversion, and before the first *Alberto* comic was published. Alberto lied about his early life and his conversion in the record. Furthermore, he presents a testimony quite different from the one eventually to be given to Jack Chick for the *Alberto* story.

We summarise the story as related in the first part of the Chick series, *Alberto*, published in 1979. This will also enable comparisons with *From Rome to Christ* to be made. The record is in Spanish. The full English text of the record was given by Rivera to former Roman Catholic priest, Bartholomew F. Brewer, along with a copy of the playing album, in 1977. I was able to see these and discuss them with Mr Brewer.

Chick's *Alberto* Story

Alberto is the first of six 32-page books. It starts with a quite natural situation. The seven-year-old Alberto is seen struggling against his mother at the formidable gates of an enormous "religious school" in the Canary Islands. Against the evidence presented previously, we are told it was there that his schooling began.

1. Two years later a grandmother and two aunts arrive at the school because Alberto's mother was dying.²⁴

2. Alberto is presented as a distraught and terrified young boy, at first unwilling to go home. He is seen clutching the legs of the "Father." He is insisting that the church was his mother, that the school was his house, and that the school was his family. Eventually a composed Alberto, looking more than his nine years, is seen seeking the assurance of the "Father" that he would be returning.²⁵

3. Alberto arrives at his elegant home and is seen hugging his mother. "Alberto... My Son... My Priest," she says. Abraham, the family priest, is there. Alberto is with his mother. He is seen weeping as she dies.²⁶

4. The *Alberto* cover shows the young Alberto weeping beside his mother's grave.

5. The following day Alberto was confused and would not talk to Abraham.²⁷

6. We see a picture of the young nine-year-old with a balloon to show what he is thinking: "Father Abraham must be a liar! He's supposed to be Jesus, and Jesus didn't help..." At the funeral, the thought is still with him. He would go back to school for his mother's sake. "Maybe Father Abraham did something wrong," he thought. The nine-year-old thought he would become a priest and find the answers.²⁸

7. The story describes homosexual offences against him. Also, we see him as a sixteen-year-old arguing with a teacher. He had been talking about Peter being the first pope. A fellow student gave him a Bible which he read under the bed clothes by flashlight for three years. His claim is that he wears glasses today because of this.²⁹

8. Next, the principal message of the picture book begins. Alberto tells us he was 14 years old when the course on “Protestantism and Its Heresies” had begun. Now outside the school, we see Alberto being invited to dinner. He is presenting flowers to the lady of the house. Alberto relates: “In Spain alone, I helped destroy at least 19 churches.” In 1952/53 Alberto was in fact a more or less well-regarded young seventeen-year-old and a member of the Evangelical church in Las Palmas. However, Alberto refers to a raid by the Spanish authorities: “I let myself be caught in one raid in Spain so my name would appear in the newspapers as a heretic. I also got a personal letter from the pastor of that church, recommending me as a faithful and trustworthy Christian. He didn’t know that I was responsible for the raid and his being in prison. I was 17 years old at the time.”³⁰

9. In another illustrated book, *The Force (Alberto, Part Four, 1983)*, Alberto is seen relating a story as a fourteen-year-old seminarian. He had been running with his friends in the grounds of the Salesian monastery in Las Palmas when one of them fell into a large open ditch. In there they found a large roll of cotton, like a big blanket. He tells us there were the bodies of seven little babies.³¹

What of the corroboration for such a story? We are told that one of the boys made the mistake of telling his thirteen-year-old sister who was attending a convent school. She told her priest at the confessional. In *The Force*, the now supposedly converted “Dr Rivera” is pictured telling his audience the ugly story, and we learn that the body of the boy’s sister was found with both ears missing and her tongue cut out. The young Alberto’s friend mysteriously disappeared at about the same time and was never seen again. Throughout the *Alberto* story we hear of witnesses impossible to find. He ties the stories of the babies into history. They were sacrificed to Mary, we are told, just like babies had once been sacrificed to Semiramis.

The series of six books continues with some testimony, but more and more history and stories of the Roman Catholic organisation. That some of these things have occurred is not open to reasonable doubt in the face of all the accumulated evidence. However, to find out whether there was evidence of these things within the enclosed island community of Grand Canary, and whether Alberto Rivera was himself involved in any way with them, research was carried out in the Canary Islands.

10. We reserve for the next chapter Chick’s deception about the destruction caused by Rivera in Venezuela and at the seminary in Costa Rica. According to Rivera: “After I destroyed the theological seminary and was taken back to the Vatican in Rome, I was ordained (appointed) a Jesuit Priest.”³²

11. Again we deal later with Rivera’s claim to have exposed Rome on a Roman Catholic platform to a crowd of 50,000 in Guatemala in 1965. We are told that after his address in Guatemala: “... they flew me back to Panama.” From there we read that he was “shipped to Spain.” “After months of failure” we are shown that “the last resort” was in Barcelona, in what his guard described as “a secret place for priests who have gone insane.”³³

12. Here we read of time passing in a padded cell “without water or food... heavily drugged.” We then see Rivera being given shock treatments, and he tells us: “By the third month, my breathing stopped. I was placed in an iron lung. I saw my mother’s death all over again, and I knew I was in the same position. I was confused with fear. I knew I was going to hell.”³⁴

13. Next we see Rivera in the iron lung. The caption tells us: “In the blackest hour, the Lord Jesus came to me, and with this scripture he gave me life... (John 8:31,32)... I asked Jesus to forgive me. Immediately, life flooded through my body. He saved me and healed me at the same instant. I was

free at last! I climbed out of the iron lung and removed the tubes from my body. One week later I was released. I couldn't believe it. I was sent to Madrid by myself."³⁵

14. In conclusion we read of the Jesuit priest who met him in Madrid: "He worked on me for days... I kept telling him how I got saved, and showed him the truth in the Bible. The Word of God touched his heart. To my shock, he gave me my passport and the papers I needed to leave Spain."³⁶

Alberto (Part One) ends with the Jesuit priest in tears and Rivera flying out of Spain. *Double-Cross* (*Alberto* Part Two) identifies the place where Rivera was flying to. The city was London. The year was 1967.

From Rome to Christ – A Different Story

We compare now the flow of events described in the manuscript of the record given to ex-priest Bartholomew Brewer before their Baptist ordination at the same ceremony in 1977.

It is only a small matter that we now surprisingly find Rivera describing the great doors of the school (the seminary) as "open for me as if they were the doors of heaven." It is not particularly useful to take issue with this detail of what was supposedly said to him as a nine-year-old, nor with the way in which a child's description was translated into formal adult language. We deal only with substantial matters. More significantly, we find no reference to Jesuits on the record.

We move on to describe events for comparison to the Chick story. Some events are listed to show how they differ markedly from it. Other events are included because of relevance on their own merit. The following summary of *From Rome to Christ* (1977), just like the picture book *Alberto* (1979), is substantially different from the facts:

1. He speaks of when he was nearly eighteen years old: "I was visited by my family and one friend at the seminary." In the picture book we see it is a fellow student of the school, not a visiting friend, who handed Alberto the Bible. However, in 1977, when about to be ordained for the Baptist ministry in California, Rivera doesn't declare that he was infiltrating the Evangelical church in Las Palmas when he was eighteen as Chick later describes. Nor does he relate the fact that he was just an ordinary local boy when he was a member of that church and that, far from not having a Bible, he was generally known for having a Bible in his hand. Pictures 13 and 14 show photographs of the young Rivera with his Bible.

2. Referring to his ordination as a Roman Catholic priest, Rivera tells us: "My ordination day was drawing near right at the time when Pope John XXIII declared the intentions of the church and the fathers: to open the doors to the whole world... Vatican II." Rivera deals with this as a relevant event in his story. He was struck by the description of the New Testament Church in the Acts of the Apostles, and was encouraged to go with other priests to the bishop to "demand the complete fulfilment of the Word of God and the new decrees of the Council to become a reality." It was, Rivera tells us, because of so many "questionings and conflicts" with his "superiors" over these matters of "faith and doctrine" that they required him to be confined to a psychiatric hospital. There was no mention of the Chick reason which detailed his arrest after speaking out against Rome to 50,000 people in Guatemala.

3. Inconsistently with the Chick books, Rivera gives no testimony of ever travelling beyond the school or seminary. But which seminary was this? The description squares neither with the facts nor with Chick's account. He goes on to relate: "The doors of that hospital seemed to be as the doors of the seminary, closed to the life without." However, he became very peaceful in his decision to communicate with his Saviour through the pages of the Gospel. He relates, "This is the way in which I was heading my steps in this place to which I had been confined. For how long? I didn't know." Three months later, he tells us, that hope within him to be free had nearly died. "There in my hospital

bed I was without movement in my entire body.” Rivera speaks of life being taken away. Then, still on the bed, not fastened in an iron lung as Chick relates, the answer came to him. He “felt the very life-giving presence of the Son of God.”

4. Leaving aside the story as related in 1979 in *Alberto* (Part One), and confining ourselves to the story *From Rome to Christ*, it is evident, both from the full story³⁷ and from the summary above, that the *From Rome to Christ* chronology ends somewhere around the time of Vatican II.

5. The Pope did signal a new strategy for Rome’s outreach to christendom. Vatican II marked the change, and the official Introduction to *The Documents of Vatican II* tells us that the pope (John XXIII) had been pope for merely ninety days when, on January 25, 1959, he made the first and completely unexpected announcement of his plan for Vatican II. After nearly four years of exhaustive preparation, the Council finally opened on October 11, 1962. This puts Rivera’s Roman Catholic ordination day between 1959 and 1962, and nearer to 1959 depending upon how long it took the young seminarian to learn about the change and to fuel his hopes with it. However, we have seen that in fact Rivera attended only one seminary (from 1955 to 1957), and that was in Costa Rica. According to the Chick account, he attended two such places, the first in Spain (the Canary Islands) from 1942, the second in Costa Rica, following a time of infiltration of a Baptist church in Venezuela. Chick’s version tells us: “After I destroyed the theological seminary and was taken back to the Vatican in Rome, I was ordained (appointed) a Jesuit Priest.”³⁸ It makes it clear this seminary is not a Roman Catholic one. Thus there is no way even to try to accommodate the *From Rome to Christ* testimony. It does not add up at all. According to this pre-Chick version, by the early 1960s Rivera hadn’t left the seminary, he was being confined to a psychiatric hospital and getting converted to Christ some five years earlier, and all this without the adventures still to be invented for the picture books.

From Rome to Christ was the first material published out of the mind of Alberto Rivera. His experiments with fantastic ideas, which would eventually make him internationally-famous through Chick Publications, first started before 1977.

One earlier edition of the recorded message, with a different cover and dedication, was purchased sometime in 1974 or 1975. The dedication reads: “... specially to the glory of Christ, and to all the priests and clergy in general and to Carmen Lydia, my faithful companion of joys and sufferings...”³⁹ In 1977 Rivera married Nury Frias from the Dominican Republic. Her name, as well as other convenient changes, was substituted for Carmen Lydia’s. Unfortunately, ugly personal events, denied by Rivera himself, are a feature of the Rivera story to which we have to return.

Next, we look more closely at the events in Venezuela and Costa Rica. We compare them with the *Alberto* account.

Chapter 3

ALBERTO RIVERA IN VENEZUELA AND COSTA RICA

Alberto travelled with Plutarco Bonilla from Las Palmas to the island of Tenerife on the first stage of their journey to Costa Rica. Las Palmas, one of the world's largest ports, is a cosmopolitan city. There has been a Christian witness there for centuries. Almost since the conquest of the islands (1587-1595) various people there believed in the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the cross-roads of the Atlantic. However, on this occasion, the boat to Caracas in Venezuela was scheduled to depart from the next island.

There were closely associated Evangelical churches on both islands. Jim Carder, then pastor in Las Palmas, had baptized Rivera. He was now in Tenerife, and there would be no shortage of well-wishers to bid *bon voyage* to the young men as they set sail from the port of Santa Cruz de Tenerife in 1955. Pictures 15 and 16 show photographs of the young men at the time of their departure.

It is true there had been last-minute upsets to do with money. Alberto, a young-looking twenty-year-old, hadn't endeared himself to everyone. Yet on the whole the opinion of Alberto was favourable. Jim Carder, at least, had never come across anything against the young man. So far as is known, neither had his wife, and she was the youth leader.

Alberto had been in the church for getting on for three years. It was a lively church, active in outreach, and expanding. There had been plenty of opportunity for church members to get to know Alberto. He had played a full part in church life. His enthusiasm was well-known. Some, however, had spotted Alberto's problems. For the rest, who didn't know or who didn't have any doubts, there would be doubts indeed when the reports began to come back from Venezuela and Costa Rica.

In describing Rivera's time in Venezuela and Costa Rica, we do not follow Rivera in granting much significance to the brief stop-over in Venezuela. It was necessary that the two men disembark at La Guaira, near Caracas, Venezuela, only for the purpose of awaiting another ship headed to Puerto Limon in Costa Rica. They waited there for a month and during this time they were related to the First Baptist Church. James Carder had given them a letter of recommendation, addressed to the pastor of the church. They met with families they knew from the Canary Islands and this helped them to feel more at home. It is the Venezuelan fantasy related by Chick that makes the facts of the matter of any importance at all. We have approached relevant sources to determine these facts.

First-Hand Evidence from Alberto's Time in Venezuela

I was able to make contact in Las Palmas with Rosita.⁴⁰ She had been in Caracas, Venezuela, and Alberto stayed with her. Another, Carlos,⁴¹ with whom Alberto stayed, and who shared a bedroom with him in Venezuela, has given me his account of the situation.

In the second picture on page 20 of *Alberto* (Part One) we read in Alberto's words what he is supposed to have achieved, whilst on a Jesuit assignment, with the pastor's letter obtained in Spain: "... I was accepted into a Baptist church in Venezuela." So far so good. He continues: "The institution sent me there to infiltrate and then transfer to a larger inter-denominational theological seminary in Costa Rica."

The young man with whom Rivera stayed tells us that Alberto shared his bedroom. He relates that Alberto and Plutarco Bonilla were changing ships. Such is known from those in Las Palmas who sponsored the young men's study. The importance here is that we have the testimony of the one who actually received Rivera in Venezuela. He remembers Rivera as an enthusiastic young man, and he hadn't known him previously. Rivera had lived in the centre of the city of Las Palmas, but nevertheless, in Caracas he was perceived as a "country" type of young man. He confirms what

Plutarco Bonilla has also written,⁴² that the Baptist Church in Caracas received them as two young men on their way to Costa Rica to study in the seminary there. Alberto's room mate knows that this is what they *did* do. Meanwhile, he relates, Alberto attended some meetings in the church and visited the capital. What Alberto did in the hours he was by himself, walking in Caracas, he really didn't know.

The *Alberto* dialogue as touching the time in Venezuela is found on pages 20 and 21. Canary Islands is politically a part of Spain, and Alberto refers to the pastor "in Spain" where he "helped destroy at least 19 churches." This pastor is identified in the caption: "I also got a personal letter from the pastor of that church, recommending me as a faithful and trustworthy Christian. He didn't know that I was responsible for the raid and his being in prison. I was seventeen years old at the time."⁴³ The dialogue continues:

1. "With that pastor's letter I was accepted into a Baptist Church in Venezuela." Most often Rivera's stories contain a grain of truth and this statement is such a grain. Then he goes on to state how the Roman Catholic institution sent him there to infiltrate and then transfer to the theological seminary in Costa Rica. His mission was to destroy the pastor, the church and the seminary. He was to get as many names as possible and send them back to the Vatican in Rome.

2. In reply to an enquirer, the picture shows Rivera answering a question about the names collected in the Vatican: "They are placed into the huge computer for the Holy Office... They have the names of every Protestant pastor and the names of every church member in the world, including Roman Catholics, in that computer."

3. Further evidencing his own paranoia, Rivera answers another question from his concerned enquirer. He wants to know whether it will be used against them in the future. Rivera answers: "Absolutely... if they stand against the one-world superchurch that Rome is trying to build. And those other enemies inside the Institution who oppose the Roman Catholic charismatic movement will be put to death! Of course!"

4. Rivera returns to his subject on page 21: "Now, back to how I destroyed the Baptist Church in Venezuela... One half of the church believed the Roman Catholic Institution was a Christian church and I would tell them this..." He goes on to explain how he gave the members various "Jesuit phrases" to make the point that the Roman Catholic church was a Christian church. In the picture following, we see him telling the pastor how his "dear pastor" back home was still in prison. As for the pastor in the picture book and his followers, Rivera tells us his message for them was that the Catholic Church was NOT Christian.

5. The final picture introduces the next fable, the matter of how he got from the Baptist Church into the seminary in Costa Rica. The truth that he was supported by good Evangelical folk back in the city where he was a fare collector on the buses is denied to the Christian readers by Chick's book. Yet, following the comic book tradition, there was still room for one more drama using the pastor in Venezuela. Rivera tells us: "While the Baptist pastor was getting me into the interdenominational seminary, we started a rumor that he was having an affair with an 18 year old girl. She was a Catholic plant. She told the deacons who opposed the pastor that she wanted to confess that she and the pastor had an affair. The pastor was innocent. His wife divorced him. The church was destroyed, and I moved on to my next assignment."

Such were the five stages and the exciting ending according to a worldly comic-cuts tradition. In this case the whole fantasy-packed adventure came out of a single month in Venezuela while waiting for a boat.

Fantasy though the Alberto story quite certainly is in the eyes of clear-thinking Christian men who will carefully address themselves to it, I would like readers of this book to understand that in the

course of research and writing I have met with godly ministers, naive certainly, but otherwise mostly sound, who still look for more evidence before they will reject the Rivera stories. This book purposes to provide such evidence, giving a balance between a reasonably well-ordered presentation of this, and a readable narrative. At times this balance is complex and somewhat difficult.

Relevant here is the evidence of Rivera's hosts in Venezuela. It was clear to them that the arrangements for attending the seminary in Costa Rica were made back in the Canary Islands, not by the Baptist Church in Caracas. They were members of that Baptist Church and they do not speak of any scandal involving the pastor. On the contrary, Alberto's room mate from those days has written to me as follows: "I read the photocopy of pages 20-21 and I cannot understand all this stupid and crazy imagination; it must come from an ill person... there is no truth in it." I share his surprise, but I must accept the evident need to proceed carefully with the analysis of this and other nonsenses in the Rivera story.

His room mate recalls that Alberto talked of books, of the Canary Islands and of the church. His hosts remember but a single problem. It concerned the misspending of his money. They didn't know Alberto previously. They considered it was because he was not used to having his own money. His room mate wrote to me: "About the money he misspent in Caracas is completely true. As far as I remember or we remember he spent the money in books and some clothes. We helped him, well my mother and the Church did as well..." (grammar as in the original).

This fare-collector had problems with the bus company's money. He had money problems in the Las Palmas church. Here were the same problems in 1955 in Venezuela. Thirty-five years later in the Canary Islands I met with some who knew to their personal cost of the young Alberto's problem. Continuing in Costa Rica, more problems would be seen. The matter of money will crop up again and again.

Alberto at the Theological Seminary in Costa Rica

Money, evident in Rivera's motivation, is a theme we see running through the whole story. Pretty girls is another. Whilst there is nothing comic nor amusing in the story of Rivera, in comic book tradition Jack Chick draws such pictures with great skill. Even so, some of them may be properly regarded as worldly, or even sexually suggestive, not right in Christian literature. However, we are not concerned with that in this book.

Jack Chick, author, artist and publisher for the books, starts Rivera's Costa Rica story with the pictures of two beautiful girls. Picture 17 shows the *fact*, a 1956 portrait of Rivera at the seminary. The copy I have was sent by Alberto. On the reverse side is a handwritten message of love to those in the church in Las Palmas. It is signed, "Alberto – 2nd January 1956."

In the style widely used in the books, Rivera is speaking: "Two beautiful girls were assigned to work with me. Both were from a Catholic Youth Action Group, posing as fundamental, evangelical, born-again, Bible-believing Christians. Carmen was to be my girlfriend in the Bible college. Marie was assigned to destroy pastors and introduce sex among the students."⁴⁴

The caption of the second picture reminds us of the distinctly serious purpose Rivera gives to his mission. "To prove I was anti-Catholic I would argue in front of the other students, with the Jesuit priests who came to the Bible College... Oh, yes... it was all an act! I reported everything about that school to those priests. In turn, they passed it on to the Holy Office in the Vatican."⁴⁵

Before we look beyond the first two pictures and see how successful Rivera was according to the Chick story, we do well to set the scene as it is in fact. We remind that it was good people in the Evangelical church in the Canary Islands, and who knew Rivera for nearly three years, who helped foot the bill to make possible Rivera's further education in a theological seminary.

We need to state that Costa Rica is far from being any Latin American backwater. During my own visit to the church in Las Palmas I was assured that the *Seminario Biblico LatinoAmericano* in San Jose, Costa Rica, gave Rivera an opportunity with which there was little to compare in the Spanish-

speaking world at that time. The present pastor of *Iglesia Cristiana Evangelica* in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, today the largest Evangelical church in the Canary Islands, had himself attended the Costa Rica seminary. He returned from his own studies there just prior to Alberto's departure.

After a month in Venezuela, Rivera travelled by boat to Puerto Limon in Costa Rica with Plutarco Bonilla. The courses taken by the two men were different. Bonilla's reflected the higher level of education he had received. Rivera's course was appropriate to one who had not finished high school, and who had since worked on the buses. Aside from Rivera's paranoia and delusions, it was Bonilla who must have seemed set to be the high-flyer of the pair. Rivera was known as the effective talker.

The Alberto story, as we shall see, is stranger than fiction. It has all the action and incident of the novel. Yet what the story cannot have is an evolving plot or an ending such as might be found in a secular novel. An ending to show Rivera any differently from the beginning would require, God willing, that before this book goes to press, Rivera and Chick turn to Jesus Christ and be brought to repentance. That would indeed be an ending for which any might pray, because the damage and dishonour to the Lord, caused by Rivera's lies and the publications, are enormous.

However, the Alberto story is such that in chapter after chapter there is evidence which stands on its own to justifiably discredit Rivera's testimony. At the very outset of the Alberto story it was clear that Alberto didn't attend a Jesuit school and the complete *Alberto* series was based upon a lie. Accordingly there is little purpose, in this or any other section, to delay with the information which establishes the further fiction of what is written in the books. Such is the case with all parts of the long Alberto saga. Yet it is a story that needs to be urgently told. The sort of destruction and deception that is unfolded through chapter after chapter of this book continues today. As in the years of the developing tragedy of another professing "Christian" minister, Jim Jones, were there not opportunities to stop him, and yet which were missed? Were there not those who could have put a stop to his activities, had they not ignored the evidence?

The research extends to many sources, and from the Costa Rica sources the usual three key areas have been tapped. There are Rivera's own stories. There are the testimonies of those who knew him. And there is the information already on the record, whether published or on file in the seminary.

The case against Rivera and the books nowhere rests upon one individual. However, writing in a few sentences from Costa Rica, Alberto's travelling companion, Plutarco Bonilla, provides all the evidence that many would need. Therefore, before we examine Alberto's Costa Rican adventures more closely, with many witnesses, we quote the words of the one who lived alongside Rivera in Las Palmas, who was a member of the same church, who travelled with him to Venezuela and on to Costa Rica. Plutarco Bonilla went on to become a professor and rector of the *Seminario Biblico LatinoAmericano* in Costa Rica, and he wrote as general director on behalf of the Latin American Evangelical Centre for Pastoral Studies as follows:

"I came to Costa Rica, to the Latin American Biblical Seminary, together with Mr Rivera. We were members of the same Evangelical Church, and I knew him and his family. Everything he says in that 'comic' book is a fraud, beginning with the story of his own education. He never finished high school. He was thrown out of the Seminary in Costa Rica as a liar who had no respect for the authorities or his fellow students. The story about his relation to the Catholic Church is just another creation of his feeble mind."⁴⁶

This feeble mind, Rivera's mind, is reflected in the Costa Rican story. We continue the picture book account before presenting the detailed evidence from the various relevant people.

The third picture shows Rivera walking hand-in-hand with Carmen, with "outraged... lady teachers... missionaries and single" looking on. Rivera tells us: "I caused unrest among the students by going against the strict rules of separating the boys from the girls. I would hold hands with Carmen... I set up a few handsome Catholic boys as Christians to seduce the younger lady teachers. I visited the girls' dormitory after hours. One night Carmen and I allowed ourselves to be caught on the grounds of the

girls' dormitory. She was in her nightgown. It created a scandal in the newspapers. A Jesuit priest wrote the story. The college was shaken... It was branded as a place of corruption... Marie had been busy... Many of the 17 students she seduced had been expelled. Now was the time to work on the pastors. When I saw a huggy, kissy Christian church and a pastor who would often touch Marie and watch the way she walked... I would tell her to destroy him."⁴⁷

This is evidence of a feeble mind indeed. Yet what is significant, given that Rivera was supposed to be doing all of this to serve the Jesuit and Roman Catholic cause, and had professed salvation for nearly twenty-five years by 1991, is that we find no evidence of Rivera repenting. There is no word of Rivera having said "sorry" to these people, many still there in the *Seminario Biblico LatinoAmericano* in Costa Rica. He could pick up his pen or he could pick up the telephone.

During fourteen days in the Canary Islands, meeting very many who knew Alberto from those days, there was not one who testified to any apology or request for forgiveness for the trouble caused.

Of course, we know that the deceit has carried on beyond the various dates of his "conversion" that Rivera has given. The story in *Alberto* from Costa Rica is just one very early example of this deceit. We find no line drawn to Rivera's behaviour after any of his various professed "conversion" dates. W. Dayton Roberts was rector of the seminary in Costa Rica when Rivera arrived there as a student. He writes: "Alberto Rivera is one of those convincing frauds who can only play fictional roles. He is the incarnation of his own incredible fantasies."⁴⁸

Let us turn over the page of the picture book and look closely at just one of these fantasies. Elsewhere we have seen evidence of his delusions of grandeur and we shall see more. Then we have seen the irrational statements of the dangers, for example with all church members supposedly listed in the Vatican. All this evidences paranoia, but even worse, we see the paranoia transferred to many a frightened and unwary reader.

Alberto affords more evidence of Rivera's delusion of grandeur in this example:

"In the Bible College, the last straw was when I talked the students into a 3-day hunger strike to improve conditions. Again it broke in the news. The school was at the point of going under. The Catholic priests were demanding it be closed. 'It's a tool of the devil,' they claimed."⁴⁹

The picture shows Rivera approached by two men. "Alberto Rivera... You are under arrest!" are the words seen coming from the lips of one of them. Rivera explains the situation to us like this: "When the school officials tried to get me sent out of the country, the Vatican, through the government of Spain, claimed I was an army deserter. I was removed before they could discover I was a Jesuit."⁵⁰

For the next 2 ½ pages of pictures we see Rivera, advanced in time to when he had supposedly become a Christian, explaining more about Roman Catholicism. Then Chick continues the biographical sequence with Rivera telling us: "After I destroyed the theological seminary and was taken back to the Vatican in Rome, I was ordained (appointed) a Jesuit priest. I was so skillful in espionage work that I was placed under the Extreme Oath and Induction..."⁵¹

Firstly, what about the hunger strike? "Yes, indeed, there was a three-day hunger strike in the Seminary in 1956," writes Plutarco Bonilla.⁵² Bonilla relates that it was prompted by three persons. The first was a Puerto Rican, now an educator and pastor of a big Hispanic Baptist Church in the city of New York. The second was a Venezuelan, another educator, and who became the general secretary of the Venezuelan Evangelical Movement for University Students (*Movimiento Universitario Evangelico Venezolano*). He adds that the third person also became an educator and the general director of the Latin American Evangelical Center for Pastoral Studies. That third person was Bonilla himself. He tells us Rivera had nothing to do with the hunger strike.

Secondly, as the facts are further laid out, it will be clear that the evidence weighs heavily against the idea, prompted by the Chick book, that the Jesuits got Rivera out of the seminary and back to the Vatican by claiming he was an army deserter.

Meanwhile, we refer readers to the full text (translated) of the report made at the seminary on 12 October 1957. The occasion was Rivera's expulsion.

Rivera is Expelled from the Seminary in Costa Rica – the Seminary’s Reasons

(translated)

“Saturday, 12 October 1957, Costa Rica

“The Seminary considers that it has demonstrated enough patience with Alberto and that it has overpassed many faults in his three years here since we saw possibilities and promise for him for God’s work. The truth is that there are few young people who have received the pity and patience we have given Alberto in the Seminary. There have been various times that the Seminary, with full reason and all justice, could have isolated Alberto but did not do so. There is no remedy now, since Alberto with his own actions, has broken the agreement he signed when he was admitted into the Seminary. For that reason the executive committee of the Biblical Seminary of Latin America has decided to discharge Alberto Rivera. The following are declarations and reason for this decision:

“1. THE REASON FOR THE DECISION

“A. He refused and challenged the authority and rules of the Seminary. Each student of the Seminary, when they apply to join, signs the following declaration: ‘In the case of acceptance and entrance in the Seminary, I pledge to submit to the regulations of the institution, to respect the authority of the Directors of the faculty.’ In view of this agreement with the Seminary, it is considered that when a student refuses to respect his own pledge he will be expelled automatically from the Seminary.

“1. On Friday, 11 October, Alberto Rivera challenged positively the authority of the Seminary. He did not attend classes which are mandatory in the Seminary. The Director of the men, Mr John Stam, pointed out that he must return to classes; he did not follow his instructions. Mr John then called Alberto three times to his office to speak to him. He refused. This was considered a challenge to the authority of the Director of the men.

“2. The case of his trip to Quesada Village.

“A few weeks ago the Seminary had extended conditional permission for Alberto to go to Quesada Village with the Methodists for a special reunion on October 12. The conditions were that Alberto had to fulfill his domestic work and academics, where he was far behind. Mr John Stam decided to help Alberto in this matter and told him he (Mr John) would pay in full the amount of money by the amount of work he did. His debt was about sixty colones. Therefore, when Alberto had worked the necessary hours to earn twenty colones, Mr John paid twenty colones more to help pay off the balance. However Alberto did not cancel the debt, even with the personal help of Mr John. After Alberto demonstrated the rebellious attitude described above, when he did not agree with the previous conditions, the Seminary decided he should not go to Quesada Village. Mr John gave him the decision made by the Seminary, first orally then written, so there would be no doubt. In spite of all this, Alberto disobeyed and went to Quesada Village anyway, disregarding totally the authority of the Seminary.

“B. False Testimonies.

“Last week Alberto has been guilty of a series of lies. This is something that cannot be tolerated in a theological student or a candidate to do God’s work. Just to name a few:

“1. He misled the missionary committee of which he was president before the Assistant Principal of the Seminary, saying that he was speaking on behalf of the whole committee when in reality the committee did not know about it and didn’t agree with everything that was said.

“2. He misrepresented the Assistant Principal before the missionary committee, telling them the

Assistant Principal told him things that the Assistant Principal had never said, and had shown him letters that he never saw.

“3. He misrepresented the counsel of the missionary committee, Professor Richard Foulkes, explaining to the committee that Mr Richard didn’t attend any of the meetings because he didn’t have enough time and wasn’t interested. In reality, Alberto, for more than two months had not invited Mr Richard, nor informed him about the reunion, even though Mr Richard wanted to assist.

“4. He offered his service to the Methodists during vacation telling them everything was fixed by the Seminary when in reality they did not know anything about this offer.

“5. Alberto told Mr John Sosa when he left for Quesada Village on 17 October everything was ready with the Seminary pointing out that he had permission to leave, when the only order he had received was that under no circumstances was he to leave for Quesada Village. This last lie was the last straw.

“II. THE STEPS TAKEN BY THE SEMINARY ARE AS FOLLOWS

“A. Inform Alberto as of 12 October 1957 he is no longer a student of the Biblical Seminary of Latin America. For this reason he will not attend any classes or participate in any activities. However, Alberto can remain in the Biblical Annex until he gets his belongings together.

“B. Inform the Department of Immigration of Costa Rica and the Embassy of Spain in San Jose that Alberto is no longer a student of the Seminary. By this he does not have access to a student I.D. card, and that the Seminary will take the necessary steps to fulfill the responsibilities in writing to the government, and that is for him to return to his country.

“C. Inform the people in the Canary Islands church who were responsible for Alberto’s coming to Costa Rica (Mr Carder and his father) of everything that has happened, and the reasons why we have expelled him, and the steps taken by the Seminary immediately.

“The Biblical Seminary expresses with deep sympathy that they were forced to make this decision. We had hoped we could have trained Alberto Rivera for the work of the Lord and graduate from the Seminary, but the actions and attitude of Alberto left us with no other choice. – Signed: David M. Howard, Assistant Principal of the Seminary.”

Richard Foulkes (Seminary Professor) Recalls the Problem of Alberto Rivera

Thirty-three years later Richard T Foulkes, referred to in the above report of Rivera’s expulsion, is Professor of New Testament at the same *Seminario Biblico LatinoAmericano* in Costa Rica. In May 1990 Mr Foulkes spoke to John Kealy who was making enquiries about Rivera on behalf of a group of Spanish-speaking pastors in Los Angeles.⁵³

Mr Foulkes made it clear that there was no question of Rivera being spirited out of the country at the behest of the Jesuits as the Chick story relates events. Rather, “using his best wiles, Alberto convinced the Methodist Church of Costa Rica (under missionary leadership at that time) that he had been the victim of injustice and misunderstanding at the Seminary, and they employed him for almost a year. Were they ever sorry!”⁵⁴

It is accepted that all can make comments with the benefit of hindsight. We give Rivera the benefit of quoting his own comments made much later. In 1967, ten years after his expulsion, we have the advantage of Rivera’s interview with a reporter from *El Diario de Las Palmas*⁵⁵ which puts an incredible new slant on the whole affair. We read that Rivera was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest

in Costa Rica.

Then in 1981, in a recorded interview with Walter Martin and Brian Onken of the *Christian Research Institute*,⁵⁶ Rivera gave the impression that the seminary was in complete apostasy. The founders of the seminary, he said, had been the luminaries of evangelism in central and south America against Roman Catholicism, and the history had been well studied by the Jesuits. “The Jesuits very well calculated for me to go there,” Rivera said.

Against that, in the words of Richard Foulkes, “... One thing is certain: he has never been a Jesuit.”⁵⁷

The true story is essentially a tragic one. Rivera has tried many believers, and it is certain that many, like Richard Foulkes and the others at the seminary, will have tried to help him. He was still only just 22 years old at the date of his expulsion. We leave the summing up on Costa Rica to Mr Foulkes:

“Although all of us who call Jesus Christ our Lord would prefer to speak well always of everyone, there are cases of an exceptional nature that demand frank, unsparing treatment in order to deter the propagation of lies that can lead to frustration and loss. Alberto, I’m afraid, is such a case.

“I remember when he arrived in 1955... younger than most of his classmates (nineteen years old) but absolutely outstanding in his public prayers. But before many weeks had gone by, the awe in which we tended to hold him began to turn to surprise and perplexity. He was *very* needy emotionally and demanding of the time and attention of the Canadian director of the men’s dorm. By the end of the first semester of study, his grades were getting worse... he had lost the respect of fellow-students and teachers alike. He was very mixed up, and even his clever excuses could no longer cover for him... I hope you and your friends can do something to protect other people from falling victim to Alberto’s persuasive voice (Proverbs 26:23-24). God bless you in your ministry; I think it’s very salutary to have to deal occasionally with people like Alberto, even though the cost is high.” (own Scripture reference added).⁵⁸

Chapter 4

ALBERTO RIVERA'S TEN-YEAR TRAIL OF PERSONAL DESTRUCTION

Alberto Rivera's time at the theological seminary came to an end. He told a story of the injustice he suffered there, and was accepted by the Methodists in Costa Rica.

Carlos Jimenez remembers Rivera when he was Rivera's superior in the Methodist Church in Costa Rica. He didn't normally have direct contact with Rivera as he was responsible for several churches, and Rivera was in one of those churches. I was able to trace Carlos Jimenez, and with the help of an interpreter he told me that Rivera married Lydia in Costa Rica. She was a Puerto Rican who had children of her own. Carlos understood Rivera had married Lydia in order to get papers to become a resident of the United States with her. He said he saw Rivera as a schizophrenic, and he believed there was no way for us to stop him. He said that Rivera was always going to do the same until the police stopped him.

According to the picture book account, the next event described was when he was "taken back to the Vatican." Page 27 of *Alberto* is a key page in the story in a number of ways. It begins:

"After I destroyed the theological seminary and was taken back to the Vatican in Rome, I was ordained (appointed) a Jesuit priest. I was so skillful in espionage work that I was placed under the Extreme Oath and Induction. Here is my I.D. card and the official certification from the archdiocese (my superiors) to work in foreign countries. (Note) After I left the institution, I was made a bishop in the *Old Roman Catholic Church*, receiving my Bull of Consecration under the Apostolic succession of the Roman Popes" (emphasis in the original).

The above statement launches the new phase of Rivera's story, and we shall be returning to all its detail. Suffice to say here that page 27 contains certificates, photographs, dates, illustrations and more explanations. Except it be read most carefully, even the more discerning reader can be left with the wrong foundation as he fingers on through the picture books, typically remembering the pictures rather than the words.

Our purpose here is to account for the ten years after leaving Costa Rica. We shall see that Rivera lied in the picture book about his service to Rome, about the destruction he caused, and about the ecumenical movement. In fact his destruction was more personal, against his family and those who sought to help him, not remotely connected to the Roman Catholic institution.

We shall see whether he was "taken back to the Vatican" as related in *Alberto*. Page 27 to the end takes us from 1957 to 1967 and the first pictures tell the story of Rivera's misery. For the first time seen in a Roman collar and dressed as a priest, we see him kissing the ring of a high official. This was allegedly at a "secret black mass" in Spain. Rivera saw a masonic symbol on the ring. This was something he tells us he had been told to fight against.

It is within this ten-year time period, according to the picture book and developed in more detail in subsequent ones, that we find Rivera serving Rome's ecumenical purposes. Alberto's own words in *Alberto* reinforce the matter of his experience in espionage, a skill he had already mentioned on the previous page. He tells us: "Because of my experience in espionage, I was ordered to join the ecumenical forces under Pope John XXIII."⁵⁹

Quite understandably, espionage is a confusing subject for many. Those involved in it are intent on deception. At least it may be admitted that Rivera knows something about deception. The reader is left with the understanding that Rivera has been involved with the more sophisticated version, that of espionage. Few readers of the *Alberto* books will be in much doubt that espionage is a subject they know little about. We hear about espionage from time to time. It is in the nature of the activity that,

like stage magicians, we don't meet too many espionage agents we can trust to tell us how it is done. The reader is ready to accept the word of a professing "Christian" minister like Rivera and a professing "Christian" publisher like Chick, that what is involved was indeed espionage. He accepts what is written. If there is anything that appears strange, then the question is already answered: "That is the nature of espionage."

Apart from giving Chick and Rivera this advantage as they launch millions of these *Alberto* books on a mostly unsuspecting readership, the idea of Jesuit espionage has given them the one further advantage. It is an advantage that has served the pair especially well. Already introduced to the admittedly devious ways of the Jesuits, even through the fraudulent ways of a supposed ex-Jesuit priest, those who have accepted the Rivera story are ready to accept the way Rivera and Chick deal with their opponents.

In the course of work on this book I have discovered that Rivera has branded his opponents as having links with the Vatican. For Rivera and Chick, those who uncover the fraud become part of the story. From such a position, Rivera can take any situation and rationalise it to his advantage. Several years ago the late Walter Martin had the recorded discussion with Rivera, already referred to. Martin is convincing. Rivera is quite evidently a charlatan. Yet the tape was sold to me by Rivera to prove *his* point. Rivera uses the opposition as part of *his* evidence. We who oppose him are deemed to be Vatican agents.

The evidence is not of Rivera's espionage. It is of Rivera's fraud and paranoia. Furthermore the paranoia can be taken on board by Rivera's audiences and Chick's readers. I myself suffered some of this at their hands. I was taking heed of Rivera when I bought the Walter Martin tape. Rivera knows that when you get people on your side, believing there is a conspiracy against you, a valuable stage in the whole deception has been reached.

The seed of that deception, the idea of Rivera's own espionage and conspiratorial activity, is planted early in the picture book series. It is crystallised in these pages immediately he left Costa Rica and "was taken back" to the Vatican.

With such ground prepared and the seed planted, *Alberto* page 28 reminds us of what Rivera has been doing for the last five years. In fact he was a fare collector and a bad seminary student in Costa Rica. As we remind of such truth, page 28 reminds of the nineteen churches in Spain, one church in Venezuela, and one seminary in Costa Rica, all infiltrated personally by Rivera. We are reminded how he helped to destroy them. We are reminded by the picture of a Roman Catholic teacher, arms outstretched. He is pointing to the denominations, cults, religions and systems known to the world, all infiltrated by Rome. He is telling the audience: "We have successfully infiltrated all of these organizations!"

Rivera is presumably in the audience. The next words give more credit and credibility to his infiltration of the churches and the seminary. In case the reader didn't by this time know what *Alberto* had been up to, the Roman Catholic teacher, appropriately dressed and with the papal coat of arms on the wall behind him, is in any case the best person to attach the label to Rivera. Rivera is now a Jesuit priest. Hitherto his work had been that of an "under-cover agent."

The balloon from the priest's mouth tells us: "Thanks to our under cover agents we have quietly moved into Christian TV and publishing, and have been accepted as teachers, pastors and evangelists. We are pushing only love and unity to pull us all together. This is our revival!"⁶⁰

Such *is* a reasonably fair statement, but with *Alberto*'s idea of undercover agents linked in. Their existence is not denied, and the purpose here in the Chick book is assuredly to build the stature and credibility of the hero, *Alberto*.

Make no mistake, it is accepted that strange matters can sometimes be properly accepted by a reader once it is established that these were deeds done by an identity "undercover." This fact is recognised. It is because of this that this book is quite different from previous short articles exposing Rivera and Chick. Only the presentation of detailed research can completely convince some that such is not the case with the *Alberto* message.

Rivera Says he Addressed 50,000 People in Guatemala

The only example of Rivera's ecumenical activity as a priest in the first *Alberto* picture book shows him, in his supposedly disillusioned state, addressing a crowd of 50,000 "Latin Protestant leaders and Roman Catholics" in Guatemala in 1965. This is the first and only story he relates of his ecumenical activity as an ordained Jesuit priest. It would indeed be his last, for we read that he exposes Rome at this meeting: "... How can I speak of life, when I've lied to you, infiltrated and destroyed your churches? You think this ecumenical movement means love and unity, but in reality it will bring about your death..."⁶¹

Rivera's infiltration of the Protestant churches is put into the context of the new attitude of Rome following Vatican II. From Rivera's standpoint, this adds further credibility in case any reader finds the previous stories to be quite hideous.

We leave the *Alberto* book at this point, but before we examine what Rivera was in fact doing after leaving the theological seminary in Costa Rica in 1957, and for the ten years to 1967, two observations on the extraordinarily large crowd in Guatemala in 1965 would be appropriate.

The *first* observation is from H.J. Hegger, a former Roman Catholic priest with a ministry to former Roman Catholics. Mr Hegger had been asked by many people for his opinion of Rivera and of the books, and his committee in the Netherlands decided that he ought to visit Rivera in the United States in order to be able to answer the many questions. He travelled from Holland to Los Angeles on 14th September 1984, and in his subsequent report he makes reference to the Guatemala meeting:

"Rivera claims in *Alberto* (p. 29) that he spoke to a group of fifty thousand people at an ecumenical gathering in Guatemala in 1965. He is supposed to have said, 'How can I preach about life to you when I am dead, and the system I serve smells of death, from confessionals, to Mary, to purgatory, to mass, and to the priesthood which all deny the resurrection of Christ?' I asked several Guatemalan ministers who are subscribers to our magazine if this was true, for indeed such an event would have made a very deep impression on the whole Guatemalan nation. They all replied that no one in Guatemala had ever heard of such an event taking place."⁶²

For our *second* observation we caution that there is often a grain of truth in Rivera's words. He might, for example, have been in a place, even if he wasn't doing what he says he was doing. We take exception therefore to one otherwise useful article on Rivera where we read: "These facts also render inconsistent his (Rivera's) claim to have been in Guatemala during the mid-sixties."⁶³ Whilst it is certainly not likely that Rivera was addressing 50,000 people, it doesn't follow that location in "Hoboken, New Jersey and El Paso, Texas"⁶⁴ precludes any man from being in another country, at least for one day in the year. In these days of fast travel, and except a man be in jail, we cannot hope to be sure of all his comings and goings in a whole calendar year.

We begin our look at the facts of the years 1957 to 1967 by reference to the chronology around the time of the supposed meeting in 1965 in Guatemala.

1964: Rivera was hired (September 1964) by the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in Hoboken, New Jersey for one year. He eventually left obligations in excess of \$3,000.

1965: Warrant issued for arrest in Hoboken because of invalid cheques.

1965: Alberto left Hoboken (April 27th) with his wife Lydia, and infant son Juan. We have also seen this woman referred to as Carmen Lydia. The picture book fantasy, to be conceived much later, involved a character identified as Carmen. The identity of the factual person is Carmen Lydia Torres, from Puerto Rico. We meet her again later in the book.

1965: During Rivera's stay in Hoboken, his wife made many complaints to the people at the Christian Reformed Church of her child being maltreated by him. The child died in El Paso of external

hydrocephalus due to microgyria, on 27th July 1965.

1965: According to the FBI, Alberto travelled from there into Mexico.

1966: A letter from Juan M. Isais, a minister in Mexico, relates: “This brother is around Mexico being a disgrace, exploiting the people with a series of incredible things...”⁶⁵ Rivera was using the designation of Doctor of Theology.

We would hesitate before anticipating the ways of a Jesuit. However, the pattern described above, and the evidence which supports it, hardly describes the likely ways of a self-respecting religious undercover agent, let alone one ordained as a Jesuit priest.

In the Chick book, Rivera dates his conversion as 1967, and so in the minds of our readers it may remain that Rivera would yet repent of these events of 1965 in the United States. A fair-minded reader will recognise, too, that indeed it is not impossible, however remote the possibility may be, that he could have visited Guatemala to address the 50,000.

The fact remains that no evidence of any repentance exists for any of the misdeeds uncovered by all the researchers and by this author. However, in this book we are concerned with the facts and the evidence. There can always be more evidence, and we have taken care to seek it from both sides. We now look at some events from 1957 to 1967 in greater detail.

The 1960s – Alberto Still in the Continent of America

As we have seen, after being expelled from the Costa Rica seminary in October 1957, Rivera found consolation in the Methodist Church of that country. Later he worked in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). Because this is a large denomination, we have the advantage of the letters and notes maintained there, both in Hoboken, New Jersey, where Rivera worked, and in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the headquarters of the denomination.

There is the further advantage afforded to our research by the extraordinary events recorded. Not only will they never be forgotten by the people involved, but there are also the records of enquiries made by the CRC after Rivera’s departure. Such have been made available to those who did the initial research prior to the press and magazine articles exposing Rivera in 1981. I have the advantage of both that documentation and of conversations during 1990 with Edson T. Lewis, Jr., Rivera’s immediate superior in Hoboken. These conversations have been taped for publication, and also I have been in direct contact with Mr Lewis. He gave permission to use the tape and draw from the various material supplied.

At the outset it should be cautioned that information held by any employer concerning an employee has most often been obtained from the employee himself. Therefore, needless to add, Rivera may have given wrong information. On that basis I note from the CRC record that Rivera was employed by the Methodist Church in Costa Rica until 1959.

In 1962 there is recorded six months work with the Church of Christ in Texas. Then, according to notes made at the CRC offices in 1967 or later, Rivera was jailed for fraud for 15 days in El Paso in 1963. They note that he married Lydia Torres on 25th November 1963. That is the same woman who was with Rivera in Mexico. We have noted previously that Carlos Jimenez, Rivera’s superior in the Methodist Church in Costa Rica, said Rivera married Lydia there.

In September 1964, Edson T. Lewis, Jr., a CRC home missionary, moved to a parish in Hoboken where more Spanish was spoken. Previous to his arrival, Rivera had been hired for evangelism mainly among the Puerto Ricans. From the taped conversation with Mr Lewis, we know that Rivera had told the consistory that he was a converted Roman Catholic priest, and that he was exposing the deceit and immorality of priests in Spain. He told them he was forced to flee for his life.

Rivera told them he went from Spain to the Virgin Islands (West Indies), and from there to a seminary in Costa Rica. He told them he graduated from the Costa Rica seminary, and was looking for

work in a Protestant church. He had heard CRC's *Back-to-God Hour* radio programme. Mr Lewis reminds us that CRC is a Calvinistic denomination, and Rivera told them he had read some of John Calvin's work. He wanted to be part of the denomination.

In their words, the church hired Rivera "on short notice." As events in later years would show, the CRC would not be the last to do that. Many more were still to be impressed by Rivera's manner. More, like the CRC, would employ him without first properly checking his credentials. The enthusiasm to start people off on much needed Christian work is often great, especially so when faced with such an eminently qualified man as Rivera appeared to be. If a good man, a good talker, comes along, the temptation is to grab him! He is here today, and after all he might be gone tomorrow! Indeed Rivera would often be "gone tomorrow." At the time, however, he seems like a gift from the Lord. Like Pharaoh, Rivera most certainly is in God's purposes. As Richard Foulkes has written (quoted previously), it is very salutary to have to deal occasionally with people like Alberto, even though the cost is high.

Rivera began in Hoboken. Edson Lewis, Jr., who had worked for the CRC since 1956, was his supervisor in the field. Rivera was unreliable. He would not do what he said he would do. In early 1965 Rivera complained of the prejudice against the Latins. It seemed, according to Mr Lewis, that many of the difficulties revolved around the fact that he was required to work creatively, not only with Spanish-speaking people but with the Anglo congregation as well. Rivera was too hostile and insecure with Anglo-Americans to be able to function well in that context. Already in January Mr Lewis was recommending Rivera's employment be terminated.

The matter of money crops up again. We are reminded of the situation in Las Palmas (Canary Islands). Now he used his relationship with the CRC to obtain personal loans from various people. It was not long, with Rivera gone, before it would be evident that he did not intend to meet obligations in excess of \$3,000.

Mr Lewis relates that the board interviewed all of them, and Rivera was dismissed. He was not asked to leave with immediate effect. The termination date was set in the future, but suddenly Rivera left. His wife Lydia, and their son of a few months, whom they called Johnny, had also been with Rivera in Hoboken. Rivera simply did not appear on the Monday. The family was gone.

Mr Lewis rang friends of Rivera's in Texas. He discovered they had stayed overnight en route to El Paso. Next, he called up a CRC pastor in El Paso and asked him to check with the police there. He did check, and the police told him that Romero (Rivera) had gone into "Emergency" with a small child who was dead on arrival. The death certificate is shown in Picture 18.

The women in the Hoboken church had complained against the harsh treatment of Johnny. Lydia made many complaints to them of her child being maltreated by Rivera, but when it came to making a formal complaint she would always refuse to do so.

Word of Rivera's misdemeanours went from Mr Lewis to the Costa Rica seminary in December 1965. Apart from the information given to the seminary, it is quite evident that there was a willingness to extend counsel and a fatherly hand:

"It would seem that Mr Romero (i.e. Alberto Rivera Romero) is in need of Christian counsel and guidance. If you are called upon to offer this to him, please assure him of our goodwill towards him, and in the Lord's providence you may be the means of assisting him to deal with some of his problems. You may receive confirmation and elucidation of further details of these matters by corresponding with our Secretary of Home Missions, 2580 Kalamazoo Avenue SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49508."⁶⁶

Again, on 11 March 1966,⁶⁷ the Costa Rica seminary was updated on the CRC's problem with Rivera. The CRC believed him to be one of their graduates. By this date Mr Lewis had learned from the Immigration and Naturalization Service that Rivera had a long history of fraud in his file, but not for "weighty enough crimes" to justify proceedings, such as for deportation.

Constructive letters in reply to Mr Lewis followed from various senior men at *Seminario Biblico LatinoAmericano* in Costa Rica. Eventually Mr Lewis learned from the police that Rivera had gone into Mexico. In January 1986 another letter about Rivera was directed to the Seminary,⁶⁸ this time

from a minister who had come across Rivera in that country. Again this informed them of Rivera's fresh activities. Now he was not only a graduate from the Costa Rica seminary. In Mexico he was pretending to be a doctor of theology.

The information transmitted from Mexico included the fact that he had two passports, one showing him to be a resident of the United States, and another as a native of Guatemala. Guatemala! Throughout the Alberto story there are usually to be found these evidently irrelevant connections. Perhaps Rivera did go to Guatemala? Perhaps he did obtain a Guatemalan passport when he was there? There are some things we cannot know. In any event, such is a far cry from addressing 50,000 people in that place.

Eventually Rivera was back in the United States. The FBI contacted Mr Lewis and informed him of this. They told him there had been complaints in the South about the con-game Rivera was playing there. This was in 1965/66, and the picture doesn't seem remotely compatible with any idea of the same man, a Jesuit priest, addressing an ecumenical audience in Guatemala, blowing the whistle on the Roman Catholic "Church" from a platform shared by a Roman Catholic priest.

Baby Juan A. Romero was buried in 1965. I have a video showing a TV film crew and a picture of the grave. He is buried at McGill County Cemetery in El Paso. The grave is number 45E½ in the paupers' burial ground (see Picture 19). Such detail would be unimportant. However, whilst Rivera returns to El Paso to preach, he claims to know nothing of any Juan Alberto Romero. His business is attacking the Roman Catholic "Church." My copy of *El Paso Herald-Post* (27 May 1991) shows a colour front-page picture of Rivera preaching, alongside a report of his "fiery sermon." The headline reads: "Big-time Liar – or Liberator?" We trust that by this time our own readers have been helped in answering that question.

What about Baby Juan Alberto Romero (Johnny)?

It would have been all too easy to let the matter of Johnny rest on the evidence recorded thus far. However, research on such a vital and terrible matter as the death of a baby was incomplete, and no proper conclusions could be reached on the basis of the evidence available. There was no reason to doubt the evidence. Yet the need was to avoid falling into the trap of drawing wrong conclusions from accurate evidence. It was appropriate to put the baby's death certificate before a pathologist.

The following information was provided by a pathologist having a special expertise with children. He was provided with the information to be found on the death certificate, and the following, written by his colleague, may be taken as a professionally competent description of the pathologist's assessment of the situation:

"Death was due to external hydrocephalus and its associated microgyria. Hydrocephalus means an excess of cerebrospinal fluid in the cranium. It may not necessarily be associated with an enlarged head.

"It is commonly a malformation, but may be acquired. Convulsions are often associated with this condition. Hydrocephalus can be classified as 'internal,' when a block to the exit of cerebrospinal fluid from the ventricular system causes the cerebral ventricles to enlarge, or, as in this case, 'external,' when there is a failure of absorption of cerebrospinal fluid from the subarachnoid space. Microgyria is a condition in which the portions of the cerebral hemispheres known as gyri are reduced in size.

"It is well-known that this abnormality can be a cause of death.

"The death certificate indicates that external hydrocephalus and microgyria were the cause of death in this case which was shown by autopsy.

"The exact medical condition of the child may or may not have been known to the parents during his life.

"Based on the information shown on the death certificate the pathologist was able to confirm the following: 1. In his opinion the condition as stated was the cause of death; 2. If there was bruising on the child's body this was not contributory to the cause of death. There was no mention of bruising on the death certificate, and death was said to be due to natural causes based upon the malformation."

There ends the description as worded by a professional colleague of the pathologist who received his opinion. The colleague also pointed out to me that bruises are a common consequence of fits or convulsions and any such bruising would not necessarily reflect on the measure of care and attention given by the parents to the infant.

In 1966, as Rivera escaped the authorities by moving into Mexico, a practise that Rivera would repeat, his landlady back in Hoboken had not been paid. A warrant had been issued for his arrest. An eventual associate and room mate of Rivera's, after his return to America from his visit to Spain later in 1966, was Daniel Abrego. On Abrego's information,⁶⁹ Rivera had left Carmen Lydia in Mexico when he returned to Spain. Rivera remained in Spain, including the Canary Islands, into 1967. This was to be another very eventful year in fact, and it was an eventful year according to the Chick account. As we shall see, once again the two stories have little in common.

Chapter 5

SPAIN 1967 – CONVERSION TO CHRIST OR CONVERSION TO ROME? (OR NEITHER?)

Our chapter heading asks a question. Where Rivera is concerned, none of the main questions are difficult to answer, and this one is no exception.

For fifteen years there had not been a shred of evidence of any association with Rome since the day Rivera left “Father” Abraham’s church in the Port district of Las Palmas, and where he was an altar boy. As we know, he left to join the Evangelical church just a short walk away.

In 1967 Rivera was in touch with Roman Catholics again. He went for help to a Roman Catholic church in San Lorenzo, one of the poorest districts of Barcelona, Spain. He used that occasion to present one of his bizarre stories of persecution. The difference this time was that this was Barcelona, Spain, a place not well known for its Protestant denominations, and still less for persecution *by* Protestants. Rivera’s story of persecution was told to Roman Catholics. He had just been dismissed from his post by Samuel Vila, one of Spain’s best-known Evangelical leaders. Now he had come to San Lorenzo. He was complaining of Protestant persecution.

Before we look at the facts of the fraud and deception in 1967, evidenced by Mr Vila, and by some I met in the Canary Islands and other parts of the world during 1991, we do well to take a look at the picture book account. This now involves two books, the latter part of *Alberto* (Part One) and the early pages of *Double-Cross* (*Alberto* Part Two).

Had Rivera discovered in 1967 that the Roman Catholic institution had the real truth, just as he told them in the Roman Catholic church in San Lorenzo? Or was Rivera converted to Christ in 1967, as Chick tells us in *Double-Cross*?

The plain answer is “no” in each case. Rivera lied about his conversion to Rome, and he lied about his conversion to Christ. He lies to all who read the picture books, as he lied to the priests of Rome. As the rector of the seminary in Costa Rica had observed ten years before, he is the incarnation of his own incredible fantasies.

We pick up the *Alberto* picture book story after his destruction of the seminary in Costa Rica. “They” took him back to the Vatican, he said. He claimed he became a Jesuit priest, and this new work promoting ecumenism had begun in earnest after Vatican II. There followed the meeting in Guatemala. Now Rivera had changed his mind. Not surprisingly, therefore, we read that “they” were not pleased. He claimed the Roman Catholic authorities flew him back to Panama, and from there he was shipped to Spain.

We know that he did arrive in Spain in due course.

We mark the words of the Chick book very carefully, and note that it was “after months of failure” that Rome turned to their “last resort.” We see Rivera, apparently handcuffed to a guard, escorted by a priest, and entering through awesome iron gates. A few months have passed, so it could still be 1965, or 1966, when Rivera is pictured as entering this place for priests who have gone insane.⁷⁰

As regards Rivera’s idea of an asylum for such priests, I met with a former Jesuit priest, Victor Affonso. From 1960 to 1963 he was at the Spanish Jesuit house of *San Cugat del Valles*. This is only ten minutes by train from Tarrasa (Barcelona), and Victor said there was nothing in the Barcelona area like the insane asylum that the *Alberto* book describes.

Victor Affonso was a Jesuit for more than 30 years and took the fourth vow. He is featured in the film, *Crisis of Faith*, which was available for sale at Chick Publications when I called there. The video exposes Roman Catholicism, and also includes the testimonies of former priest Bartholomew Brewer and former Jesuit priest Bob Bush, whom I have met and consulted concerning Rivera. Like all the other former priests interviewed, they believe Rivera was never a Roman Catholic priest.

Back to the *Alberto* story and the insane asylum. The “Holy Office” had judged Rivera “guilty of heresy through insanity.” “Recant,” they tell him through the slot in the padded cell, “There is only one church!... the Holy Mother Roman Catholic Church!”

According to Chick’s illustrated fantasy, there were two weeks of torture and brutal questioning in the asylum. He was given shock treatment and heavy drugs. Next we see Rivera inside what may well be a perfectly normal iron lung. This was Spain in 1967! Yet we do well to note that these books are interpreted according to their pictures by many in Third World lands who do not know the English language. Even for those who do, it is all too clear how interpretations can come from the pictures rather than the text.

A new full-length *Alberto* picture book in 1990, written this time by Rivera himself with new material, is in print in the Korean language. My copy is *Alberto* (Part Eight). It has 44 large pages. I do not have a full English translation of the picture book. However, I have received, from New Zealand, a publicity flyer for the “12th Asia Bible Prophecy Conference” in Seoul, Korea. There we read of Rivera: “In the end he was so tortured at a secret prison of Spanish Mental Hospital, and also, he was locked in iron-barrel which was specially made” (grammar as in the original).⁷¹

An iron barrel is a fair description of the picture. Whether it is a Spanish iron lung as the picture book represents, we just don’t know. Really, in the context of our description of the picture book account, it just doesn’t matter. Yet the Korean example which arrived on my desk shows how innocents abroad are able to make a matter worse as the result of both a poor understanding of language, and of pictures which do not represent what they are familiar with in their own country.

As we approach the main event of the *Alberto* story, which is Rivera’s supposed salvation in the mental hospital, we mention that it was Roland Rasmussen, the pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Canoga Park, California, who introduced Rivera to Chick. Clearly this was before the picture book fantasies, and Gary Metz, one who wrote an early exposé of Rivera, writes of a supposed conversion date which is inconsistent with the timetable, both as to fact and picture book fantasy: “While speaking at the Faith Baptist Church in Canoga Park, California, Alberto pinpointed his conversion at 3-00 in the morning on March 20, 1967. He says he immediately defected from the Catholic church. However, five months later, in August of 1967, he was still promoting Catholicism and the ecumenical movement in a newspaper interview in his home town of Las Palmas in the Canary Islands.”⁷² This is in contrast to the picture book story.

Here we look at the comparison of the facts and the fantasy during his time in mainland Spain, before his departure for the Canary Islands.

It was whilst inside the iron lung that Rivera tells us, via the picture book, that he asked Jesus to forgive him, and immediately life flooded through his body. In his own words, he was saved and healed, and free at last. He climbed out of the iron lung and removed the tubes from his body. One week later he was released. He couldn’t believe it! He was sent to Madrid by himself. Such is the fantasy.

Yes, he did actually go to Barcelona, and he did actually go from there to Madrid. However, we find nothing in the picture book to compare with what actually happened in those places. He also went to the Canary Islands. That is clear from Vincent Phillips’ letter.⁷³

The evidence is that after Rivera’s “conversion” to Rome at the San Lorenzo “church” in Barcelona, and after obtaining clerical garb, he was able to have a photograph taken, and obtain a Spanish I.D. card. For this, he stated his profession to be that of a priest. In Madrid he was able to cheat a Roman Catholic functionary into issuing another certificate. It meant nothing but it added some weight to his deception.

Rivera was thus well equipped, and it was apparently without shame that he took off for the Canary Islands, dressed as a Roman priest. He visited Clara Montalban and her husband. He appears to have had a purpose. Still dressed as a priest, and claiming to be of the Order of “Escolopios,” a teaching order, he told them he was collecting money for a Roman Catholic building project. Such is the factual account.

Back to *Double-Cross*: if the dates quoted in it could be relied upon, it can be calculated that Rivera left Madrid on 18th September 1967. That puts his professed “conversion” in the “iron barrel” somewhere in mid-August, according to the picture book account. Somewhat ironically, the fact is that he was evidently feigning a conversion back to Rome just at that time.

What is also a fact is that, still in 1967, Rivera *did* leave Spanish territory for London. We now look in more detail at Rivera’s time in mainland Spain. Starting upon his arrival, when he introduced himself to Samuel Vila, we see how much chicanery Rivera managed to pack into 1967.

Personal Fraud in Barcelona – Spanish Patriarch Samuel Vila Says Rivera and His Lies Should be Unmasked

What we are presented with is a fraudster with an immense capacity for inflicting grave personal damage, and causing severe personal and financial loss. This can happen at any opportunity he finds.

It appears Rivera’s first call in Barcelona was upon Samuel Vila. Such is not surprising, because for 15 years Rivera had been away from Roman Catholicism. Also, here was one of the best-known Evangelical leaders in all of Spain. Mr Vila’s Bible dictionary in the Spanish language is on the shelves of Christian bookshops wherever Hispanic peoples are to be found. In the words of the Evangelical pastor in Tenerife, Samuel Vila was one of the most-used patriarchs of the Gospel in Spain right through his life.⁷⁴ My purpose is to properly describe the man Rivera was dealing with, and I further introduce Mr Vila by quoting from the opening and closing paragraphs of a long letter written to me in January 1991. I leave the words in the same style and innocent choice of English used by Mr Vila:

“I will turn 90 next May and lately I have been working 13 hours a day on my book... With God’s help, the book is now out of the presses and I have some more free time to take care of other matters... Now, concerning my position, I am including a biography written by David Muniesa. I do not like to talk about myself, but through the book you will see that I have been one of the greatest freedom fighters in Spain. I have had many problems with the Roman Catholic Church in Spain and I am possibly the man that has most strongly faced the Roman Catholic Church in Spain. As you will be able to realise if you can read the book in Spanish, I know the Roman Catholic Church in Spain better than anybody else. I all I can say is that we have had persecution and we have had problems with the Catholic Church in Spain. But they have nothing to do with Alberto’s stories. What Alberto says in his comics is nothing but lies... I think it is about time that someone unmask Alberto and his lies...”⁷⁵

What then did Mr Vila know about Alberto Rivera? In reply to that question, the same could be said by Mr Vila as would be answered by all I met in the Canary Islands, including Evangelical ministers and Jesuit priests. Unless they happened to know Alberto as a boy or a young man, none had ever heard of the island’s internationally-infamous son. *Alberto* books are translated into Spanish but I found none in the Canary Islands. Even Alberto’s family declared to me they had not heard of him in more than twenty years. Not one of them had ever seen an *Alberto* book, not even his sister Maria. Now featured in a drawing on the cover of the Korean picture book, Maria’s story of her physical and bloody torture in a London convent was still unknown to her, even though *Double-Cross* was published ten years ago. Maria had not even heard of any Chick book. She was supposed to be dead or missing, according to the Rivera-Chick fantasy.

The point is that I found none in Spain, among any of the relevant groups (family, church or Roman Catholic), who have been affected by Rivera at anything other than a personal level. No one there had heard of Rivera, and his family hadn’t heard from him either. The issue with Rivera throughout has been personal fraud and hideous personal behaviour. In the words of many, it is time he was stopped. In the words of Samuel Vila: “It is time someone unmask him.”

In order to ensure maximum effectiveness in doing that, we continue with our story. Mr Vila would

never have heard of Rivera at all, had he not turned up one day and proceeded to cheat him. Mr Vila relates how Rivera came to Tarrasa (Barcelona) in 1967. He told him his impressive story of the persecution he had suffered from the Roman Catholic “Church.” Mr Vila believed him and decided to help him. We see a re-run of events similar to those in Hoboken, New Jersey, three years before; Alberto seemed like a gift from God.

In 1981, Mr Vila wrote to a researcher: “He spoke to our Committee with such humility and apparent unselfishness that we were all deceived... I think you are doing a good work for God opening the eyes of those who could be deceived and entrust to him money that is needed in real departments of God’s work in the world. I have never seen his comic books on his life”⁷⁶ In another letter, Mr Vila wrote: “He was a smart man. By that time the Principal of the Christian School in our Church in Tarrasa had left and the job was vacant. A man like Alberto appeared to me, as well as to the school board of directors, as a gift from God. So we appointed him Principal in the school. It was one of the greatest mistakes I have ever made.”⁷⁷

Then Mr Vila relates the difficulties: “During six months he collected all the income from the parents and did not give a single penny to the treasurer, only lies and excuses. On top of that, several parents reported stories of a sexual hunt from Alberto to young students. This did it. We called him to a Board meeting and the lies he told us, and his cynicism, were so extreme that I myself grabbed him by the lapels and expelled him from the room saying, ‘Get out and never come back’.”⁷⁸

Meeting Samuel Vila and One of Rivera’s Girl Students in Tarrasa

In October 1991 Tom Babcock, from Canada, travelled to Tarrasa to continue the research into Rivera’s activity there. The account, already clear in writing from Samuel Vila himself, was confirmed by meetings, both with him and with others, who were personally involved with Rivera, each in their different ways, nearly twenty-five years before. Like the good people met with in the Canary Islands, Mr Vila was nonplussed that Rivera’s nonsense could ever have received such attention in the United States. This man, who knew both Rivera and the work of Chick Publications, said:

“I don’t understand how people in America have given attention to him (Rivera), to publish all these things... It seems he has had the help of the good people (Chick) who publish the little books (the tracts). It’s a pity because the booklets were good – about Salvation.”⁷⁹

All remembered Rivera. Samuel Vila’s son, now 48, said he ran the publishing and printing business, the work started by his father. Eliseo was just 23 when Rivera was there. From the beginning he didn’t like Rivera. “He said to my father he had been a Jesuit priest, and that he had been persecuted by the Roman Catholics. He came to us as an evangelical. I had the impression that he was telling lies... I think he changes the story every time he tells it.”⁸⁰

As to the politics, Eliseo Vila told us, “In 1967 Spain had moved left, as in Latin America today. Franco’s dictatorship was over and the Catholic Church was divided pro-Franco and pro-Left.”

As regards the money questions, Eliseo confirmed the accounts of the threatening letters Rivera had written to parents about their fees, and which were never handed over by Rivera.

As for the troubled girls, he spoke also of the problems faced by the school and the committee concerning Rivera’s alleged sexual adventures with the young girl students. However, all that was possible for him to know “for sure” was that on this subject “the parents were angry.”⁸¹

“We discovered that he (Rivera) was a crook. Also there were reports that Interpol were looking for him. The reason that he came to us was that he had a child with a woman in the United States, in New York, and that they killed the child and threw the child into the garbage. I don’t know if that is true or not. But we can say also that at that time the police were after him. I don’t know why.”⁸²

Mr Vila introduced Tom Babcock to Armando,⁸³ “a member of the committee when Rivera was here... a good man.” Eliseo said Armando was a member of their church.

“I know ‘the little priest’,” Armando recalled, “because instead of behaving like a Christian he came acting like a devil... To me he is a scoundrel. He can’t live without taking money from others.”⁸⁴ He spoke also of Rivera’s entanglement with the “San Jose” groups of worker’s unions.

Tom Babcock was taken by Samuel Vila's driver to meet with a girl, now related to Armando, and who had been a student at *Colegio San Juan* when Rivera was director there. Eliseo had earlier obtained the consent of Grace for the interview.

Grace recalled that she would have been ten or twelve at the time. Tom Babcock showed her a picture of Rivera. Then Grace's recollections, given in Spanish, were taped:

(translated) "Simply I could say that I was a student at *Colegio San Juan* when this person was there. He was a man that used to take advantage in advances with the girls, the students, with his eyes and with his hands. He was in the habit to come from behind and to embrace us, putting his hands on our breasts. Other girls had already stopped him using vulgarity. I was not very sophisticated, but I managed to grab his hand and to throw it back. He really was a pervert. When he was in class, he would go astray in his speech because he was looking under the table at the girls' legs. That was despicable for a teacher. Well, he was trying to pass as a teacher. The worse is that he tried to trick us, telling us to be nice with him, that he also would be nice with us, giving us better grades and better treatment. It is a pity I don't know the address of the other students. I know them but I don't know where they live. They would say the same thing that I am saying about that guy, 'the little priest' as we used to call him."⁸⁵

Grace's husband, the son of Armando, remembered Rivera too. He used to eat and sleep at his house: "At that time I was 17 or 18, and for me he was great. He knew everything. He was talking about ecumenism, and you know ecumenism was something special in those days. And he was talking politics. At the Parish there was a workers' center. He introduced himself there and those people were extremists, almost communists."⁸⁶

Grace again: "On that aspect I don't know him. But about his bad behavior with the girl students, yes, he was a real punk. He used to grab our hands to feel them, saying 'your hands are really hot'... And he looked at me. And you could see his excited eyes. I couldn't understand much, but now I realise what it was... Then he asked how did we feel, and he was very sweet."⁸⁷

As Mr Vila admitted, employing Rivera was a big mistake he made. As for Rivera himself, he had passed another test. He had duped an experienced man, one who ran an Evangelical school and an Evangelical publishing organisation, one who was well-known. At the time of his death in 1992, aged 90, Samuel Vila was still working at Libros CLIE, which he founded, an Evangelical publishing house which is the source of very many books in the Spanish language, found in the Hispanic homes of America. Rivera had swindled a Christian man, one who had successfully coped even with Franco.

"Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint" (Proverbs 25:19); *"A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape"* (Proverbs 19:5).

Rivera Can Use Any Situation as an Opportunity

Assuredly Rivera never expects to stay long in a place, but only to use the situation he finds. Certainly he had been fired, but he had been fired before. Unrepentant, we see he left with more lies and cynicism directed to the board. Later he was to speak more dreadful slanders about his time there to those on the other side of the city, and in a few more weeks to Clara Montalban, his old youth leader back in the Canary Islands.

Having used the situation he finds, he moves on. Such is Rivera's way today. I have heard talk shows and phone-in programmes where facts are laid before radio listeners by those who expose him. Rivera calls in to the programme himself and gets on the air that way. The host is caught off-guard and unprepared. Ever more outrageous lies are fed into the listeners' ears. Publicity is given to him. The interest of new people is aroused. More sympathizers and supporters replace old ones who realise they have been duped. Researchers' files get bigger. Yet Rivera is as yet unharnessed. The saga continues. The trail of destruction goes on.

It is right to deal with the harm done by Rivera to Roman Catholics and Protestants alike. There is no need, in such a case as Rivera's, to discount the evidence from non-Christian or Roman Catholic sources, because Rivera never was the smallest part of a Jesuit or Roman Catholic conspiracy. Christians do need to distinguish the discernment called for where such matters are involved, but here the need is for clear thinking and a logical approach. This is a vital need for Christians. The examples in this book are to encourage.

Samuel Vila rightly had no quarrel with the Roman Catholic "Church" – which he *does* know well – when it came to exchanging information about Alberto Rivera. In Mr Vila's long letter⁸⁸ he underlines and prints in bold letters only a single word. It is the word to describe Rivera. That word is "crook." Here we have, he says, an excellent con-artist who has, all his life, been playing games with religion and making the credulity of good and honest people his *modus vivendi*.

From Mr Vila's co-operation with the people of the Roman Catholic parish of San Lorenzo in Tarrasa, he learned that Rivera went to them and described how he was persecuted. Given this was Franco's Spain, it is valuable to note carefully the lies that were told. By that time in 1967, Mr Vila writes, the priests in "*Parroquia de San Lorenzo*" (*Parish of San Lorenzo*) were Communist. He learned that Rivera had told them that his organisation had dismissed him because of his Communist ideas, because of his fight for freedom and democracy. Rivera related to the Roman Catholics that Mr Vila's school, the school he had come from, had been financed by the donations of Christian brethren in the USA. However, it was controlled, he said, by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). He had been a freedom fighter and this was another reason why the school had dismissed him. Furthermore, he had been physically abused.

When we think about the damage Rivera has done and continues to do, we do well to reflect on the above example. The example can be matched as regards the abuse Rivera heaps upon anyone who will challenge him. However, the account is not easily matched as an example of the potential damage of such behaviour, in a country like Spain under General Franco, or in countries in Central and South America today, where Rivera could put people into untold danger from the governing authorities because of his slanders.

Vila was born within a decade of Franco. He was a contemporary and well known in Spain; indeed known by Franco himself. Let us consider that across from Vila's section of the city, and in the poor area, are to be found the inevitable Roman Catholic priests. They are in spiritual darkness; but they nevertheless have children in their parish whom they also seek to teach (albeit falsely), and they too find a bed for those, like Rivera, who offer to help. They too sympathise with those who go to them with a story they recognise as like their own.

The priests can relate to the image which Rivera presents. Also, he is "smart" and he talks well. He pretends to have a doctor's degree. He has spent much time in America. The priests know little about America. They have heard about Samuel Vila but they have not previously heard such things about his school. Rivera, with his great skill and fluency (in Spanish), tells them all about it. There is some truth, for after all Rivera was the director of Mr Vila's School. He was put in charge. The priests learn much. Over a bottle of wine they talk about it. The word gets around. Vila's school is controlled by the CIA. The school board abuses those who dare to oppose them. Lies, lies, and more lies!

Is this not the kind of story Rivera has caused to be strewn around an already troubled world? Are these not the messages on which misunderstandings are based? Is it not to honour Jesus Christ and to jealously guard the reputations of His people, for His sake, that we have to warn? Is it not for Christ's sake that we warn?

In a very few weeks, one or two priests of San Lorenzo, just like people in Mr Vila's organisation, would have some facts regarding Rivera. They find in due course that they have fallen into the same trap. Yet in the meantime word has spread. Maybe by then, even, a recording is made. Perhaps even tapes are being copied today. Has the message even gone full circle? Do we find some version of it all in a picture book?

In a very few weeks Rivera would be gone from San Lorenzo. Indeed he *was* soon gone. The pattern

seen before was repeated. Money was lost that might have gone to the poor. Mr Vila relates the San Lorenzo experience in this way: “It did not take long until they discovered that Rivera was a crook. They had the same problem with him as we did. On top of that he used the Parish telephone for ‘dozens of international phone calls.’” It was after they received the bill for these that they had to dismiss him. Mr Vila reminds us that the figure was a “fortune” in 1967 – \$5,000. In his own words, it was after that “... the priest from San Lorenzo Parish came to me to excuse himself and explained how Alberto had cheated them.”⁸⁹

I discovered there had been several priests at San Lorenzo. With Mr Vila’s help, we were able to make contact with their leader, “Father” Damian Sanchez Bustamente. In 1992 he was residing in Barcelona.

The San Lorenzo Parish Priest Describes Rivera’s Fraud against Them

When priest Bustamente was asked if he remembered Alberto Rivera in 1967, he wrote: “He shared our life at the parish house for about three or four months.”⁹⁰ Because of the clear statement about the San Lorenzo parish school on the inside front cover of the *Alberto* series (see Picture 20), it was considered necessary to seek Bustamente’s confirmation about the Roman Catholic parish school where Rivera was supposed to have been the director. Accordingly, the priest was asked: “Was there a Roman Catholic parish school in San Lorenzo in 1967?” and his reply was, unequivocally, “No.” As to the photograph (Picture 20) where Rivera is seated at a table, allegedly as director in the parish school, and with three others, Bustamente identified the girl as a teacher in his parish. Her name and address is known and she continues to live in Tarrasa.

Bustamente wrote of Rivera: “He contacted some people on his own behalf while he was alone to tell them lots of false stories; he was interested in taking photographs and talking with them so that he could later invent some other untrue stories about the parish school and himself as the pretended headmaster.”⁹¹

Recalling his acquaintance with Rivera, “Father” Bustamente wrote at length, including how it was that Rivera could obtain the identity card (Picture 20) as a priest at their address:

“This is my personal opinion about the whole affair. It has been discussed with some of the priests who were at the time working with me in a pastoral parish team...

“I was introduced to Alberto Rivera by a parishioner. He was introduced as a Protestant priest having some troubles with the Protestant ministers in a nearby district. As he had no place where to go, we accepted him in our parish house. We were ready to give him bed, table, food and room, without asking for anything.

“We were working priests, so we earned our living by working. Our way of life was very simple. We had only what was necessary for our daily life, and we did not accept any money from our parishioners. Alberto could share and check our way of life. He told us a lot of stories about his own life, but it was difficult to know exactly what was true or false. According to him he had studied theology in Mexico, especially Paul Tillich. He had worked as a Protestant minister in several countries in Central America. But you never knew exactly what it was all about. He had some relatives here in Spain, in the Canary Islands, and you could not know if he was married and had children, or not. We were not worried really about everything he was explaining to us day after day for we were too busy at that moment to be concerned about the details of his life.

“Actually, he helped us some Sundays in the religious services, reading the Bible or playing the harmonium in weddings and so on.

“There were a lot of hours in the day when nobody was in the parish house, because all of us on the weekdays were working in our jobs. In fact, he knew that we were living in a very poor and simple way. We did not accept any money from our parishioners but even helped with our own money in the running of our parish.

“What did Alberto do while alone at the parish house? He could take parish documents so as to be able to go to the Police Station saying he was one more of the priests in our parish of San Lorenzo (we were at that time about nine priests working together) and this is how he could obtain his Identity Card

with our address. We could not know that. He did not explain anything about it.

“In those days we wore only civilian clothes because of our work in factories and schools, but he tried always to dress as a priest with a smart Roman collar, in order to be accepted everywhere as a Catholic priest.

“Because of his freedom in doing whatever he wanted while we were away working, he could also take photographs with different people of the parish, because he had in his mind a clear idea about what he would have to do in the near future. He must have been convinced at that time, after sharing our life for two or three or four months, that something very important was about to happen and that he would be immediately expelled from our community. And this is what I am going to explain now.

“As I have said, Alberto Rivera shared our life for three or four months. It was at the end of that period that we could learn the kind of person he was. We discovered it through the telephone bill. Every two months we paid nearly 2,000 pesetas, and suddenly the total amount to be paid was 75,000 pesetas. We went to the Central Telephone Office to claim against what we considered was a wrong bill. But they could show us a lot of international calls dialled from our telephone to the United States. Alberto Rivera had been dialling Houston time and again while he was alone at home. As we had no money to pay that enormous amount, we asked the Director of the Telephone Office to be allowed to pay the money little by little, and we did so for many months.

“This was the reward we had from Alberto Rivera after accepting him among us without any selfish interest at all. He had never paid us a cent for his long stay with us, and he perfectly well knew we were earning our daily living in a very simple and poor way. He knew we were a very poor parish in a working peoples’ district, and without economic resources. But in spite of that, he behaved this way.

“Then we asked him to go away immediately because we were not able to understand his behaviour at all. He apologised, assuring us that he had arranged everything in the United States, and as soon as he had arrived there he would send us back the whole amount of the telephone calls, and even more to help with the expenditure while sharing our life.

“As you can imagine he never sent us anything, and what he really did before leaving was to take with him some of our suitcases with the suits and clothes belonging to some of us.

“So in a few words, he abused in many ways our trust and hospitality... He was a good actor to deceive lots of people with his strange behaviour. He was an outstanding cheater, and he will go on behaving this way until he can be put under arrest to pay back for so many crimes he has been committing...

“I hope all the above can help a little to complete your book to expose and stop Alberto Rivera’s frauds and cheatings.”⁹²

Indeed it can help. Yet this was but a small part of his frauds and deceptions during this very short time in Tarrasa.

A Teacher at *Colegio San Juan XXIII* Explains the Photograph of Rivera Seated at the Desk with Her and Other Teachers

Mrs Celia Ros is the teacher seen seated on Rivera’s left, seen on the inside front cover photograph (Picture 20). She identified the other teachers in the picture with Rivera and described that scene. It is the *Colegio San Juan XXIII*. It is known from an original and official source that this school later reported its serious complaints about Rivera to an enquirer from the United States.

Celia Ros said the school was founded in the 1960s as a private organisation by the Escolopian priest, “Father” Alejandro Garcia-Duran de Lara. At that time the neighbourhood lacked urban and social amenities after a storm in 1962 with loss of life and much damage. Mrs Ros worked personally with “Father” Alejandro from 1963 to 1968. He is now in Mexico City, working among poor children there. Mrs Ros adds that he has not forgotten Rivera and the problem of the money. The school has since become a public school, dependent upon the authority of Catalonia.

Another teacher in the photograph became a priest. “Father” Corbera was, at that time, teaching

classes in the school. Today he is the parish priest of San Jose. He still lives in Tarrasa.

In the photograph, the teachers are in the teachers' room, where they prepared the lessons. Mrs Ros said it was difficult to know why Rivera would be there, but that probably the photograph was to provide some evidence of his presence. Rivera was neither director nor one of the personnel of the school. The director was a priest of the religious order of *las Escuela Pia* (the Pious School). Mrs Ros evidenced that Rivera was a Protestant. She informed me that Rivera was accommodated because of the ecumenical spirit which then prevailed. In the beginning she regarded him as a Protestant religious man who was eager to know of the religious activities of the officers of the Catholic Church. She said his eventual disappearance was much talked about, because he left so many unpaid debts as the result of many telephone calls to the United States. Mrs Ros added that there was suspicion that Rivera was an impostor.

Alberto Quickly Sets Up as a Roman Catholic Priest

While in Tarrasa (Barcelona) in 1967, milking the funds of the parish of San Lorenzo, Rivera made contacts to consolidate his new Roman Catholic guise. By now there will be little need to remind again that this is all far removed from the 1967 events in *Alberto*.

One of Rivera's contacts was the head of the School of John XXIII (*Colegio Juan XXIII Las Arenas*) in Tarrasa, which was described by Mrs Ros. Rivera had come from America and he would be going back there. His idea was that he would collect funds in the United States for the work of the school. Once again, the arrival of such a man in the school office would seem like a gift from God! Credentials would appear unnecessary. Here was just the right sort of man. Sacrificing all his degrees and qualifications, here was a man humble enough to be preparing children for their first communion, helping them with their catechisms in a poor part of town.

The School of San Juan may well have reflected that such a man would normally be a *director*. At any rate, this was an idea that did not escape Rivera several years later, when the time came to once again reshuffle his story and his experiences. By 1991, six 32-page *Alberto* books, all covering a vast range of invention, show a picture of Rivera in Roman collar at his desk, alongside the three young people (see Picture 20). The caption to the photograph reads: "Above are some of the last photographs taken of Dr Rivera as the *Director* of the Parish School in San Lorenzo, Tarrasa, Spain."

The difficulty with believing what is printed there was discovered from Samuel Vila long before contact with the Roman Catholic priest was made: "He (Alberto Rivera) was never appointed Director of the Parish School in San Lorenzo. There never has been such a school."⁹³

As we have seen, it was during the six months previous to San Lorenzo, at Mr Vila's Evangelical school, that Rivera had served as director. In the Sam Lorenzo parish he was, according to Mr Vila's information from one of the other priests in the parish (not "Father" Bustamente), simply preparing some of the parish children to receive the Roman Catholic communion. The picture in the comic book, as we have now confirmed, and as Mr Vila assured us, "comes from some other place".⁹⁴

The picture will doubtless have served Rivera well as he established the idea of himself as a Roman Catholic priest in 1967. We see other individual pictures of him, wearing the Roman collar, in the front of all the 1991 comic books. Such a picture would be helpful for an Identity (I.D.) card. Rivera, a native of Spain now returned, would doubtless be able to apply for one. It was twelve years since he left. His old one may have been lost or out of date.

"Father" Bustamente eventually was to make reference to Rivera's I.D. card (see Picture 20). However, before his information, the subject warranted and received careful attention. For myself, I was able to give the card such attention in company with well-informed Spanish people (one a medical doctor; another a pastor) when in the Canary Islands. When applying for an I.D. card in Spain in 1967, there was no check upon the occupation entered in the application for the card. Indeed, much like an application for a passport in my own country, the authorities would be hard-pressed if they were to trouble about the occupation described. Indeed, they never did in my own case, and such was the case with occupations on I.D. cards in Spain in 1967. Furthermore, there was no restriction upon the kind

of collar worn or not worn for an I.D. photograph.

Former Dutch Roman Catholic priest, H.J. Hegger, meets ex-Roman Catholic priests from overseas in the course of his ministry. In his report after travelling to California to interview Rivera, he confirms that the I.D. card much flourished by Chick Publications has no evidential value, and: “According to Spanish ex-priests we know that 20 years ago it was very easy to obtain such a document with a bit of deception.”⁹⁵

The date of the I.D. card is 19th June 1967, and we are entitled to take it that he was with the parish of San Lorenzo when he obtained the card. Mr Vila tells us that the address on the card, “*Calle Pl. Immaculada*,” is the address of “*Parroquia de San Lorenzo*, Tarrasa.” This, to the mind of Rivera, would surely add to the card’s evidential value. Did he seek the status of a priest with a parish address and a uniform? Was this all his fantasy? Did he yearn to be looked up to? Whatever his motives then, with “*Sacerdote*” (priest) entered as his profession, the small I.D. card would prove a valuable tool in Rivera’s hands. It would be valuable for many years to come, not so much during this very short sortie back into Spain, but in the United States and, in particular, for the eventual marketing of *Alberto* by Chick Publications.

In earlier editions of *Alberto* (Part One), the important reverse side of the I.D. card containing the detail was not reproduced. All we had was the information we find in *Alberto*. Packed with irrelevant information, and flying in the face of the truth of the matter, the descriptive narrative written there by Jack Chick is as follows:

“The I.D. Card was issued by the Spanish Government in Spain in 1967, under the rule of the Spanish Dictator Franco. His security forces were equally as strict as the Gestapo had been in Germany. To obtain this document, Alberto had to supply birth certificate, identification papers and positive proof from his archdiocese of being a priest. Several security organizations were involved, similar to our CIA and FBI. The priest, Alberto Rivera, had to be approved by all these organizations to receive this document. There was no way it could have been a forgery. There is no question he was a priest. What you see there is positive proof...”⁹⁶

Such is the statement of “J.T.C.” – Chick’s style as the author of these picture books. We are entitled to ask what proof Mr Chick has found. Many have asked him. Sadly, Jack has turned down invitations to consider the evidence of others, and he produces little of his own. He has often stated that he believes Rivera’s story because he “prayed about it.”⁹⁷ Indeed, along with many other well-meaning, professing Christian men, confronted with such a man as Alberto, they will do anything except *think* about it in order that they might *pray intelligently* about it.

The I.D. card described on the inside covers of all the later printings of the six books is described as follows: “Dr Rivera was assigned to stay at the address on the above I.D. Card pending the decision of his ecclesiastical trial in 1967, just before his conversion to Christ.” Indeed, the address could be a correct one, and such is the small grain of truth in the caption. The rest are lies. The lies help relate the I.D. card to the further lies of the books. *Alberto* puts his conversion later on in 1967. Yet, now with the card in his hand and a set of priest’s clothing, we don’t find Rivera staying in Barcelona, or in Tarrasa which is part of the Barcelona administrative district.

Lies and More Lies

Neither do we find Rivera in a mental hospital, nor locked in an iron lung or “iron barrel”, as described in the *12th Asian Prophecy Conference* advertising flyer from Korea. Without such evidence, if we followed the story so clearly defined in the picture books, we would search in vain for his miraculous physical release, his conversion, his healing of body and soul. In fact, we soon find Rivera in Madrid and the Canary Islands, then London, all away from his recent Evangelical “testimony,” and in places where it would be easier to wear his new priest’s garb.

Samuel Vila admits they lost track of him after San Lorenzo, but they heard he went to Madrid and cheated someone else. Indeed we can confirm that this is so. He cheated the chancellery-secretary of

the archbishopric of Madrid-Alcala on 14th September 1967. On that date the secretary signed a document, with the flourish of an impressive seal common in Spain, and it was an authority to go to foreign countries. This, like Rivera's I.D. card, was to be reproduced in great numbers, perhaps running into millions, serving as his credentials as a former priest. I received my copy from Chick Publications. Thus a magnifying glass to read the certificates on page 27 of *Alberto* was unnecessary.

The so-called evidence that Rivera was a priest, reviewed in this section, is all that has ever been provided. Whilst other former Roman Catholic priests are able to produce an entry in a Roman Catholic directory, or some other piece of relevant evidence, Rivera has produced nothing. All we have is Jack Chick's "positive proof." We have the bits and pieces dreamed up in Rivera's room at the Tarrasa monastery, quickly obtained and skillfully fitted together in Rivera's usual fashion. It is quite extraordinary when we consider he was sheltering in the monastery after "persecution" at the hands of Samuel Vila.

Yet, like the conscientious detective on any important case, we are not to neglect our own straight thinking. The value of this certificate (see Picture 21) from the Archbishopric of Madrid-Alcala has to be weighed. In one of his circular letters from Chick Publications, undated but written about the late 1970s, Jack Chick was pleased to report from the Catholic newspaper, *Our Sunday Visitor*, which stated the documents were *in fact* certificates from the archdiocese of Madrid-Alcala. They quoted "Father" Juan Martin de Nicolas, S.J., provincial of all Spanish Jesuits, as the authority on the matter. Such a statement is true. We don't doubt the reality of the official certificate we see before our very eyes. But what does the certificate actually say? What actually is it? And why is it printed so small in the Chick book that it cannot be read – at least without a magnifying glass? These are the relevant questions to ask.

If the certificate is even remotely significant, would it be beyond the wit of any normally dishonest reprobate to encourage such a mistake and to obtain one? Never mind Rivera's extraordinary capacity for blatant deception, a factor which again we trust is already clear to readers!

Chick himself gets into the realms of half-truth in a circular letter dated 22 December 1980. Referring to *Our Sunday Visitor*, he writes: "...but they made one little slip in the article when they said Father Juan Martin de Nicolas, SJ, provincial of all Spanish Jesuits, admits the papers issued to Dr Rivera which we photographed along with his I.D. card in *Alberto* were certificates of the Archdiocese of Madrid-Alcala."⁹⁸ The point is that the paper did not make a "slip." It was reporting the facts. The slip or mistake was made in Madrid in 1967.

I am reminded of how easy it was to obtain official sealed certificate copies free of charge, from both church and state, when I was carrying out my research in the Canary Islands. I remember the long conversation with the priest in the Rivera family church, San Pablos in Las Palmas. I remember his geniality, his helpfulness. I remember the priest's apparent delight as he wrote out one of the certificates I needed. I remember him bashing his big seal on it when he had finished. The question of who I was didn't arise. Yet, whoever I might have said I was, I have no reason to doubt he would have believed me. And why not?

I have no reason at all to doubt that Rivera, entering the office of the archbishopric of Madrid-Alcala, dressed like a priest, behaving like a priest, and even *without* producing the I.D. card bearing his picture and his profession as a priest, would have had the least difficulty in obtaining the innocuous pre-printed certificate. Only the words of the text (as underlined below) are completed by type; the remainder is print:

"His Most Reverend Excellency the Auxiliary Bishop and Vicar-General of this Archbishopric is pleased to authorise Mr Alberto Rivera Romano, a priest that dwells in this Archdiocese, to go into foreign countries in the cause of his ministry – Madrid, September 14, 1967 (Signed: Chancellery-Secretary)."⁹⁹

It is true that the document was obtained by deceit. It is true it is another piece of false evidence that Rivera was a priest. Yet anyone knows a priest does not become a priest by having a certificate like this. You are not necessarily a member of a club if you have a card that entitles you to a discount at a

store and which describes you as a member of the club. What difference does the card make? What difference does the certificate make? The only relevant observation is that they are both held fraudulently.

As for the Madrid-Alcala permit, it seems unlikely that any priest would necessarily need such a certificate when he goes into a foreign country “in the cause of his ministry.” Obviously such a pass in a police state could be helpful. In Rivera’s case, it may be that he was flying to London four days after the certificate was given, just as *Double-Cross* informs us. In that event, could he not have breezed into the Madrid office, demanding such a document urgently and on some plausible pretext, and with the advantage of it all being “at the last minute”? Did he not know many priests and functionaries, one of whom might have gone to the chancellery to obtain the certificate for him? We do not know. We *do* know the certificate is unremarkable, and moreover that readers of the picture book will be quite unlikely to reach for a magnifying glass. If they do, they will see nothing more than a safe-conduct. We have also the report of one who understands the workings of the Roman Catholic system, former Roman Catholic priest H.J. Hegger. He tells us he wrote to the archbishop of Madrid. The archbishop replied that with a little deception it was quite easy to obtain such an identity document.

We suggest that, given the fuller view of what is involved with the document, Mr Hegger and our readers are quite entitled to view the archbishop of Madrid, who ought to know best, as a reliable witness. We are not dealing with conspiracy, espionage, or spiritual discernment, as Chick and Rivera would have us believe. I fully realise there are some Protestants who would presume Roman Catholic bias, whatever the matter in question. Yet when dealing with a crook such as Mr Vila describes Rivera, I believe the testimony of a Roman Catholic archbishop in such matters can be counted as acceptable as that of anybody else.

In like manner, and given the weight of all our other evidence, we need not be hesitant in calling the Roman Catholic authorities as witness to another of Rivera’s frauds in 1967. We referred briefly to the *Colegio Juan XXIII Las Arenas*, another school in Tarrasa, which gave its approval for Rivera to collect funds in America. It was not until the following year, 1968, that we see dates in our documentation files. Rivera had by then switched back from Roman Catholicism once more, and was working with a Pentecostal denomination, the Church of God of Prophecy. Suffice to state at this point, as we remain with events in 1967, that a letter arrived from the denomination’s headquarters in Cleveland, Tennessee.¹⁰⁰ It enquired of the college whether or not Rivera was authorised by them to collect funds. It was the reply to that letter by *Colegio Juan XXIII Las Arenas* which unfolds more of Rivera’s fraudulent activities during his very short time pretending to be a Roman Catholic priest.

We know of his thefts in 1967 at the expense of Mr Vila’s Evangelical church organisation. Then by June 1967 he was at the San Lorenzo parish address, and he robbed them too. He was in the Canary Islands and Madrid. We write of facts here, not of the Chick accounts, and we know he went to London. Furthermore, we have the evidence of the Church of God of Prophecy that he arrived in Tennessee, the denomination headquarters, by October 1967.

Accordingly, there was not much time for more deception, but for Rivera there was enough, and we now identify Rivera’s third financial fraud in that short time in Tarrasa.

According to the letter from *Colegio Juan XXIII Las Arenas*, Rivera had deceived by saying that the campaign of raising funds was only for the month of July. The Spanish police were seeking Rivera, not for this matter nor for political reasons, but, in the words of the school, “for authentic swindles and cheats.”¹⁰¹ The school, whilst admitting conjecture on one further point, states that it could “practically be said that Rivera left Tarrasa to avoid being arrested.”¹⁰²

According to a report of an interview with Rivera published in the daily newspaper of Las Palmas (Canary Islands), Alberto had gone there from Tarrasa. We look next at this short period back in his native city.

Rivera was born there in September 1935. He attended the Roman Catholic church of San Pablo, where he was an altar boy. Then, around 1952, he joined the Evangelical church. He was baptized there in 1953. He left for the seminary in Costa Rica in 1955. Now, around August 1967, he was back

in the garb of a Roman Catholic order, not of a Jesuit but of an Escolapian. On 1st December 1967, and *supposedly* newly converted to Christ by that date according to the Chick story, Rivera's entries in the Evangelical church register in Las Palmas (see Picture 3) ceased. On that day he was in fact excluded from them. The entry in the register reads (translated): "Expelled because of scandal on 1st December 1967." We look now at what the Evangelical people in the Canary Islands witnessed when Rivera once again came among them.

Chapter 6

BACK HOME IN THE CANARY ISLANDS – DRESSED AS A PRIEST

For our two main profiles of Alberto Rivera, when he returned to Las Palmas around August 1967, we have the advantage of different perspectives.

Firstly, in 1991 I met with Clara Montalban de Perez and Adrian, her husband, in an apartment over their general store. Here Alberto regularly visited as an enthusiastic young Evangelical. Clara was then a young peoples' leader; Adrian was a leader in the evangelism programme of the church. In 1967 Rivera returned to put a proposition to them. We have the benefit of their perspective of the new Alberto. *Secondly*, we see how Rivera saw himself. This is set out carefully in an interview which the long-absent Rivera gave to *El Diario de Las Palmas*,¹⁰³ the daily newspaper of the island where he was brought up.

How then did Rivera see himself? We begin with the account given to the reporter. I have a copy of the newspaper in Spanish. It is dated 26th August 1967. Also available is a translation. *El Diario* could regularly be seen on the news stands in Las Palmas in 1991, and there is no doubt it is a significant vehicle for news on the island.

The *El Diario* Report Denied – an Example of Rivera's Conspiracy Alibi

Before looking at the newspaper report we note a cassette tape recording of a radio discussion in 1981 on KBRT (740-AM), Avalon, California. I have this tape and it includes, amongst others, Rivera and researcher Gary Metz. An account of the broadcast was reported in *Cornerstone* magazine, and this Las Palmas newspaper interview is dealt with under a very appropriate heading: "The Conspiracy Alibi."¹⁰⁴

Rivera denies the veracity of the newspaper story, and in doing so we are given an excellent example of the conspiracy alibi. Rivera regularly uses this against those who oppose him. According to Rivera's ways, testimony he no longer needs is accounted for on the basis of the conspiracy alibi. The evidence is accounted for as being fraudulent, and is used to emphasise his message that there is a big conspiracy. Suffice to mention here that, on KBRT Avalon, Rivera asserted that the *El Diario* newspaper account was rigged.

Certainly *El Diario* wasn't accurate as to the duration of Rivera's absence. He went to Costa Rica twelve years before, not fourteen. However, we have already established that neither Rivera nor Chick's books are necessarily accurate on such matters, and, whether or not the mistaken dates are deliberate on Rivera's part, we consider such matters to be of little significance when compared to the meat of the deception.

The "Reverend Rivera," we read, had come from Tarrasa, where he had been doing work of "ecumenical character." He worked among different people of different creeds. This was done especially in the educational field, creating and encouraging an ecumenical integration of some religious schools, including the *Colegio Juan XXIII*, superintended by "Reverend Father" Alejandro Estupian.

The paper further reports that "Father" Rivera was ordained as a priest in San Jose, Costa Rica. After this, he accomplished his studies in the field of nutrition and dietetics and became "a Licensee in these subjects." We are told that at present he was carrying out several activities of this kind in Central America, and also in the United States where he resided.

The reporter started by asking his fellow-countryman about his ecumenical work in Tarrasa. Rivera's reply has to be considered on its merits. Nevertheless, it is relevant to record two matters. *Firstly*, all of the many taped messages I have, with Rivera speaking, evidence (in the English language at any

rate) how easily he reaches a place in a conversation or message where he becomes unintelligible. There is much that makes no sense at all when it is transcribed. The *El Diario* interview is also something of a jumble. *Secondly*, the newspaper article was translated by Daniel Abrego, a member of the Languages Department of the Church of God of Prophecy, and who later worked closely with Rivera independently of the denomination. Abrego's sworn statement, and signature as the translator, plus the signature of the testifying notary public, is just as we have seen it, adding an official impression to the document from the archbishopric of Madrid-Alcala previously referred to, and reproduced on page 27 of *Alberto*. See Picture 21.

The following is Rivera's reply to the interviewer (notarised and translated): "To be exact: the work that I have been carrying on in that city (Tarrasa) for the space of six months and that is now in a state of development, consists of, and has as its purpose, the creation of an interconfessional commission whose end will be an authentic ecumenism in the fullest sense of the word, that is, beyond the simple theological dialogue if at all possible by means of living together of..."

Whatever that may mean, Rivera next gives the reporter a copy of Vatican II's *Decree on Ecumenism*, Chapter 11, Paragraph 12, from which is reproduced a lengthy quotation. Rivera is then asked about the methods used in such work. He replies:

"In regard to the way of procedure in this work, the same guidelines of the Council's Decree are followed. The people of different religious persuasions are invited to meet with the purpose of creating a social environment by means of conversations and the exercise of Christian piety so that we may directly arrive at the purposed goal in the educational and social-economic fields."

With the advantage of the research now completed, some comparison of the purpose declared to the paper and what was unexpectedly achieved among the unrelated religious groups is worthwhile. Rivera brought together Samuel Vila's Evangelical ministries, the poor parish of San Lorenzo and the school of *Juan XXIII*. What they had in common wasn't a wish for ecumenical unity – certainly not in Spain in 1967. What they had to talk about, the notes they were able to usefully compare, related to how they had all been duped by Rivera.

Co-operation in this sense continues. A necessary enquiry made in 1990 by this author to the office of the archbishop of Canterbury led to Arturo Sanchez, a bishop of Madrid, and on to John H. Dixon, Jr, a "reverend" of the Episcopal Church (USA) working under the authority of the bishop. A reply from Mr Dixon on behalf of the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church (Madrid) brought a statement translated by Carlos Lopez Lozano, an ordained presbyter. The statement in Spanish was from David Muniesa, a Baptist pastor. Muniesa is the author of the biography of Samuel Vila, *Samuel Vila: Una Fe Contra un Imperio*. He writes (15th May 1991): "...Rivera left a very bad impression that is still remembered twenty-four years later in 1991, in both the school Juan XXIII and in the Parish of San Lorenzo..."¹⁰⁵

Such co-operation between the "different religious persuasions" resulting from Rivera's "six months" in Tarrasa, was quite a different co-operation from the ecumenism described to the newspaper. Unlike co-operation in ecumenism or with any false doctrine, here we had urgent and vital co-operation in matters of public responsibility calling for common sense. It is straight thinking which brings a criminal to book. Even by 1967, such an approach to the problem of Rivera was already long overdue. Still many more innocent people, Christian and otherwise, would yet suffer as the result of his wiles.

The *El Diario* article concludes with a description of Rivera as a "Worker Priest": "Our countryman also has functioned as Worker Priest among peasants in Southern Costa Rica at the banana plantation owned by United Fruit Company... In reality, the Workers Priesthood is a definite answer to the demands of society, and these demands must be considered as urgent. The Reverend Father Rivera will soon return to the United States. He asked us to say goodbye to his friends in Las Palmas on his behalf... His last words were of gratitude towards *El Diario de Las Palmas* wishing it the greatest success in serving the community as a daily newspaper. He also expressed his appreciation to all those friends of his for their warm welcome."

Apart from seeing the pastor, Vincent Phillips, no evidence has been found that Rivera met with those who supported him, encouraged him and sent him on his way to the seminary in Costa Rica. The other

exception was the one from whom he might indeed have expected the warm welcome, and whom he did visit in 1967. We have noted previously that it was Clara Montalban de Perez who had observed his gift for reciting poetry. She had run the Christmas programme at the church and greatly appreciated his contribution to that event.

Clara Montalban's Perspective on Rivera in Las Palmas, 1967

When Clara had gone to Rivera's home in the 1950s, she would usually be received at the door by one of Alberto's sisters. Clara, along with Lola Medina, had particularly visited one of Alberto's sisters or stepsisters. The two visitors found the sisters very amiable, and witnessed to them, but no "decision" resulted. As for Alberto's own supposed "conversion," Clara said she was there when Alberto witnessed to this, and she perceived a desire to serve the Lord. We have considered already the impression given by Alberto to Clara back in the 1950s, and how this was very different from the one given to Adrian, her husband. It is against this background that we can set the return of Rivera, now dressed as a member of the Roman Catholic Escolapian Order.

Clara told me she believed Alberto called on them in 1967 because he really liked them. His arrival was unexpected. He came with a young woman of about seventeen or eighteen, introduced as his niece. To Clara, her manner of speaking unmistakably established her as a native of Grand Canary. Rivera himself was wearing a Roman collar, and he had a briefcase.

In the briefcase, Clara told me, Alberto had various plans and drawings. These were for buildings. A religious college was in view. Clara said he was collecting money for the college, and when I asked if Rivera asked them for money, the answer was "yes." This conversation had taken place downstairs. It was necessary to first ask in the store which belongs to Adrian and Clara. Clara had come down to Rivera after the call from the lady serving in the store.

In due time Adrian joined Clara and Alberto. Adrian asked Alberto how he could possibly have left the Christian Church and gone back to Rome. All Adrian heard was the same rudeness he knew in times past. There was no answer to Adrian's question. Rivera simply started to swear. Adrian told me that he tried to talk seriously to him. But after a while he told him: "This house is closed to you."

In Clara's own words (translated), she wrote: "When he (Rivera) was reprimanded by Adrian because of such a behaviour, insisting on a proper apology, what Alberto did was to release a great torrent of infamies and derogatory comments against Dr Samuel Vila and all the Spanish evangelical leaders. He was presenting an abject moral picture of them. As we couldn't make him see reason, we told him that in those circumstances we were not willing to receive him at home again. He hasn't come around since."¹⁰⁶

Once again Rivera appears to have deliberately created a different impression to Clara and to Adrian, just like the past. When he talked to Clara downstairs he had appeared very friendly. Did he just visit them to collect money? Clara isn't quite sure. What must have seemed certain to Clara was that Alberto had changed.

What is surely clear in all the evidence, admittedly with hindsight so far as all the main characters in the saga are concerned, is that Rivera certainly *hadn't* changed. As for those in the Las Palmas church who knew the other side of the young Alberto – not the Jesuit-secret-agent side, but the worst side of a complex character – would they not also know that Alberto hadn't changed at all? Jesuit or not, had the young Alberto not fooled them all?

Chapter 7

RIVERA GOES TO LONDON: HE MEETS AVRO MANHATTAN AND HIS SISTER MARIA

After the Canary Islands, we know that Alberto went to London. In this particular detail we have no dispute with *Double-Cross*, which has him headed in the same direction. The Canary Islands are some 800 miles south west of Spain, and whether he travelled to London via Madrid, we do not know.

Following the events as Chick presents them, we see Rivera taking off from Madrid on the last page of *Alberto*. Early in *Alberto Part Two, Double-Cross*, we see him arriving at Heathrow Airport, London. Whereas in previous references, we have evidence that even a year-date can be incorrect, here the date and time are stated precisely: 5.30 a.m. on 18th September 1967.

We read how Rivera marvelled that God had put his passport, his I.D. card and the certificate from the archbishopric of Madrid-Alcala in his hand in order to leave Spain. We are told emphatically this was his *only* chance to escape. He had a one-way ticket to Washington, D.C.

Rivera was “nearly broke.”¹⁰⁷ We are not told of any emergency. However, we find him making an “emergency” phone call to his younger sister, Maria. She was in England. When Rivera got through to Maria, presented by Chick as a cloistered nun in a London convent, she was crying. Rivera missed his flight to the United States. “Only God knew the terrible danger Maria was in and how close she was to death. He was directing me to London.”¹⁰⁸

Arriving in London, Rivera started telephoning Protestant churches from a small room in a YMCA. A little Anabaptist church came to his help and they drove him to the convent where Maria was. Miraculously saved and healed in the iron lung in the asylum in Barcelona, we find Rivera in London still dressed in a Roman collar. Such is the picture book account. In real life, ten years later he was still to be found in a round collar, on the occasion of his ordination in a Baptist church. But in 1967, given that the picture-book-Alberto is supposedly a new convert, and also the extraordinary life-saving mission ahead in the cloistered convent, this accounts reasonably well for his continuing in priest’s attire.

Greeted at the convent as “Father Rivera,” he is informed of how Maria had talked many times of what a faithful priest he was. But Rivera is very wary: “Just the way the Mother Superior talked made me suspicious... I wondered if she already knew I had left the Roman Catholic institution.”¹⁰⁹ The mother superior would not allow him to see Maria. He refuses to leave and his suspicions grow: “I knew then the Vatican had notified the Archdiocese in London...”¹¹⁰

The police are called and we see the mother superior telling the officers: “This is the man pretending to be a priest.”¹¹¹

We are shown how, mercifully for the hero, he has his certificate from the archbishopric of Madrid-Alcala and his I.D. card. Also, we are told, one of the policemen is a Bible-believing Christian. Rivera is able to get to Maria’s “cell.” We see the bloody picture. Rivera describes the scene: “I saw her blood-soaked dress. It was dried and stiff. It was from the bleeding ulcers on her back caused by the beatings of flagellation.”¹¹²

Two More Parts in Korean – Now Eight *Alberto* Picture Books

The juggling of stories or even history-book accounts from Spain or Central and South America into the London Metropolitan Police area may well appear hideous to all but the minority of readers. Such examples of picture-book nonsense are the unfortunate reason why some, who are otherwise discerning and thinking ministers, regard the picture books as undeserving of critical attention, not even worth warning about. I can understand this view, but such men do not know the influence of these picture

books. It is easy to greatly under-estimate the effectiveness of the *Alberto* message. Staying with the same grossly hideous and inaccurate picture (a description admitted to this author by Maria during a conversation with her), many are just not prepared to overlook what they see as author Jack Chick's foolish acceptance of Rivera's bedside observations: "I thought she was dead. I was dizzy and almost vomited from the smell of rotting flesh... Then I saw her move."¹¹³

Such intellectual critics who dismiss the picture books as laughable comics need to realise that a picture book presentation is principally for those who do not read other books, and not for those who will get their information from Loraine Boettner, Alexander Hislop, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and suchlike. Those who would only ridicule the Chick books fail to understand that, to the picture book reader, an inconsistency between the idea of the smell of dead flesh and someone who is not quite dead is but an academic matter. The more significant fact is that millions of these books are sold. They are not read for fun. They are called comics by most people, but they are anything but comic. The books include inaccurate messages of a very dangerous kind, and the messages are understood and believed. Christians who dismiss them as comic books, not worthy of a warning blast, ignore the dreadful distortions, both of history and of Roman Catholicism, that they contain. Also, they need to understand the credibility that millions of these books give to Rivera as an international "Christian" conference speaker.

After ten pages of convent invention and drama, Jack Chick's story of the rescue of Maria is concluded. We see Rivera carrying his sister away, and Chick writes: "Maria Rivera recovered and... disappeared... Dr Rivera believes she is either dead or suffering in another convent."¹¹⁴

In *Alberto* Part Eight, published in Korea in the Korean language, in 1990, Alberto Rivera writes of his sister. I met with a Korean pastor, Lee, in Los Angeles, who gave me a literal translation of the seven lines printed alongside the picture of a girl represented as Maria:

"Maria was saved from the Catholic system and became the people of Jesus. She loves Jesus the Lord. She helped the ministry of Alberto. She was martyred (killed) by the Roman Catholic and now she is in heaven in the bosom of Jesus."¹¹⁵

Like much else in the Korean picture book, this statement contains a vital lie. Maria was in fact alive. This author met Maria in 1991. It was learned that she *was* in a convent, that she *was* very unhappy there, and that Rivera *did* visit her in London. Nevertheless, the point is that she is alive.

Rivera claims knowledge of his sister's experiences of convent life. In a tape he made in 1984, and which I purchased from his "ministry" around that time, Rivera tells us of the people he hears who say they were assaulted. His experience, he tells us, is based upon what he has heard when receiving confessions, and upon what he has learned from his sister:

"I have young people coming to say 'I was assaulted by my priest. He was a homosexual.' And these are by the hundreds and thousands, and I have young girls tell me at confessional, she was raped. And after the confession took over, and the priests took her to a home, but I have the confessions of nuns, novitiates, fifteens, sixteens, in schools and the novitiates and convents that will come completely confused and destroyed from the soul, to their spirit, to their mind, not knowing what to do, what to confess and what not to confess, even with all the knowledge of the rules of the convents, they were confused, they were destroyed. They don't know whether they cry or whether they die, or whether they want to kill themselves. I have my own sister, not only abused and assault but more than two times conceiving childrens in the convent where she was a nun on the hands of priests, and killing the babies, forced to abortion while they fight against abortion in the street. This is the... reacting. People have enough reasons to leave Roman Catholicism."¹¹⁶

We Need to Beware the Half-Truth from Wherever It May Come

We recognise half-truth in the *Alberto* London convent story. As ever, there is much falsehood, and such has been well evidenced to me. Yet I learned an important lesson that made my conversations with Alberto's brother and sisters worthwhile. Not everything that had been previously written to expose Rivera was correct. I avoided the pitfall by going to different and better sources for the

information.

Words and accuracy are important. I have written that it was learned from Maria, (1) that she was in a convent, and (2) that Rivera did visit her in London. Maria's privacy was respected. We talked and no questions were asked. I have not written that Maria was a nun in a convent. I didn't learn that. I learned that she was *in a convent*, and in London. I have not written that Rivera visited her in the convent. Perhaps he did. I was not told. What I learned is that Rivera visited his sister *in London*.

Another lesson may, perhaps, be learned. Endeavouring to get to the bottom of such an exceptionally hideous and scandalous story, others have investigated and related that Maria was a maid in a London home in 1967. The *Christianity Today* article refers to Rivera's contact in London and states: "Actually, the person he (Alberto) contacted was not an Anabaptist, but Delmar Spurling of the Church of God of Prophecy. Spurling said in an interview that Rivera did not rescue his sister, because she wasn't a nun but rather a maid working in a private London home."¹¹⁷

It is clear I have not written that Maria was *not* a maid in London in 1967. I have written that she *was* in a convent in 1967. During a whole year, it is possible to do, and to be, many things. Rivera's life in 1967 is proof enough of that! Often we do not have an either-or situation. Rivera was an Evangelical in 1967! He was a Roman Catholic priest in 1967! As we shall see in the next section, still in 1967, he was an Evangelical once again.

Rivera and Chick seem to appreciate these matters. The picture books are more carefully written than some intellects would credit. No research can be complete. We can make mistakes. Yet there is no need to walk into the trap by not thinking straight, or by not following the logical ways the world's policemen and detectives understand so well. The Christian, like the alert policeman, is commanded to be a watchman. We are to watch out for those false brethren who dishonour Christ and spoil His witness to the world (Philippians 3:17-20).

I reflect that were I to write the story of my own life's movements over the past forty years, it would be difficult, perhaps like covering Rivera's. With him there is an advantage. Alberto has left a trail. As we saw in Tarrasa, because of his misdeeds he is remembered. Assuredly, Rivera is one not forgotten wherever he goes. Yet even with all the information, there is a danger. The danger is to misread it and to misuse it. We are to warn. But we are to do so on the basis of properly researched facts which are logically applied – nothing more.

We look briefly in the next section at the story of Rivera in London.

Alberto Rivera in London – He Finds Avro Manhattan

Rivera met up with an American Pentecostal denomination when he was in London. It appears that the people from the Church of God of Prophecy were a help to him. However, any stranger arriving in London, and having the abilities we see evidenced in Rivera, is likely to make many contacts from various walks of life. "Alberto was in London during the time mentioned in the comic (September 1967), but was staying at a Catholic monastery rather than the Y.M.C.A. described in *Double-Cross*," according to Gary Metz. "Rev Delmar Spurling (Church of God of Prophecy) picked him up at the monastery."¹¹⁸

One of the people Rivera went to see in London was Avro Manhattan, the author of many books about the workings of the Vatican and Roman Catholic politics. Like Avro Manhattan, I choose my words carefully. Mr Manhattan died whilst this book was being written. We had corresponded at various times. Evidently an authority on Roman Catholic intrigue, and himself the product of a Jesuit education, it had been my intention to visit him at his home in the North of England when this manuscript was complete.

I did receive a useful letter from Avro Manhattan, dated 10 May 1990. He wrote of "Alberto," and somewhat carefully he distinguished "Dr Rivera" whom he had met. My reason for delaying a meeting with him was that I considered it prudent, before meeting such a man, to arrange the evidence

most carefully when I had carried my enquiries to a more advanced stage. Had Rivera duped Manhattan, as he had so many before him? Had he done so, this would be yet another milestone for Rivera. Manhattan seems to have been a man among men, humanly speaking, not easily duped. To introduce Avro Manhattan more fully, we quote extensively from an obituary of him:

“Internationally respected author... A world authority on politics in religion, he wrote almost 60 books in a career spanning 40 years and has been described as the greatest Vatican historian.

“His books have been translated into dozens of languages including Chinese, Russian, and, most recently, Korean.

“Friends and admirers describe the Baron as a one-off, a real character and a wonderful conversationalist as well as a lively academic.

“His friends included Pablo Picasso, who the Baron met in Paris, H.G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw and scientist Marie Stopes.

“Baron Avro first came to South Shields in 1963 shortly after he met his wife Anne... The couple stayed mainly in South Shields until his death on Monday evening although they also had homes in Kensington (London) and Spain...

“Born in Italy, his mother was American and his father Swiss/Dutch while his childhood was spent in Brazil.

“His aristocratic roots meant he was a Knight of the House of Savoy as well as a Knights Templar and a Knight of the Order of Mercedes. After the war he was also made a Knight of Malta.

“Still young, he moved to Europe and the United States. His constant travelling as a young man led him to remark that he never had a place he could call his own.

“His education started at school in Switzerland, he then attended the Sorbonne in Paris and finally the London School of Economics. He studied philosophy, social science and religion.

“He wrote his first book in the run up to the Second World War. While a foreign student in Italy he was called up for Italian national service. He refused to swear allegiance to the country and was jailed...

“During the war Baron Avro operated a radio station called Radio Freedom which broadcast to occupied Europe. For this he was made a Knight of Malta.

“The Baron also wrote political commentaries for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and cooperated with H.G. Wells in helping to draft and distribute a new bill of human rights, which was intended to be the basis of a new world community.

“Despite his keen political interest and knowledge he never belonged to a political party, always maintaining he was completely liberal and open minded.

“His 1970s book, *Religious Terror in Ireland* was dedicated ‘To Ireland and to all Irish men and women throughout the world, trusting that the tragedies of the past and the calamities of the present, no less than the hopes of the future, may soon bind them together in brotherly love.’

“*The Vatican in World Politics*, first published in 1949, ran to more than 50 editions and is one of the world best-sellers.

“One of his most recent books, *Vietnam – why did we go?* published in 1984 is now being filmed in the United States.

“*The Dawn of Man* (1986) was a major triumph which was 40 years in the writing and was well received, charting the evolution of man. Seven of his books still remain in print in America.

“As well as lecturing, writing short stories, essays, articles, novels, poems and plays, Baron Avro was an accomplished artist and described painting as ‘my second profession.’

“He exhibited in London as well as South Shields. For a while he lived with Picasso in Paris. The great artist even gave Baron Avro some of his drawings which were unfortunately later stolen...

“His friendship with George Bernard Shaw came about after the two men were both house guests of a Russian prince in a Swiss Villa before the Second World War.

“The two became friends despite Shaw losing his temper with Baron Avro after he beat him at bowls.”¹¹⁹

After Chick started publishing Rivera, Chick became Manhattan’s publisher. In terms of his

promotion and publicity, the Manhattan books are used to support the *Alberto* message. A 13" by 8" advertisement for books in *Battle Cry* includes pictures of *The Vatican Billions*, *Vietnam – Why Did We Go?* and *The Vatican Moscow Washington Alliance*, all by Avro Manhattan. The message of the advertisement was headed in large bold letters: “Alberto... Is he telling the Truth?” It is a good question! The advertisement was explicit in its purpose, which was to address Alberto’s doubters, “those who need more proof after reading the *Alberto* series.”¹²⁰

Chick Says: Avro Manhattan is on the Vatican “*Index of Forbidden Books*”

Not only do we read a great deal about Rivera in the “Publisher’s Note” to be found in the Chick edition of Manhattan’s book, *The Vatican Moscow Washington Alliance*, but there is a further statement: “The works of Avro Manhattan appear on the Index of forbidden books in the Vatican.”¹²¹

The pope of Rome, Leo XIII, published the last Index through the brief, *Romani Pontificis* in 1900. According to the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967):

“The Index compiled by Leo XIII underwent several later revisions, the latest being in 1948. It gradually became the policy of the Church to restrict the number of books explicitly condemned and to depend on the general principles regarding the prohibition of books to guide the faithful in the matter.”¹²²

The general secretary of the *Catholic Truth Society* of London (publishers to the “Holy See”) put it this way:

“There certainly used to be an Index of prohibited books maintained by the Vatican, but the last edition appeared in 1948. In 1966 the Head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (the lineal descendant of the Roman Inquisition and Holy Office) declared that there would be no more editions of the Index... as I understood it, the principle was basically to condemn theological books which were likely to damage the theological tradition of the faith... English Catholics would certainly now regard it as a curiosity rather than anything else.”¹²³

On the basis that the last “*Index of Forbidden Books*” was published some 45 years ago, and furthermore that every Avro Manhattan book known to me was written since the date of the last edition of the Index, it seems unlikely to be true that “the works of Avro Manhattan” were included in the Index. Nonetheless, Jack Chick’s statement could only be conclusively disproved by obtaining either a copy of the 1948 Index, or by establishing that Avro Manhattan had not published by 1949.

However, what can be noted as significant are the words of the general secretary: “I fear that I have never seen a copy of the Index myself...”¹²⁴

As Protestants and Evangelicals, we do well to note that even this executive officer of the main fount of Roman Catholic information in Britain is prepared to say that he hasn’t seen the Index. How, therefore, can the question of an Index have any significance or relevance? In order for any list of banned books to be of any effect, a list first has to be found. Second, the list has to be made known. Otherwise, how would Catholics be warned and know they ought not to purchase them?

Let us not become carried away with the idea that an “*Index of Forbidden Books*” exists beyond 1948, though the ramblings of Rivera and Chick might encourage such thinking. Yet in a circular letter of 10 September 1980, Chick even goes so far as to write of his *Alberto* book: “The Vatican has put it on the forbidden list and in Spain Catholics have been alerted never to read it when it goes into Spanish.”

It is true that, basically, Rome doesn’t change. Only her strategy changes. Yet the fact of the last published Index in 1948 can hardly be disputed. To dispute the fact, as Chick and Rivera well might, would be as stupid as their claim that in 1980 priests were “sweeping through Spain and elsewhere, destroying all evidence”¹²⁵ that Rivera was ever a Jesuit. When it comes to the printed word, it can neither be invented when it doesn’t exist, nor can the evidence of it be totally removed once the presses have rolled and the material distributed and sold.

Incredibly, those who stand by the Rivera message are evidently persuaded that hundreds of

thousands of copies of the *Catholic Directory*, and other publications in which priests' names can always be found, have simply been removed by Rome to conceal the true identity of one man, Alberto Rivera Romero.

We now return to Rivera and Avro Manhattan's contact with him. Do we find here yet another example of Rivera's success in duping an experienced man?

We look at Manhattan's dialogues on the matter of Rivera, both with me and with other enquirers. My surprise was that a man who understood Rome could evidence no real doubts about Rivera. He met Rivera. Chick was his publisher. Avro Manhattan wrote regularly for *Battle Cry*, and doubtless received copies of the paper. Rivera has been a regular subject in *Battle Cry* for a decade. Was there nothing to make Avro Manhattan suspicious that Rivera was not a genuine ex-Jesuit priest? A number did try to find out, and we look now at this dialogue with Manhattan.

Avro Manhattan on Alberto Rivera

Avro Manhattan attended a Jesuit school.¹²⁶ Alberto Rivera did not. Assuredly Avro Manhattan knew something about the Jesuits. It seemed likely that Alberto Rivera knew little, at least apart from what he had read in books. It was sensible to write to Avro Manhattan. The following is his reply to my letter:

"Dear Mr Roy Livesey: Just received your letter 7 May 1990. Thank you. I must confess I am baffled about the controversy concerning the existence and reality of Alberto etc. Frankly I know nothing about the fiction, myth or reality of such a personage. I am aware of course of the controversy related to his fictional or real existence. But I know nothing concerning his real or fictional personality. What I know however is the following. Some twenty or so years ago, I dealt with one Dr Rivera, who at this particular time was preoccupied with a sister who was a nun, or who wished to leave the convent where at the time she was. I never met her personally, but Dr Rivera was very preoccupied with her welfare and appeared to be anxious for her to leave the place. I never met her but it was obvious that Dr Rivera was eager to help her etc. etc. I never knew what happened, whether the lady left the place, etc. I had one or two phone calls with Dr Rivera at this time, after which I was informed that Dr Rivera, having settled the problem of his sister, reached the U.S.A., and I lost contact with him. These are the facts, as far as my relationship with him is concerned. Whether you should go ahead with your plans of course is for you to decide. Apart from the above I know nothing else. So it is for you to decide. I am sorry I cannot be of more help or counsel. May I, however, counsel you to use prudence, prior to taking steps which could complicate matters, instead of facilitate the issue. Let me know how the problem is solved. Meanwhile I trust you will find a solution to the whole affair, or rather dilemma. I am reading your book with great interest. Thank you and all the best. Apologies for bad typing. God's blessing – Avro Manhattan."¹²⁷

Avro Manhattan's letter is included at length because clearly we have in Manhattan one whose evidence (at least if it were able to stand against any other) could carry weight in Rivera's favour. We have the testimony of Maria that she was in a convent in London. We also have the testimony of Manhattan that he was there in London with Rivera when he said he was looking for her.

An earlier letter (1983) from Avro Manhattan on the subject is of interest. It was written to Bartholomew Brewer and the full text of the first page is as follows:

"Dear Dr Brewer:

"I am writing to you after having had a talk with Mr Bob Franklin today... also, having had a talk with Dr Bob Jones, Jr. This in connection with the problem of Mr Chick and his comics, Alberto, etc. Until I came here, quite frankly, I had no idea what the problem was. I read your letters and the press cuttings which you sent me, but again, I could not comprehend what it was all about. Now it is clear.

"I am under the impression that there is some misunderstanding somewhere re: the Alberto alias Dr Rivera personality.

"I am prefacing this by saying that I know nothing whatsoever about the background or personality of

Dr Rivera. However, I must declare that after meeting him my impression was that he was an honest person.

“About ten or twelve years ago he came to see me in London, having read many of my books. During our conversation, he told me that the purpose of his visit to England was to take home his sister who was in a convent, being very concerned about her health. Between other things he also told me that he was a former Catholic priest, and he mentioned some section of the Roman Catholic church – I cannot remember which. I should like to point out all this because what I have just related is factual, concrete and true and I would like to be put on record. Now, whether Dr Rivera told me the truth or not is another matter, but I believe he did.

“At that time he did not seem to have any purpose whatsoever, since I believe he had not met Mr Chick then. Concerning the personality of Dr Rivera in the comic, this is not in my province. However, I am writing this to clarify a point which seems to have become a matter of contention, accusations and counter accusations, which have engendered disputes, which are harmful to a united Protestant front. Therefore, I would like to ask you to clarify the issues – perhaps with Dr Rivera himself or Mr Chick.

“As for myself, as I mentioned above, I know nothing of the whole affair, but, I must bear witness to the fact that the latter disclosed to me many years ago that he was an ex-Roman Catholic priest, that he had a sister in a convent whom he took out... as per above.

“At the same time I declare my total ignorance as to past or present operations. My only hope in writing this is to try and clear a potential misunderstanding on the part of all interested parties.

“I was in California only for a few days. Then I went to Utah for a while, then I came here to Bob Jones University. Dr Bob Jones III was very surprised after I told him as per above. I am glad I came and trust this information may clear up a possible misunderstanding. I have also discussed the case of King James Version and my impression was that there should be give and take on this issue.”¹²⁸

This was written some seven years before the letter to me. We don't include it in order to highlight small differences between the two letters. Such differences can be considered quite normal when writing spontaneously from memory, and without the benefit of notes. The letter is included because it provides evidence in Rivera's favour. Furthermore, if what is testified by Avro Manhattan is right (a qualification that attaches to all such kind of evidence), still further weight is lent to the plea extended throughout this book: as many sources of evidence as possible have to be found and compared. Since we are dealing with what, on the face of it, appears to be the most hideous example in the whole so-called comic book – the idea of a nun-snatch, a nun lying in her own dried blood, London 1967 – it is still appropriate to examine all the available evidence before reaching conclusions.

Upon reading Avro Manhattan's letters, this author was surprised. In a measure I remain nonplussed. However, the letters were written carefully and they must be read carefully. Quite properly, Mr Manhattan is wishing there to be no confusion between “Alberto,” about whom he knew nothing, on the one hand, and “Dr Rivera,” the man he met, on the other. Straight thinking, an exercise in which he, more than most, is quite capable, required that such be made clear. He valuably counselled prudence, and such also is our purpose here. The ten picture pages of Rivera in the convent, and our sources which in a measure support what is printed there, serve as an example to remind of the misstatements of some who have unfairly reviewed the convent story.

In the Christian life there is great danger in departing one fraction from the truth revealed by the Word of God. In like manner, there is danger in exaggerating or departing at all from the facts, at least as they are understood. The danger usually results from nothing more than a failure to think straight. There can be illogicality, and sometimes a biased enthusiasm on top of that.

We trust our guidelines will help readers when they are called upon to answer for themselves *why* the Rivera story is a fraud. We trust they will be clear in their own minds and be able to defend what they say. As with sticking to Bible truth, readers may be encouraged to learn that it can soon be discovered that keeping to the known facts is quite sufficient.

Alberto and His Sister in the London Convent – a Need for Right Thinking

It cannot be said that Rivera did not help his sister to get away from a London convent. Yet some have said he wasn't in London. Others have said Alberto didn't have a sister named Maria. Avro Manhattan's letter reminds of the controversy even over Alberto's "fictional or real existence." Such is the progression of nonsense once right thinking is abandoned.

The eventual consequences of wrongly jumping to conclusions that Rivera was not in London, or that he did not have a sister in a convent in that city, is well evidenced in an influential Canadian Christian magazine, *The Protestant Challenge*, with a good distribution, published in January 1991. The natural way of a brother who takes the opposite viewpoint on the subject of Rivera, and who does happen to believe what is written by Chick, is to deal with such attacks upon Rivera's story as he hears. Indeed, what more should he reasonably do? If the attack he hears is that Rivera was not in London, and he checks and finds out that he was, then what is he to do? He hears another attack that he didn't have a sister there. He checks and finds that he did. He may, like me, find that she was in a convent. Is he not entitled to be unmoved from his position that Rivera's testimony is sound?

This situation of others can result from the careless thinking, and any tendency to exaggeration, on the part of we who know perfectly well from other evidence what a fraud Rivera is. An even more serious result of this wrong thinking arises when we see the consequences reflected in magazines such as *The Protestant Challenge*, the magazine of the Canadian Protestant League. Here we emphasise that we refer not to the wrong thinking of the respected author of a mistaken article. We refer to those who may have unthinkingly advanced inaccurate information which the article has replied to. To give the example on this point, and, once again, to be fair and include the contribution of Jonas Shepherd of the Canadian Protestant League, one of Rivera's most consistent supporters, we reproduce the article, which appeared in 1991, in full:

"Because of constant rumors spreading rapidly about the character of Mr Alberto Rivera, whom it was claimed was never a priest, was never in London, England, never acted for a bishop, whose sister was never a nun; who has again and again been guilty of violation of trust, misrepresentation, theft and child abuse – even the murder of an infant; we felt strongly we should go to the centre of such repeated charges – Los Angeles.

"A brother, from Portage La Prairie, paid for most of the expense of the plane fare; Jack Chick, the publisher, met us at Ontario (California) airport, arranged for the accommodation in a motel and paid for three nights of the stay; and another group took care of most of the expenses of our stay in that area. Hence the League was not burdened by the added expense.

"While there we covered almost every area of the attacks, meeting friend and foe alike. The result of our search, left us with the confidence that no specified charge could even be laid against Rivera, that he was, indeed, a man of integrity beyond doubt. The truth of him and his sister being in London, England, in 1964 is established by Michael Penfold, manager of Book Distributors (Oxford, England) and Avro Manhattan, beyond doubt!

"I know that we can be deceived, but the Los Angeles sojourn (by no means a holiday) certainly confirmed our wisdom in circulating the Alberto series of personal testimony. We will continue to do so!" (reproduced exactly as the original).¹²⁹

Apart from just promoting Chick's *Alberto* series, the Canadian Protestant League actively support Rivera's own ministry. The following appeal appeared in the March-April 1992 issue:

"Needed: Commitment to a Ministry:

"The A.I.C. (International Christian Ministries) seeks a concerned evangelical Christian 'not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ,' who will be prepared to establish an office in Canada of the Los Angeles-based Headquarters, directed by Dr Alberto R. Rivera.

"This arises out of a tremendous need and constitutes a genuine opportunity for Christian service on the part of anyone particularly interested in winning Roman Catholics to Christ. We will be glad to

forward any communications to Brother Rivera from 600 Woodview Road, Burlington, Ontario L7N 3A3.

“Better still, write directly to the mission: A.I.C. International Christian Ministries, Box 1513, Upland, California 91786 or telephone them (714) 357-3588 or 3589.”¹³⁰

Whilst sympathising with author Jonas Shepherd for the reasons already given, we hope this book will eventually be helpful to him. Jonas Shepherd is the author of *The Babington Plot*, a well-reviewed book dealing with Jesuit intrigue in Elizabethan England. To those Christian intellectuals who dismiss as irrelevant the need to warn believers of what they call “comic book nonsense,” we would invite their attention to this further example. Often things are not obvious to those who don’t see, no matter what the extent of their Christian wisdom in other directions. In Jonas Shepherd we by no means appear to have an example of one who is typically blind to such matters.

Those who are happy for the picture books to circulate without challenge, need to understand also that the *Alberto* picture book account of history, of Roman Catholicism, and of Rivera himself, is being distilled from the books. We see examples of the Rivera information distributed in a new form that even the “intellectual” Christian is himself, unknowingly, and after all, digesting.

These picture books are of no value in reaching any Roman Catholics who recognise the major deceptions found within them. In like manner, little is to be gained by seeking to expose the picture books on ground where we can be justifiably attacked. Yet emphatically, we encourage Christians in their right thinking. We are to encourage the prayerful warning against all so-called Christian ministry which dishonours the Lord.

Chapter 8

STOLEN CAR AND CREDIT CARD – FROM FLORIDA TO SEATTLE

Alberto stayed with Church of God of Prophecy members in London for about a month in 1967. Charles Hawkins was with that church from the United States, and was spending three years in England. During this time he met Rivera. In a telephone conversation in 1990, Charles told us Alberto definitely was not who he claimed to be.¹³¹ After being with Rivera in England, Charles Hawkins was with him in the United States. Rivera arrived there in October 1967. Charles recalls: “He just gets money in any way that he can get it.”¹³²

When Rivera was with the Church of God of Prophecy in the United States, the letter from *Colegio Juan XXIII Las Arenas* became useful to him. Rivera started collecting money, supposedly for that school in Tarrasa, Spain. Charles Hawkins speaks of this, and of Rivera’s doctor’s degree: “If he had one, it was probably mail order, and it was the man in the Languages Department who became suspicious and started asking for information.”¹³³ Rivera did some translating for them and it was James B. Wright, World Languages Secretary, who wrote to the College.¹³⁴

Daniel Abrego was a translator in the Languages Department while Rivera was working there. Rivera told him he was converted in England. Abrego became friendly with Rivera and helped him even after Rivera left the Church of God of Prophecy. He translated into English, with a certificate, documents such as the one from the archbishopric of Madrid-Alcala (Picture 21), and the report of Rivera’s interview with *El Diario* in Las Palmas. Abrego allegedly said at a later date that Rivera didn’t know Latin.¹³⁵ This is a matter which has seemed very significant to some who question Rivera’s credentials.

By the time Charles Hawkins and others had got the full measure of their new colleague, no doubt Rivera had profited well. Hawkins described his own hesitation when Rivera asked to borrow his new car: “I remember one time... I had just bought a new car, a Jaguar, imported from England... He finally did go. He was longer than he was supposed to be, but he brought back the car.”¹³⁶ We are not to guess at the opportunities for an experienced con-artist at the wheel of a new Jaguar in the United States. The possibilities were obviously very considerable. Clearly Hawkins was one who knew and worked with Rivera in Tennessee, and his words to describe him are therefore relevant: “He is a con-artist. That’s all he is.”¹³⁷ Indeed he was soon to be dressed as a priest once again, and he recalls that when Rivera left he “had a woman with him, also a child.”¹³⁸ We know that he left in March 1968. Yet as has happened before, his physical departure doesn’t mean the end of the memory, nor indeed the end of the work. The work and trouble caused is evidenced by the correspondence we have from the Church of God of Prophecy during June 1968.

Beginning 5th June 1968, we have a copy of Charles Hawkins’ letter to the U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service in Atlanta, Georgia. We have noted previously that Rivera was believed to be married to Lydia years before. However, this letter tells us that a wedding was scheduled with Carmen Lydia Torres: “When Miss Torres did not turn up for the wedding Mr Rivera appeared to be very upset and went into isolation for a week or two during which time he grew a beard. It is possible that he is still wearing a beard.”¹³⁹ Our own efforts to find Carmen Lydia Torres are continuing, and we have the statement from Rivera’s supervisor in the Methodist Church in the 1950s in Costa Rica that Rivera had already married Lydia in that country.

However, why was such information of interest to the Department of Justice? Rivera had refused to leave a forwarding address when he left Chattanooga, Tennessee on 25th May, dressed as a priest. A few days later, Merchants Bank in Cleveland called the church about a check that had been written on his account after the account had been closed. The check was payable to Delta Airlines, and in Mr

Hawkins' words: "Mr Rivera was surely aware he had closed the account with Merchants Bank before leaving Cleveland."¹⁴⁰

By this date in June 1968, it became clear that Rivera's destination had been San Juan, Puerto Rico. This mainly Roman Catholic land probably accounted for his switch yet again. Had he really been converted to Christ in the "iron barrel"? Now away from his new Pentecostal employer, he was back into Roman Catholic garb, again pretending in the Roman Catholic camp.

According to Hawkins' letter, on 4th June 1968 Rivera and Carmen Lydia were in the Pan American Airlines office in Puerto Rico, endeavouring to change the "San Juan (Puerto Rico) to Cleveland" ticket that the church had organised for Carmen Lydia. They sought a re-issue for "San Juan to New Orleans via Miami." Hawkins knew this because the church was asked by the travel agency to give its consent to the change. It refused.

A letter from Hector Ortiz, state overseer of the Church of God of Prophecy in Puerto Rico, to Charles Hawkins in Cleveland, 18th June 1968, serves to describe Rivera's next move:

"This is to let you know that Alberto Rivera has contacted me and has requested his ticket to Spain. He has informed me that he desires to leave Puerto Rico July 12th via Transatlantica Lines for Spain. Alberto Rivera desired you to know that unless he receives his ticket in about two weeks that he will take legal action against the church. According to his warning, he has already talked to Senator Luis Munoz Marin (former Governor of Puerto Rico; Alberto has married into the Sr Marin family) who says he is ready to help him in taking legal action against the church."¹⁴¹

Back in Tennessee, we find the church writing again to the Immigration and Naturalization Service to update them. In their eyes, if Rivera was not an American citizen, then liaison with this government department would perhaps be thought necessary. The church's position was stated. If it was necessary for them to supply transportation for Rivera back to Spain, they would be pleased if the same officials would see to it "that he departs."¹⁴² Alas, we have no evidence that Rivera ever did return to Spain, nor even leave the United States area of jurisdiction. We recall Rivera had demanded a ticket to Miami. Florida is indeed where we find him next.

Florida to Washington State – with Stolen Automobile and Stolen Credit Card to Facilitate the Long Journey?

Arriving back in the United States, in the south east corner of Florida, one can appreciate Rivera's need of money and a vehicle. We pick up the story with a very descriptive document soon to be issued by BankAmericard and the Barnett First National Bank of De Land, in De Land, Florida (see Picture 22). This notice from the bank includes pictures of Alberto Rivera and of a small infant. The purpose is to invite anyone having knowledge of Rivera's whereabouts to contact the bank.

What then do the bank know about Rivera? They are mistaken in believing he is from Barcelona (Spain), and they are mistaken as to the date and month of his birth. People in banks, just like anyone else, can often only be expected to know what they are told. However, we read that "Alberto Rivera Romero" is 5' 4." His name is correct and his height is about right. We do find Rivera using more and different names through the 1970s in the United States.

The bank is assuredly certain about the matters of a credit card and a vehicle, and the notice begins in confident tone:

"The above (Rivera) is known to have stolen a BankAmericard credit card in the name of Meta G. Averill of Ormond Beach, Florida."

"It is known that he (Rivera) took, without authorization, a 1965 Rambler Station Wagon (License Number: 8-36307) from Mr R. Sands¹⁴³ of Daytona Beach, Florida."

The notice spells out the charge, the name of the judge and the appropriate place of jurisdiction.

We are told that Romero alleges to be a converted priest, and that he stayed in the Averill home while conducting lectures in their church. We know also he was helped and befriended by Mr and Mrs Sands.

The bank also gives the information that Rivera was travelling with Lydia Torres. We recall that Johnny, an infant of a few months, was dead when Lydia and Alberto arrived with him in “Emergency” in El Paso in July 1965. Since that date, Rivera had been “converted,” at least one way or another, and according to his own accounts. Now in Florida in the late 1960s the bank reports another child and sees fit to include the picture of the child in its notice. Luis Marx Romero was stated to be “approximately eight months old.” More than twenty years later, the direction and destination of Luis Marx after Florida remain unknown.

Researchers had the advantage that Mr Sands and his wife were still alive and well in Florida. The Sands’ were able to confirm that Mrs Meta Averill had died. They first met Rivera at a church where Rivera was preaching in Daytona Beach. They had a big home, and so they invited him to come and stay. In a conversation with a researcher, Mrs Sands said Alberto had told them he had sent the baby to Spain. In Mrs Sands’ words, “Maybe it wasn’t his son. He wasn’t married to that woman, so they said.” Asked what kind of work Rivera did for Mr Sands, the reply was: “Very little. He made some deliveries from the paint store using my husband’s station wagon, that he drove to Seattle, Washington.”¹⁴⁴

Some may ask if the bank notice was genuine. I have the actual photocopy, along with the envelope postmarked 28 November 1969, which was mailed to Mrs Sands by the BankAmericard Center at the Barnett First National Bank of De Land.

The notice invites contact with Mr G. Nolan Kenner in De Land, Florida, by anyone knowing the whereabouts of Alberto Rivera Romero. More than twenty years later, a researcher found Mr Kenner. He was no longer with the bank, but now in Kentucky. He had worked on the case with Lt. Frank Nibler of DeLand Police Department. The memories came flooding back to him:

“This man was running with a credit card and using it fraudulently. Yes that’s who he was... We knew he was a bandit in those days but we couldn’t catch him. We chased him all the way out to Washington State as I recall... he had stolen the car... the church... wouldn’t cooperate to get him arrested.”

Mr Kenner, like many others, hit the nail on the head.

As regards the discovery of the vehicle in Seattle, Mrs Sands writes:

“A Mr Johnson, whom by chance we called, a pastor and head of the Assembly churches in Seattle... investigated and learned Alberto was there. He found the car with the motor burned out from lack of oil. He disposed of it for us.”¹⁴⁵

Later Mrs Sands related more of her first call to Mr Johnson. He told her of a conference of pastors. At that conference one of the pastors told Mr Johnson that Rivera had been at his church holding a “Revival.” Accordingly the pastors got Rivera in and asked him about the story they had heard from Florida. Rivera denied it. He told them Mr Sands had given him the automobile, and that the lady had given him her charge card to use. At that, Mrs Sands recalls, there was to be another meeting, and when they went next morning to the place where Rivera was living, he was gone. He had moved out everything he had. Mrs Sands said, “He escaped and they didn’t catch him... I didn’t really believe in Rivera.” She recalled her understanding that he took the credit card from the lady’s mail box, and that she didn’t know the bank had sent it to her, or when it came. She didn’t know anything about it until she started getting the charges.

Seattle, Washington, is some 2,500 miles from Daytona Beach – the way the crow flies – in the opposite corner of the country. We note the warrant pending against Rivera as regards the 1965 Rambler. Obviously this would be worded at least as carefully as a notice put out by a bank. The pending warrants were for the “forgery of a credit card,” and the “unauthorized use of an automobile.”

The original agreement as regards the automobile made between Rivera and Mr Sands is now in my possession. It is relevant, not only because it was signed over the false name of “Roberto Rivera Romano.” The agreement is for the same 1965 Rambler. It calls for Rivera to pay Mr Sands \$972-21 for the vehicle at the rate of \$100 per month from 1st October 1969 until the amount is paid.

The agreement contains the significant condition that Rivera was not to drive the vehicle more than 1,000 miles from Daytona Beach until full payment was made, and it was to be maintained in good

operating condition. Rivera further agreed to relinquish all rights to the vehicle and to return it to the seller if the payments were not made as stated.

Asked what made her feel that Rivera was not a Christian, Mrs Sands replied: “His fruit was bad to be a Christian. We learned as we went along trying to help him. But let the Lord judge him not us.”¹⁴⁶

As for the infant, in 1991 Mr and Mrs Sands were mistakenly given the incorrect name of “Johnny” by a researcher, when the child was, according to the Bank, Luis Marx. In any event, like the real “Johnny” when he died, this infant was also only a few months old. Mrs Sands’ reply remains helpful, even though we know that Juan (Johnny) died some four or five years previously, in 27th July 1965. As to the infant she knew, Mrs Sands replied: “I did not see abuse, but I did see the baby lying in the sun with oil over its skin and once or twice saw him pick it up by the head, or hold it up by placing his hands on either side of the baby’s head, and I asked him not to ever do that in front of me again.”¹⁴⁷

We do not pretend to know if the evidence in Florida is conclusive, or if it would necessarily have all been acceptable, were Rivera to have faced Judge Charles Luke and Judge J. Robert Durden. After all, even Rivera’s proper name did not appear on the agreement, and it appears differently – doubly incorrect – in two places on the same document. Whether Rivera or Mr Sands drafted the document, we do not know. Neither has Mr Sands replied to my letters.

However, what has been presented is testimony from those who knew and counselled Rivera in the late 1960s. We can be grateful for the help that an ageing Mr and Mrs Sands gave. Perhaps it is helpful to invite readers to consider if Mr and Mrs Sands seem like Roman Catholic ‘plants.’ Such would in due course be Rivera’s accusation, according to his usual ‘conspiracy alibi’ method described before.

A Chick Letter “Explains” the Conspiracy

Gary Metz revealed and published some of the information from Florida more than a decade ago, and it was his exposé that caused Jack Chick, on behalf of Chick Publications, to write his well-circulated letter of 25th March 1981.

In his letter, Mr Chick asks his readers why all the information released in 1981 didn’t break seven to fourteen years before. Rome, he wrote, had been waiting for the right moment. Were not Gary Metz, *Christianity Today*, and *Cornerstone* magazine, serving the antichrist? This is the doubt established in readers’ minds. Then in the next paragraph, on the much-heard theme of Roman Catholic ‘plants,’ we find he had learned their ways from Rivera.

Jack Chick’s letter continues:

“Dr Rivera explained that, years ago, while preaching the gospel, he was approached by 2 ‘Christian’ brethren who offered to help him in spreading the gospel. One claimed God wanted him to give Dr Rivera the use of his car to go preaching, because his was almost worn out. Another offered his credit card so Dr Rivera could sleep in motels and in this way he could be part of Dr Rivera’s ministry. As soon as he crossed the state line, both of these Roman Catholic ‘Christian’ plants reported the car and credit card stolen. Even the F.B.I. agent was embarrassed as he picked up the credit card. He was angry about being used by the Vatican. But Rome knew this could be used in the future to destroy Rivera.”¹⁴⁸

The last sentence evidences a style just like Rivera’s. Taking a paranoiac approach just like Rivera himself, the view is advanced that all who hinder or attack Rivera’s current story must be reckoned as part of the plot. Thus they have the explanation to counter my own book already in place. With the book, this ‘future’ has once again arrived! Will Rivera and Chick yet again blame the Vatican, this time for me and for this book?

Roy Livesey: Conspirator Involved in the New Age Smokescreen?

As early as mid-1990, Alberto Rivera's own A.I.C. International Christian Ministries put out the word that Roy Livesey was a conspirator. In the words of an A.I.C. "News Flash": "Mr Jack Chick later (after the KBRT Radio broadcasts in 1990) furnished a lot of information concerning the conspirators, and about the materials that had been coming into his office. Even involved was a man from England, Mr Roy Livesey who is involved in the 'SMOKESCREEN' of the 'NEW AGE MOVEMENT LITERATURE'."¹⁴⁹

It has to be admitted that such a view of the New Age movement was covered by "J.T.C." in *Four Horsemen* (Alberto Part Five). A diagram¹⁵⁰ shows all of the following groups headed up to the Jesuits and to the Vatican beyond:

- * The Illuminati
- * The C.F.R.
- * International Bankers
- * The Mafia –Criminal Arm of the Vatican
- * The Club of Rome
- * The Opus Dei
- * The Masons
- * New Age Movement, etc.

Again, and to be fair, Jack Chick wrote to me in the same year *Four Horsemen* was published (1985) with Rivera's idea of the origins of the New Age movement:

"A few years ago, Dr Rivera told me the concept for the New Age Movement was created in the Vatican by Pope Pius X, and the program was put into action by the Jesuits. He said it is, in fact, another daughter of the whore to be deceived with."¹⁵¹

All my books have been on various aspects of the New Age Movement and the New World Order. As regards one of them, I have a letter from A.I.C. where I was informed that Rivera "is interested in writing the foreword."¹⁵² The manuscript was never sent to them. However, Jack Chick did receive one. The following foreword for *Understanding the New Age* was written for my book by Jack Chick:

"*Understanding the New Age* by Roy Livesey, is a work that encompasses the major threads of Satan's massive web to blind, entrap, confuse, and bewilder the average Christian. The Word of God says, 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge' (Hosea 4:6).

"Roy Livesey brings the big picture into focus, and it should drive the reader closer to the only One who can solve this mess, who, of course, is our Lord Jesus Christ, the only hope of the world.

"Few men today dare include the great whore of Revelation 17 (the Roman Catholic system) in their writings when discussing the occult, and for this, Roy is to be highly commended for his courage."¹⁵³

Jack passed on to me letters he received concerning the New Age movement, and I was pleased to reply to his correspondents. However, by 1993, after I had mailed him a copy of a manuscript for his comments, and completed my final research for this book on Alberto, he wrote to one of his correspondents:

"I believe the Vatican has financed his (Livesey's) trips to create this book."¹⁵⁴

Jack wrote again to his correspondent, confirming his belief in my Vatican connections in a more certain fashion:

"We had been blessed by the best Rome can throw, and then came 'christians,' who want to make points with the Vatican, and they appeared to pick up where the Jesuits left off... Alberto was exactly what he claims to be...

"Rest assured Rome is behind this whole thing."¹⁵⁵

Understanding the New Age was published in 1986 *without* any foreword. Warnings about Jack Chick, and those he promotes, reached me just in time. However, our good relationship was maintained intact for several more years after that, and the relevance here is by way of further evidencing the folly of labelling this author as a conspirator. The Chick message follows the way of

Rivera's paranoia. Jack has addressed many in terms of "What Dr Rivera has told me is..." We have similar situations in both the New Age movement example and in Jack's naive explanation of the stolen credit card and the vehicle stolen from Mr and Mrs Sands.

Writing in Jay Adams' *The Journal of Pastoral Practice*,¹⁵⁶ Kurt Goedelman addressed the attention of readers to the Chick letter explaining the stolen car in this way:

"Jack Chick, in an attempt to counter the material presented to Mr Metz... has sent a letter to bookstore owners. He announced that Rome has slammed Chick Publications using writer Gary Metz. But Chick's rebuttal actually contains nothing more than vague objections, avoiding many of the main issues contained in Metz's articles. However he does attempt to answer the charges of the Florida warrants by stating that two 'Christian' brethren approached Dr Rivera and offered their help in his ministry... We are then asked to believe that when Rivera crossed the Florida state line these 'Christian' brethren turned out to be Catholic plants and promptly reported the theft of their car and credit card by Alberto."

As Goedelman writes, we are asked by Chick to believe it. Of course we cannot. Yet, we do not know what the judges would have decided. The *Journal* leaves the question with its readers. So must we.

Was Rivera Ever a Bishop?

The Florida period is concluded with a final observation. Does the Vatican have any interest in collecting information against Rivera for some future use, in order to proceed against him? Or is it Rivera himself who gathers evidence and credentials as he proceeds? False credentials have proved useful to him. Consider the following dates. On 16th September 1969 Rivera signed the contract with the Sands' to pay for the car. Within a month of making the agreement, 14th October 1969, "Rev Father Alberto Rivera, DD" was granted a licence to preach in St Anne's Liberal Catholic Church, in Tampa, Florida.

In a letter dated 17th May 1991, the "Rt Rev" Joseph LeSage Tisch, DD, of the Liberal Catholic Church – Province of the U.S.A., wrote of a former Roman Catholic priest, evidently a genuine one, who tried to start his own breakaway Catholic Church in Tampa. He signed Rivera's certificate, but the evidence from Mr Tisch is that the church "never existed much more than on paper."¹⁵⁷ Mr Tisch also checked and confirmed from his own records and "found that the first services sponsored by the Liberal Catholic Church, Province of the U.S.A., in the St Petersburg-Tampa area were held on September 17th and 18th 1982."¹⁵⁸

Rivera's certificate in Tampa was doubtless the germination of a seed planted in London or elsewhere. It is appropriate in this connection, before looking in on another of Rivera's ports of call in the United States, to briefly consider the origins of Rivera's adopted style – "Bishop." How did he come to be a bishop? Indeed, was Rivera ever a bishop?

In the Chick story, Rivera tells us: "After I left the institution, I was made a bishop in the Old Roman Catholic Church, receiving my bull of consecration under the apostolic succession of the Roman popes."¹⁵⁹ The underlining is his, but nevertheless many readers have carelessly registered that Rivera was a Roman Catholic bishop.

This confusion is in a measure understandable, for how many have heard of the Old Roman Catholic Church? How many ever heard of Old Catholics? And then how many would know that all Old Catholics are not necessarily part of the so-called Old Roman Catholic Church?

Then there is the Liberal Catholic Church, which came out of the Old Roman Catholic Church. In making himself available at the (paper) Liberal Catholic Church in Tampa, was Rivera himself breaking away again? Was he creating a pedigree for himself, collecting credentials, in his normal fashion, breaking away from the Old Roman Catholic Church he had just joined in London or elsewhere? Whatever he was doing, it would present valuable opportunities for misstatements, misunderstandings and confusion, all a smokescreen used to Rivera's advantage, as he promoted himself further. Rivera evidences a yearning to be regarded as a priest, and in spite of his attacks on

Rome.

Rivera Unknown in the Old Roman Catholic Church

I have a file of helpful letters from various bishops in these break-away churches in Europe and America, and at least there began to appear some significance for some of the language used by Rivera, even though not fully understood by former Roman Catholic priests I have contacted. The break-away groups appear to set much store by the matter of “the apostolic succession” of those among them.

The Old Catholics were the only group referenced in my Catholic Encyclopedia,¹⁶⁰ and so for a long time that research trail was followed. I was encouraged in the probability of the logic of this connection, at least as it might seem to Rivera’s mind, when I read of the group’s rejection of the Jesuits. However, it was not until I found details of the group, styled the “Old Roman Catholic Church,” the one clearly mentioned in the Chick book, that any progress at all could be made. In his interview with Walter Martin in 1981, Rivera spoke of the Old Roman Catholic Church, but then seemed to describe what I knew as the Old Catholics, headquartered in Holland:

“The Old Roman Catholic Church will take a priest, whether a Christian or not, because they themselves are in trouble about Christianity... matters that took place in 1800... matters of infallibility... most of these people are as lost as anyone else and they need the Gospel as anyone else. The fact is that when I gave my testimony to them and others in London, that was the first experience I did have in 1967, really and truly saying what I... they were very impressed. I met some of them from Utrecht, the Mother See. Some of them came to give me an honor.”¹⁶¹

It would have been more encouraging if the Old Roman Catholic Church had even heard of Alberto Rivera in 1991. However, it seemed time to draw the enquiries to a halt when I thought I had reached the top. I was speaking with the primate of this “church,” an archbishop, Frederick Gilbert Linale, at his international headquarters in Beckenham, Kent. Mr Linale informed me that they had never heard of Alberto Rivera. Since Mr Linale said he was the only bishop in England in 1991, it seemed he would be right when he said it was unlikely that his predecessor (1950-1969) would have consecrated a man without him knowing. Further, I learned there was no Old Roman Catholic Church in Spain.

When my enquiries had ended, I was advised of yet another group to which Rivera might be traced. In another directory, I read of another branch of the “Old Roman Catholic Church.” I read that the “Most Reverend” J.C. Hedley Thatcher was the archbishop. The directory listed “no full-time staff.”¹⁶² Yet reading also of “1,000 members, 6 ministers and 4 congregations,” I was optimistic that this archbishop would recall “Bishop” Rivera.

Mr Thatcher had been in London in 1967. However, he had no recollection of Alberto Rivera, nor did he know any Riveras at all, and that included Holland and Germany where they had people. There were none in the overseas directories to which he referred. The archbishop was kind enough to write me a formal letter of confirmation (see Picture 23).

Rivera was clear that the idea of the honour came when he was in London. Nevertheless, there did seem to be some possible link from the London Old Roman Catholic Church to Holland, where the Old Catholics were headquartered. Accordingly it seemed right to look back at the information received from the international headquarters of the more noteworthy and well-recognised Old Catholics in Holland. The letter from the archbishop of Utrecht, to whom I had written previously, declared that Rivera was unknown to them. He was, in their words, unknown “as... layman... priest... or bishop.”¹⁶³

However, like the “paper” Liberal Catholic Church in Tampa, Florida, we may yet find a break-away bishop who, after all, did ordain Rivera and confer upon him the title of Bishop of the Old Roman Catholic Church, just as the Chick picture book claims. Such may even know what the book means where it speaks of Rivera receiving the “bull of consecration under the apostolic succession of the Roman popes.” The archbishop of Utrecht certainly does not.

Asked in the interview with Walter Martin and Brian Onken in 1981 why he would anyway accept

such an honour if he was saved, Rivera took the point and said he “had thrown away the paper.”

According to the Gary Metz research of ten years ago, former associate Mr Wishart (once a pastor of the First Baptist Church of San Fernando), who questioned Alberto about this, reported that Alberto admitted he had never been ordained a bishop, but used the title for prestige. Yet when asked by Brian Onken for “the date and place of *ordination* as bishop” in 1981, he replied: “Now, it took place in 1967, in London.”

The first time this writer heard from Rivera was after 1981, and the accompanying documentation made it very clear that Rivera was a bishop. Furthermore, I had never before heard from a man with so many degrees!

What about Rivera’s Many Doctorates and Degrees?

Questioned about his degrees by Gary Metz and Tim Barrons on KBRT Radio in 1990, these were identified as:

1. Philosophy – Doctor
2. Theology – Doctor
3. Psychology – Masters
4. Sociology – Doctor
5. History – Doctor
6. Bible – Doctor

The ambiguity in the confused radio discussion about how these degrees came about was very evident. Again, Gary Metz had written about this ambiguity nearly ten years before:

“Alberto commands great respect from many with his alleged numerous degrees including an ND, a DD, a ThD, a PhD, and a Master’s in Psychology. However he is ambiguous when asked where he received these degrees.”¹⁶⁴

Turning to Mr Wishart once again: “When Rev Wishart pressed Alberto concerning his degrees, Alberto admitted receiving them from a diploma mill in Colorado. This ended *their* relationship.”¹⁶⁵

Indeed, how many faithful picture book readers who have proceeded this far need to travel yet further before being convinced to end *their* relationship with Alberto Rivera? Next, we return to Rivera’s works of destruction in the United States.

Chapter 9

THE 1970s – CONNING CONGREGATIONS IN CALIFORNIA

There is no mistaking that in 1973 Rivera was styling himself as a bishop. This is known from correspondence in which he is being pressed for rent monies.

From March 1973 through to late January 1974, Rivera occupied an office at 2624½ Saturn Avenue, Huntington Park, California, in the name of his organisation, *Agapesofia Oikoumene*. “Oikoumene” means one-world. There was found little substance in Rivera’s own descriptions and mainly paper organisations.

Rivera had a card printed. It bore a coat of arms and the Latin: “*Per Fidem Sola.*” “Alberto Magno R. Rivera, DT, DD, ND, NRH – Bishop” (see Picture 24) is further described as the “International Coordinator and Founder” of this New Era movement. “New Era” means New Age. As ever, we find the delusions of grandeur, the paranoia; or was he quite seriously meaning to advance the New Age, the New World Order and an international group to promote ecumenism?

Even into the 1980s when, through the Chick books, Rivera would have an enormous correspondence, there would still be no real organisation, only unanswered letters, cheques received and orders unfulfilled – endless paper of a different kind, with no evident enthusiasm to deal with much more than the money that came with it.

Still in the 1980s and 1990s bills went unpaid. And so it was, right from the first of Rivera’s various organisations in 1973. Throughout his occupancy of the Saturn Avenue offices, he paid only partial rent for the first months and no rent at all for the two months before his departure. As always, questions were soon raised by those involved with him.

One associate wrote to the archbishopric of Madrid-Alcala. Perhaps he had seen the well-worn certificate which, as we have seen, Rivera obtained from this place. At the outset, some readers understandably might have been unready to reckon testimony from the Roman Catholic hierarchy. However, now that Rivera’s story has moved on – to California, 1973 – we trust that such readers will accept the fairness of including the reply received from Madrid by Rivera’s associates in Huntington Park. The reply of the archbishopric, doubtless the product of the same research reported again to Mr Hegger some ten years later, arrived in 1974 after extensive enquiries had been carried out. The following is taken from it:

(translation) “First of all, pardon us for the delay in answering your letter dated 6 December 1973. The reason was that we have tried to verify if, in fact, he (Alberto Rivera) was a priest.

“We have contacted all 64 bishoprics in Spain and all of them have answered us that they do not have any knowledge, nor record, of Alberto Rivera.

“As to the documents he presents, which are the only documents he is able to show from this chancery in Madrid, they undoubtedly are documents that he acquired by deceit and subterfuge. He must have taken the then Archdiocesan Secretary by surprise, telling him some well-thought up story that the Secretary, in good faith, believed, giving him the documents which in reality do not have any validity. They are only a mere legality that helped him (Mr Rivera) to acquire his passport, without specifically indicating his true ordination to the priesthood.

“The fact that Mr Rivera is unable to present any other documentation clearly indicates that he has not been ordained to the priesthood. Otherwise he could produce some other testimony, either from the Secretary where he studied, the bishopric in which he exercised his ministry, the church where he worked, or from his fellow priests. In other words, he could produce innumerable testimonies to prove what he says.

“Finally... we assure you that everything Mr Rivera says is a pure lie. In our judgment, Mr Rivera is

a deceiver. Nothing he says is true. For this reason, we are profoundly sorry that you have been led to give him credit and your trust, because we believe he is not deserving of it.

“We are sorry to give you these details, but, unfortunately they are the only ones we have to offer. Sincerely yours – .”¹⁶⁶

The letter thus expresses regret that credit had been extended to Rivera. Over the years many more, the Lord’s people and the world’s, would come to regret how Rivera parted them from their money. Chick and Rivera would later explain away letters like the one reproduced above. Yet would any right-thinking person, even one who understands the deceptions of the Jesuits, dismiss this Roman Catholic letter out of hand?

With an office in Saturn Avenue and an organisation like *Agapesofia Oikoumene* it would not normally be difficult for a bishop to enter into further financial arrangements. In 1973 *Agapesofia Oikoumene*, the New Era Movement, entered into a lease with option to purchase the facility at 16000 Bailey Road, San Fernando, California.

In the manner we would later see in general letters from Chick Publications, we find Rivera addressing “Dear Ones in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Chick writes to bookstores. Rivera was addressing the local churches. He is telling them of the formal opening of his new facility and touching their hearts as regards the much needed work on behalf of nuns, monks, and ex-priests like him, who had left Rome behind. The letter heading describes “*Agapesofia Oikoumene*” as a religious non-profit organisation and a “Liberation center for Priests, Nuns, Jews, Communists and ‘Whosoever Will’.”¹⁶⁷ It is signed by “Dr Alberto Magno Rivera – Bishop.”

The center for all of this outreach to nuns, priests, monks and communists was to be 16000 Bailey Road. We know that Rivera’s normal personal difficulties assuredly pressed upon him, and again Rivera failed to pay rent. On 6th February 1975 a “Notice to Pay Rent or Quit” was served on “Alberto Magno R. Rivera and the *Agapesofia Oikoumene*,” the new name “Magno” by now adding further to his aggrandisement.

In the matter of the rent and of the \$7,000 due, the process of law was swift. A judge of the superior court of the State of California for the County of Los Angeles signed the order on 29th May 1975. Whether the plaintiffs ever got their rent is a different matter. It can be sensible to give up when there is no money to be found. Another plaintiff in the Municipal Court of Los Angeles Judicial District issued a summons under a contract for another \$379. That was also in May 1975.

I hear of those who say, “If Rivera is so bad, why is he not taken to court?” The fact is that some have taken this route, but it can be a tiresome, expensive and fruitless business. Understandably, many give up at some point in the process, even if they ever make a start. The above are examples since Rivera’s supposed “conversion,” and more follow. Also, back to 5th May 1965, when Rivera claims he was still acting as a Jesuit plant, a fraud complaint was made against him in Hoboken, New Jersey, and we have a letter from the Hoboken Police Department confirming that “a warrant was issued by Magistrate Miller.” However, because there was a failure to follow up, to prosecute, that claim was after all dismissed in 1978. Rivera later escaped more claims against him.

In September 1974, while still able to give his address as 16000 Bailey Road, Rivera, along with two others giving the same address, did what he had written that he would *not* do. Rivera incorporated a church, the “Catholic and Apostolic Church.” According to the Articles of Incorporation, the property of the corporation would be dedicated to charitable purposes. No part of the net income or assets were ever to benefit individuals. Alberto Magno R. Rivera, with a sealed document and a signature of a notary public, now had a church.

This “Catholic and Apostolic Church” name served Rivera well in 1974 when he made the record, *From Rome to Christ*, already referred to. In this record he links his own assumed name and titles to “Wycliff, Luther and many more men and women that preferred to obey God and Christ and not the Pope or the Roman court.” He tells us, “... this is the case of the Doctor Alberto Magno Rivera, Bishop of the Catholic and Apostolic Church *in Spain*” (our emphasis).¹⁶⁸

Much that Rivera is supposed to be, or to have done, as in this example, is placed just out of sight,

just beyond convenient checking by those around him or by enquirers. The half-truth was that he was head of a more-or-less paper “Catholic and Apostolic Church.” The lie was that this was in Spain, a place out of reach when it comes to checking by the average enquirer.

A Valuable Profile of Rivera from One Close to Him in the 1970s

Before we pick up Alberto’s story in 1977 and his first meeting with the well-known head of *Mission to Catholics International* in San Diego, Bartholomew F. Brewer, we record a valuable personal account of one who knew Rivera in the 1970s. This is taken from a letter written to Mr Brewer in 1983:

“(speaking of Rivera) ... when we met him he was running a small marriage chapel in Huntington Park, CA. He used the chapel for services on Sunday mornings and married couples at all other times. We were introduced by my sister who started attending his church... Alberto is highly intelligent but is a con man. He is a wolf in sheep’s clothing who uses God’s word to exploit the body of Christ. My sister assisted him with clerical duties and I found myself getting more involved with him.

“He ordained me a minister which is contrary to the Word of God as this is my second wife. He very skilfully overcame my objections. I see now that as a young Christian the flesh won out.

“He (Rivera) tried to sell us a worthless piece of property which I found out he paid \$2,200.00 for, and tried to sell it to us for \$5,000.00. Our Lord was merciful and we were able to see through his ‘scam.’ I didn’t mind the price but I couldn’t see him making a profit from a brother and told him so. He was able to get 5 lots at Cal. Pines here in Alturas for the price of two, because of an error by the salesman and after the contract was signed he brought it to their attention and held them to it. He told me it was a blessing from God, but our Heavenly Father doesn’t work that way. He conned the church in Oxnard to make the payments by telling them he wanted to take them out of the slums and that he was going to set up a retreat for them. He sold the Oxnard building to a cult this year!

“I had decided to retire from the Navy and he asked me to help him set up a retreat for ex-priests and nuns, to which I agreed. Alberto had plans for us, but our blessed Lord had different ones. The Holy Spirit started to open our eyes about Alberto. We started to notice too many things that a man of God would not do.

“He put out an appeal in his *Anti-Christ Information Center (A.I.C.) Letter* for money to build a retreat. He bought a run-down business in Madeline, California. He conned a family from the church at Oxnard to run it. Several months later he had a picture in the A.I.C. letter which was supposed to be a bunk house that had been built. This was a bold-faced lie as nothing was built. On the contrary he was exploiting the business for his own gain. He made another appeal for more money to build another alleged bunk house. The family that was running the business love the Lord and wanted to serve Him. The brethren had bills to pay in Oxnard, so Alberto was to pay them wages regularly, which he didn’t. He worked them 16 - 20 hours, seven days a week!

“He also wanted them to sell liquor. I saw the liquor license application with Alberto’s signature.

“He had me teaching a children’s Sunday School and the brother was holding a regular service. He told the brother that if I wanted to keep teaching Sunday School I would have to join the church. I decided to tell him why I couldn’t join. He really exploded and went into a tirade. He called me many names, which I took until he tried to tell me he knew what I was thinking. After that I started talking back to him and told him he was not God and that he could not read my thoughts. The Lord finally hit me over the head with a 2 x 4 and got my attention. Praise His Holy name.

“The brothers from Oxnard were in deep financial distress as he hadn’t paid them in four months. They pressed him for some money and he turned on them. He accused them of stealing, forbade them to eat or take any food from the business. The poor brethren were in bad shape, and the unsaved people of Madeline would feed them. Nice testimony! He could say all he wanted about the brethren, but we knew what really happened. He is a liar, a thief and a cheat. No man of God would do the many, many things he did.

“Alberto agreed to buy a motor home from another brother who had come from Oak View,

California, to help him. He returned the motor home after a few months and said he didn't want it any longer. Shortly thereafter the financial institution repossessed the RV for non-payment. The payment book stubs had been forged to lead the brother to believe the payments were being made. Our brother was without his RV and his good name, and his credit was destroyed.

"When I was helping him with the A.I.C. newsletter, our Lord put a very damaging letter in my hands but I made excuses for it and didn't make a copy of it. The letter was his appointment of Bishop by an organisation that appeared to be a cult. I thought someone was getting in on his notoriety. I honestly think the organisation was a cult or a diploma mill.

"Alberto was always evasive with me on his ordination to Bishop by the Catholic church, and where he was awarded his PhD.

"He claimed to be trained in military matters, but he was totally ignorant of the most basic weapons training.

"He claimed to be from Spain but was not familiar with some of the most popular cuisine from Spain. He knew very little about Spain itself.

"One of the brothers that attended Alberto's church in Oxnard asked Art McDonald (*Time for the Bible* Radio Program) to help him start a church in Mexicali (Mexico). I was one of the missionaries Bro. McDonald sent. We did start a work and things went well until Alberto and I had our little 'chat.' He ordered the brother to throw us out as we were heretics, false brethren and enemies of the church. It didn't take the brother long to see through his facade.

"Alberto wants everyone to follow him blindly and if you question anything he does or says, he accuses you of having spiritual problems, heresy or being the enemy. He is a petty tyrant and there is no doubt in my mind that if he ever gets powerful enough, he has the capacity to have someone killed that crosses him. He is the classic example of someone who intellectually accepts our Lord but never accepts the Lord in his heart.

"In Alberto's Spanish album, *De Roma a Cristo* (From Rome to Christ), his testimony is identical to Mark Pena's, a converted Roman Catholic priest.

"While my sister was attending Alberto's church, he forbade them to call him brother and he used Luke 8:19-21 for his demand which to me was completely out of context. He is an expert at telling you what you want to hear and twisting the Word of God to fit his schemes or his point of view.

"Alberto's wife confided in my wife about his loose morals. I don't think this would be the proper place to discuss this but my wife should be in Chula Vista, Lord willing, towards the end of July. If you care to pursue the matter, you can contact her through Brother Hank Parks.

"After being around Alberto for any period of time you develop a siege mentality. He's paranoid and it will rub off if you let it.

"His alleged attempted assassination by charismatics, upon closer examination, is full of holes. I really fell for it at the time. When I questioned him later, there were too many inconsistencies, especially when it came to nerve gas. Concerning the steel pin in his tooth, I had a root canal done and it was S.O.P. to insert pins into your gums to kill the nerves.

"In 1979 Alberto and his wife told us that they planned to invest wisely and in five years, sell everything and move to Spain. This leads me to believe that his real name is not Alberto Rivera. If his life is in constant danger, why would he want to return to a place where they have a contract on his life, unless he is really someone else. It appears he's exploiting the body of Christ to build up a personal fortune.

"I could go on and on but I think this is enough. This fake should not be allowed to exploit the body of Christ. He must be exposed and stopped. If you want more testimony, I could put you in contact with other brethren he's exploited...

"Your fellow servant in the Lord – John Tvrdevich."¹⁶⁹

The above is an account which is not written from the standpoint of a researcher, and there is no reason for John to have known any of Rivera's background as we can know it today. Accordingly, we see that some of the assumptions made are incorrect. This fact takes nothing away from the value of including the letter almost in its entirety, because what we have is a perceptive first-hand account. It is

an assessment by one who got so close to Rivera that, like others in the years to follow, he was bound eventually to see through him. Perhaps, like the stage magician's assistant, if you stand around long enough you see how it is done! John Tvrdevich saw through Rivera.

Indeed, John's experience would be repeated by others over and over again. Reading John's letter some eight years later, Ismael Guerrero MD was astounded to see how the pattern had been repeated in his own dealings with Rivera. We relate Dr Guerrero's experiences later.

Antichrist Information Center (A.I.C.) and a Refuge for Nuns and Priests

John Tvrdevich was involved with Rivera at the time of Rivera's refuge project. A.I.C.'s purpose was "to reach the millions of Roman Catholics with the true message of Christ... to be a watchman for Bible-believing Christians... (and)... to establish a base or refuge for Roman Catholic nuns, priests and monks who are converted to Christ."¹⁷⁰

A.I.C. News (the A.I.C. magazine) began publication in October 1979, and the December edition of that year tells us that it is imperative for such priests and nuns to have a place of safety to go to.

Whether the evidence in an A.I.C. appeal in 1980 is of clandestine fund raising, or whether it is simply more evidence of Rivera's paranoia, I do not know. Under the heading "Special Need" we read: "We need \$12,000 to be paid in 60 days time... we will reveal the location only to people directly involved, if we do decide it is proper and safe to do so."¹⁷¹ What we *do* know is that there was no refuge for nuns and priests that I have been able to identify. What we *don't* know is what happened to the money collected.

We are told that many who have come out from religious life have been killed or kidnapped "as was Sister Charlotte in 1959."¹⁷² Yet we know that Charlotte, according to her death certificate,¹⁷³ lived to a good age and died in hospital in Napa, California, where she long resided. Her death was in 1983. More about her later in this book.

Paranoia is evidenced in another A.I.C. circular in relation to ex-priest Clark Butterfield. We are told, "Clark Butterfield... died under very suspicious circumstances. We deeply believe that he was killed by the forces of the Jesuits working through a Roman Catholic doctor in Detroit, Michigan, which, if it is true, would make Clark Butterfield the last Roman Catholic ex-priest (known to us) to be martyred by the religious system he spoke out against."¹⁷⁴ More about him later, as well.

Accordingly, A.I.C. sought funds to build a refuge or retreat for such people. Rivera had already sought funds in 1967 in Las Palmas (Canary Islands) for a Roman Catholic building project. Now the money would supposedly support those fleeing for their lives as they escaped the Roman Catholic system. If indeed there is a need for the sort of retreat that Rivera has identified – and I have met genuine former priests who speak of such a special need – then clearly Rivera's lies, sensationalism and exaggerations do nothing to help others who labour in such a worthy cause.

I have not seen the copy of an A.I.C. letter showing the picture of the completed building at the retreat centre, and to which John Tvrdevich refers. Several of the 1980 A.I.C. letters showed drawings of the proposed chapel, administration building, and the men's and women's residences, with cost estimates and an appeal for the sums needed. None of the buildings were ever constructed, and what happened to the money we do not know. No doubt such abortive plans can cost a great deal of money, even when there is nothing to show for it.

Nevertheless, I have found it to be the observation of those involved in A.I.C. that figures of income and expenditure were unknown to them. Throughout the saga, "What happens to the money?" is a question that former elders, managers and members working with Rivera have been unable to answer.

Rivera Works for I. D. E. Thomas

In the late 1970s Rivera served on a part-time basis for about two years with I.D.E. Thomas of First

Baptist Church of Maywood, California. Mr Thomas is the senior minister there and the author of *The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations* (Moody Press), plus a dozen other books. He is also president of the California Graduate School of Theology. Here is another out of many, favourably impressed at the first meeting with Rivera in the late 1970s. I went to see Mr Thomas in August 1991, and he subsequently wrote that from his public acquaintance with Rivera, he came over as very personable, articulate and eloquent, especially in Spanish. Mr Thomas continues:

“He (Rivera) was always brimming with new ideas and plans. He was never afraid of being innovative. He gave the impression that he knew everything about Roman Catholicism, and that from first-hand experience. He spoke with a note of authority and conviction. During the time I knew him he always had a hard-core following of three or four dozen people.

“During the two years he was a part-time member of my staff, I recall having to ask him to come and see me on a few occasions, this apart from the usual staff meetings.

“On two occasions, it was because of a critical report I had received (either by letter or telephone) from an outside source. These concerned his background, his ordination, his previous marriage, etc. If half of these were correct, then Alberto must be one of the greatest religious con-men ever. He admitted that he had been married but had been divorced a long time. He never mentioned a child. As for his ordination, etc., he said he would return with documents to prove the fact. Some time later he did return, with a handful of documents, all in Spanish, which he claimed were proof of his ordination and of his former Jesuit associations. Further proof, he said, was unattainable, because the Roman Catholic authorities had destroyed them, and they consequently considered him a non-person.

“The last occasion was when a member of his congregation came to accuse him of having had ‘unworthy’ relations with her. Alberto partly admitted it, but added that her evidence was grossly exaggerated and over-dramatized. He also added that she had a few days earlier confronted him on a street in Huntington Park, and kicked him. He showed me the bruise.

“At this time I also learned that he was about to become engaged to a member of his congregation (Nury), and that this may have contributed to the violent reaction of the former ‘friend.’

“We both agreed that it would be best to terminate his ministry in Maywood.

“I did not see Alberto again until 12 years later. He said that he was now a Baptist minister in Boyle Heights, and was operating a day school...”¹⁷⁵

Rivera had got the idea to be an ordained Baptist minister during the time he was responsible for the Spanish work in Mr Thomas’ church. The idea was prompted by a meeting with former Roman Catholic priest, Bartholomew F. Brewer.

Rivera Meets Bartholomew Brewer

Bartholomew F. Brewer is one of the best known and respected former Roman Catholic priests. His *Mission to Catholics International* has a truly international outreach. His testimony book, *Pilgrimage from Rome*, circulates widely, and he is the president of the *Association of Fundamentalists Evangelizing Catholics* (AFEC).

It was during Rivera’s time with I.D.E. Thomas in 1977 that Mr Brewer recalls a telephone call from Rivera. Mr Brewer thus learned of the “converted ex-Jesuit priest, Alberto Rivera.” Being a trusting person, he was thrilled to learn of another ex-priest willing to serve the Lord. In less than 24 hours Mr Brewer, and his wife Ruth, drove from San Diego to Los Angeles to meet him. They had dinner together, and in Mr Brewer’s words, in general they were impressed.

When I met Bart Brewer and his wife Ruth, Ruth recalled the first meeting with Rivera:

“In the course of the conversation I asked him about a scar on his forehead. His answer was a phenomenal story which he told from the beginning. The story began in a large cathedral where several hundred priests had gathered to pray over spiritual concerns. They had been there several days. The Roman Catholic hierarchy objected to this and convinced the city police to surround the building and order them all out. Alberto was among them.

“As they came out, he said the police were there with bayonets. The first did something he didn’t like

and they bayoneted him. The second was bayoneted too. Rivera was the third, and in an effort of self-preservation he walked straight ahead and was hit on the head. From there he was taken to the mental hospital.

“I asked him how he was able to escape being married. He said he had been married to a former nun from Puerto Rico or Cuba. He said he found out that she had a husband, and that she was still married to him and so that the marriage was invalid.”¹⁷⁶

Rivera told the Brewers he wanted to leave the staff of First Baptist Church where he was engaged with the Spanish work. We know that he had other connections too at that time. However, he pointed out that Mr Thomas’ church belonged to the American Baptist Convention, and now he wanted to join a more independent and fundamental church. Incidentally, Mr Thomas states that Rivera never once told this to him.

Mr Brewer then mentioned Rivera to the one who was his (Mr Brewer’s) pastor at that time, M.O. Garner at Calvary Baptist Church in National City, a section of San Diego. Rivera expressed a wish for ordination. A time was set for that in November 1977. At that time, Rivera, Cipriano Valdes, a former priest from Mexico (whom I also met), and Bartholomew Brewer, would all be ordained together. Cipriano Valdes, who now works with Mr Brewer as part of Mission to Catholics International, from the beginning sensed that Rivera was never a priest.

His Baptist ordination now accomplished, Mr Garner invited Rivera to take charge of the Hispanic work, and Rivera was in perfect agreement. However, to their knowledge, after the ordination, Rivera never returned to the San Diego area. Mr Brewer wrote to me: “Rivera has not only avoided me, but Valdes and other former priests like Greg Adams in Canada, Charlie Berry, Tony Pezzotta and others. When the comic came out about or after this time, I wrote a letter asking for more evidence that he is a former priest. I never received a reply.”¹⁷⁷

In the same letter to me, Mr Brewer, at my request, enclosed a copy from “The Official Catholic Directory” containing the name of Bartholomew Brewer when he was in the priesthood. In brackets there was shown (SD). That means the “Diocese of San Diego.” Here was the evidence such as any former Jesuit priest ought to be able to supply.

As to Rivera’s supposed priesthood, Mr Brewer wrote: “...the burden of proof is on Rivera. Until he can be found in some “Official Catholic Directory” for Spain or wherever, he is not considered a priest. Can Rivera produce a copy of his baptism? If he was ordained a priest, a note would be affixed to the baptismal certificate about his ordination to the Roman Catholic priesthood. It is always easy to identify the true former priest. Rivera is no exception.”¹⁷⁸ Indeed, there are more ways that Mr Brewer lists, and in his magazine, *Mission to Catholics Challenge*, he set down sixteen useful questions which might be asked of an ex-priest.

Indeed, how can hundreds or thousands of directories published year by year, with the names of the priests in a country or state, be eliminated? I have such directories in my office, and photostat copies from others. How can they all cease to exist? Jack Chick would have us believe that such is possible, and, from Chick Publications, 15th September 1980, he wrote: “Two months ago, this office received a telephone call from a European reporter telling of a sweep being made by priests through Spain, destroying all evidence that Dr Rivera ever existed.”¹⁷⁹

At any rate, by November 1977 Rivera was ordained. It was also time for him to make another change. His testimony record, *From Rome to Christ*, its cover, and the manuscript translation, all had to be changed before he gave Bartholomew Brewer a copy. In 1977 Rivera married Nury from his congregation in Mr Thomas’ church. The woman’s name had to be altered in the record’s message of dedication.

As Gary Metz reported a decade ago, we still do not know what happened to Rivera’s wife, Carmen Lydia: “... when Alberto left Florida for Seattle with the car and credit card, they (Alberto and Carmen Lydia) no longer had the child with them. What happened to Carmen Lydia after Seattle is also unknown, but Alberto remarried in 1977 to Nury Frias, a woman from the Dominican Republic.”¹⁸⁰

Rivera was married to Nury by Glenn McNeill, and we learn from Mr and Mrs McNeill¹⁸¹ that Rivera

wanted to make a film after the wedding, using their “Catholic-looking” sanctuary as a background. Mrs McNeill wrote that Rivera “of course would be dressed in his Catholic robes... to do a portion of his life as a priest for an entire movie”¹⁸² that he claimed somebody was making of his life. Mr McNeill had refused and “now wonders if he wouldn’t have used it, or wanted to use it, as proof that he was once a Catholic priest?!”¹⁸³ Indeed, Mr McNeill may well have good grounds for wondering! Rivera seems to have been looking for even more usable credentials to establish himself as a former priest. At his Baptist ordination in the same year, and where he surprised everyone by wearing a Roman collar, his idea for the filming of the ceremony was also turned down by the minister.

Rivera Hits Out at Bartholomew Brewer

Rivera has made several attacks upon the testimony of Bartholomew Brewer. Faced with regular enquiries about Rivera, Mr Brewer issued the 4-page “To whom it may concern” in 1983. The following are extracts from it:

“...Anyone who is familiar with the work of *Mission to Catholics* knows that we are not soft on the Church of Rome. It is a false church with a false gospel. Catholics need to be redeemed and then separate from it for Biblical Christianity. Who doesn’t know that the Roman hierarchy thinks nothing of telling lies in order to protect the institution? In this case, however, it is difficult to believe that Rome is withholding information on Rivera’s true identity. Again, Rome’s denial of Rivera’s claims is explicit. In the light of Rome’s denial that Alberto Rivera was a priest, the question is not, ‘Can we prove that he was not a Jesuit priest?’ It is, ‘Can Alberto prove he was?’ Not only does he fail to give acceptable evidence of his claims, he has made no effort to fellowship with those active in Roman Catholic evangelism such as *Mission to Catholics*, *The Conversion Center*, *Catholics for Christ*, Wilson Ewin, Bill Jackson and others. Several years ago I wrote Rivera a most gracious letter asking for more information on his background. He has never answered. Anyone who questioned his credibility is said to be non-Christian, working for the Vatican and thus subject to legal action...

“I would like to have no part in this situation. But do I have a choice? People write to us about Chick’s comics on Alberto. People telephone us. Wherever I speak I am asked about Mr Rivera. I have no choice but to share in Christian love what I believe to be true about the Rivera case.

“Mr Rivera and some of his friends, including Jack Chick, are quick to defend their stories by pointing to some of the results which involve Roman Catholics getting saved. I praise the Lord for any of the lost coming to the Savior. However, results must not deter the true Christian from trying the spirits. 1 John 4:1.

“My earnest prayer is that Mr Rivera will be perfectly open with Christians regarding his background. I believe the cause of Roman Catholic evangelism will be further enhanced if he does.

“Most sincerely in Jesus Christ – Bartholomew F. Brewer.”¹⁸⁴

The following are some of the statements from Rivera and Chick which have followed the stand which Mr Brewer took:

1. A.I.C. International Christian Ministries, 27th February 1984 (letter to a correspondent in Australia):
“... Then Bartholomew Brewer’s claim that Dr Rivera sought to join them. Get their evidence in writing, again we seek this. It is most clever. We have every reason to believe this man is a Jesuit under dispensation set up as a ‘competition’ against A.I.C. ministries, along with Andre Young and others. We have a tape covering this man should you care to order it, \$6.00 and not on the enclosed catalogue... In His Service – James Brown (name changed).”¹⁸⁵

2. A.I.C. (tape extracts) – *The Treacherous Dealer, Volume One, Part 13 – Bartholomew Brewer* (1984):

(text exactly as in the original) “Concerning Bartholomew Brewer... many people have requested information about him... unless he confesses his own transgression to God he will not only not be forgiven, but he will not be forgotten... that is a Bible principle... because he is going to be challenged

to do it in a court of law, among the others. He is already one of the individuals that has been given to my attorneys... I know that much that he have the most perfect communication with the Vatican and I have copies of all the documents that he has received from the Vatican. I have my contacts too, you see... He will have to renounce publicly, the day that I come to believe, *first*, that he is a Christian, *second*, that he is a Roman Catholic converted priest, and, *third*, that he is a servant of Jesus Christ, he will have to do more than anybody realise. He will have to do first a complete public renunciation of the dispensation under the Pope of Rome... Even Walter Martin proclaimed him as one of his good collaborators; Gary Metz, second; Brian Onken, third; *Cornerstone, Christianity Today*, you name it. You see the good collaborators. And then the Vatican. A faithful priest of Rome serving the cause of the Vatican...”¹⁸⁶

3. A.I.C. Magazine, Volume 6, Number One, June 1986:

Six out of fifteen close-typed pages in this magazine are devoted to a scurrilous attack upon Bartholomew Brewer. A critique is again made difficult by Rivera’s inadequate command of the English language. Much is repetitious. Strangely, the long article commences in mid-sentence and ends in mid-sentence. However, what we have are little more than wanderings reminiscent of the lying and often meaningless language found in some of his tapes. There is nothing which merits transcription here. However, there can be many a reader, who doesn’t know Mr Brewer, and conditioned already by Rivera over several years, who could be persuaded by Rivera’s plea against this godly man. Even some might read the pathetic plaintiff message with sympathy.

4. *Smokescreens – Who is the Whore of Revelation?* by J.T.C. (Jack Chick), Chick Publications, 1983 (p. 64):

Following mention of Gary Metz, Walter Martin and Brian Onken, who had exposed Rivera, Jack Chick wrote: “Then you’ve got Bill Jackson in San Jose, and Bart Brewer in San Diego. Both of these men are supposed to be operating ministries to Catholics. And yet, they’ve been going around to churches trying to destroy our credibility. Why? Doesn’t that make you a little suspicious?” Whilst accepting that Rivera has a credibility problem, Mr Brewer has expressly denied that he makes it his purpose to expose Rivera. Rather the situation is that questions he receives about Rivera are a distraction in his own work.

It is in such articles as these that we find further reasons for warning of Alberto Rivera, and indeed for stopping them.

The Alberto Story (1981) by Gary Metz had already been written by the time of these scurrilous libels by Rivera. It describes other events in the late 1970s. It carries a banner quotation across its pages from Jack Chick, who describes Alberto Rivera: “The Most Godly Man I Ever Met.” Unlike Jack Chick, who was about to produce and sell millions of picture books and tracts based on the Alberto Rivera stories, many pastors in California were now, through various exposés of both John Todd and Rivera, getting wise to Jack and the people he has promoted.

Roland Rasmussen was one, like Chick, who had been duped by another fraud, the supposed ex-witch John Todd, the provider of the testimony and information for some of Chick’s earlier sensational picture books. There the comparison ends. Mr Rasmussen recognised his error regarding Todd, and, like I. D. E. Thomas and Bart Brewer, he would eventually reach sound conclusions about Rivera also. First he had Rivera to speak in his church, Faith Baptist Church in Canoga Park, California. It was there that Rivera pinpointed a different date of his conversion – 20th March 1967. With the advantage of research we know that Rivera was, on that date, on the staff of Samuel Vila’s school in Tarrasa (Barcelona), collecting the parents’ money for himself.

Before entering what would truly be a “new era” for Rivera, the publication of the first *Alberto* book in 1979, we allow the final summary to Bart Brewer. Even though many more millions would be printed and sold, even though Rivera would still go on from strength to strength, *Christianity Today*

had published an article against the picture books.¹⁸⁷ The magazine published a letter from Mr Brewer the following month. It takes hold of some vital matters which are well addressed to Chick Publications:

“As a former Roman Catholic priest and now director of *Mission to Catholics International*... It is my conviction that faith doesn't come from sensational stories, but by the hearing of God's word (Romans 10:17). Both *Alberto* and *Double-Cross* lack solid Bible meat and are somewhat inaccurate regarding Catholic teaching... A lot of people, Catholics and non-Catholics, have been hurt by this bogus priest.”¹⁸⁸

We trust none will doubt the fact of those who have been hurt. No line at all can be drawn between such occasions pre- and post-Alberto's supposed “conversion.” The physical and spiritual damage done has been enormous. However, we suggest that this is little by comparison to the damage in the 1980s and into the 1990s, through Rivera's continued activity.

Chapter 10

ALBERTO – JACK CHICK IGNORES THE EVIDENCE

I once believed what is written in *Alberto*. In 1983 I had little idea of a Jesuit until I read the Chick illustrated picture books. The series of six are marked on the cover as reading intended for “*adults and teens*.” In other words, what Chick is rightly saying is that these are serious adult reading. They are not, as the very attractive covers might suggest to some, comics for children. The books claim to describe the life and exploits of Alberto Rivera, a Jesuit priest, a bishop, one of some evident seniority in the Jesuit Order and who eventually came to Christ.

I was about to include reference to Rivera when writing the first edition of *Understanding the New Age* some six years ago. Then I was warned to beware. I was told that articles exposing Rivera as an impostor had appeared in the professing Christian press. Eventually I obtained copies of these articles, and as long ago as 13 March 1981, the big-selling magazine *Christianity Today* had carried the headline, “Jack Chick’s Anti-Catholic *Alberto* Comic Book is Exposed as a Fraud.” The work had been done by Gary Metz. I also obtained a copy of the article in *Forward* magazine by Brian Onken, “Alberto: The Truth about his Story.”

Yet in spite of all this, why did I remain deceived? I had studied the *Alberto* message, as well as other sources, and I thought I had reasonably grasped what Jesuitry was all about. Significantly, the answer to those proper doubts which came my way had been placed right there in the *Alberto* message. Those who opposed that message were precisely the problem supposedly exposed in the picture books. I had read of churches infiltrated by Jesuits. I had read of these so-called Christian leaders who were really agents of the Vatican. In other words, the defence was right there in the picture books, ready for any challenge when it was mounted. In short, everyone who opposed *Alberto* was considered to be a part of the plot. Indeed this is a very crucial point and the key to Rivera’s success.

Alberto Rivera is important because the information which he has provided to Jack Chick has resulted in publications against Roman Catholicism which far exceed anything else, past or present. In the face of the mountain of evidence presented in the present book, it is difficult to see how any fair-minded person can continue to believe that Rivera was ever a Roman Catholic priest. It is difficult to see how any credibility can be attached to his false testimony. It is difficult to understand how Christian men can accept the false history concerning Roman Catholicism that Rivera presents. Certainly, most are easily persuaded by the clear and detailed evidence we have presented.

Rivera remains thus far undefeated. Chick remains the champion of his cause. We acknowledge Rivera has other supporters, and we acknowledge in him an ability to continue without them. With all the authority and power of a cult leader, he has displayed an ability to dispense with the most valuable and conscientious of supporters once they are seen to step out of line. His enduring supporters are those who are many hundreds or thousands of miles away, actively promoting the *Alberto* materials and supporting A.I.C.

From my conversations with Ismael Guerrero, a medical doctor who had one of the longest stints of anyone with Rivera, it was evident that he could not explain the command Rivera had over him. As he looked back, eighteen months after his three years of service to Rivera’s every whim, and at great cost to both his family and medical practice, he could find no explanation. He admitted he could not account for being taken in for so long.

Supporters like Jonas Shepherd of the Canadian Protestant League, testifying to the Alberto story, have not been in the same position as Ismael Guerrero when it comes to regular close-at-hand exposure to Rivera’s behaviour. Such support from one like Jonas Shepherd, who himself wrote a book about Jesuit activity, is valuable to Rivera. We have seen already how this has served Rivera, with the extensive quotation from Shepherd’s report in *Is Alberto for Real?* published by Chick Publications.

Also in Canada, it is acknowledged that the couple who ran the *Antichrist Information Center* work in that country, Harry and Tina Barrett, left the ministry only because, in their words, Rivera is now deviating from the strong stand he once took in defence of the Authorised King James Version of the Bible. Rivera was promoting a 1655 edition.

The Barretts have provided numerous printed testimonies from Canada of people leaving Rome and of conversions. From Australia, Sidney Hunter of Evangelistic Literature Enterprises and editor of the book *Is Alberto for Real?* also writes of conversions: “We sponsored his trip to Australia in 1987. He had meetings in capital cities in Australia. When in Brisbane his meetings were in the church I pastor (Good Shepherd Baptist). There were genuine conversions.”¹⁸⁹

Chick Publications and “Saving Souls”

Derek Pearce, a supporter of Chick and Rivera in New Zealand, publishes *New Zealand Beacon*. He wrote to me of what seemed to him to be a significant matter: “...just this very morning’s mail brought me a letter in which was a report off the local Christian radio (Radio Rhema) which spoke of a Roman Catholic priest in Switzerland who, I was informed, was saved through the literature of Chick Publications. I thought this significant in view of the letter I was shortly to write to you.”¹⁹⁰

How was it significant? It is always significant when someone is saved, but what is the significance in the context of Chick Publications? Such a story describes what Derek Pearce, and many more, call “fruit.” He writes:

“My own testimony of the ‘Rivera Affair’ is... that the spiritual and scriptural method is FRUIT. Not so much character, although that is most important (but highly subjective), i.e. what a man produces. Over a period of several YEARS (in this case you are looking at over two decades) a man’s fruit is more easily identified.”¹⁹¹

Romans 6:20-21 speaks of the absence of fruit in the servants of sin. The Bible is also very clear on the importance of a man’s character (Romans 2:21-23, 1 Thessalonians 5:22, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9).

Many professing Christians are deceived into believing it is they who are responsible for the souls who are saved, and that saving souls is all-important. We are called to be witnesses for Christ all the time, and we rejoice when we see people saved. However, we need to keep in mind the sovereign purposes of God (Romans 8:29-30). God can, and does, use any individual, and various means, to work His purposes out. “*What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice*” (Philippians 1:18).

A minister or leader may see souls saved, but this is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit. New birth is produced only by the Holy Spirit. When a man is regenerated by the Holy Spirit’s power, he receives a new nature (Romans 8:2, 1 Corinthians 12:3). His character is to change. He is no longer ruled by sin. Of course we are to preach the Gospel and witness Christ, but fruit is something different.

“*...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law*” (Galatians 5:22-23).

“*Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them*” (Matthew 7:20).

Whether or not they boast of souls brought to Christ, it is by their fruits that those who are Christ’s are known.

Jesus said: “*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*” (John 15:1-2).

Throughout the Research – Only One Generous Word about Rivera

I have received only one generous word regarding Rivera personally, as distinct from his preaching or soul-winning capability. It came in a letter to me from a professing Christian man who didn’t like denouncing him because on several occasions he had tried to be kind. This man said he stayed with

Rivera before he was saved, but later, in 1989, he had a call from Rivera. He was without employment at the time and Rivera offered him the position as director of his “Christian school.” The offer wasn’t as good as the one Mr Vila in Tarrasa made to Rivera when he became the director of his Christian school in 1967. In 1989, Rivera claimed to have 187 students in the school.

I met with Edward Arthurs, the principal of the school governed by the First Baptist Church of Maywood where I. D. E. Thomas is senior pastor.¹⁹² Mr Arthurs was familiar with Rivera’s school because Mrs Arthurs served as the principal there during the very few months of its existence. Rivera was very disorganised and a long way from being able to offer the *Accelerated Christian Education* (ACE) programme, the programme operated at Maywood, and upon which Rivera had embarked. The only factor that was some help in the situation was that there was never the 187 students Rivera had spoken of. The figure was more like 20 to 25.

Rivera finds good support in Australia, and evidence of the high esteem in which his Antichrist Information Center (A.I.C.) is held is found in a cassette message tape from Fred J. Buick, the pastor who hosted Rivera’s meetings in Perth, Australia, and produced by the Free Presbyterian Church of Inglewood, Western Australia. In the context of seeking to expose Adrian van Leen, editor of *Take a Closer Look*, Mr Buick is asking his listeners to accept his information as credible. His basis is that his source is A.I.C.:

“Having our suspicions raised about the position of Mr van Leen, this Free Presbyterian Church wrote to the *Antichrist Information Center* in California, U.S.A. asking information about Mr Adrian van Leen. I quote now the reply which came from the *Antichrist Information Center Christian Ministries*, dated July 8th, 1985: ‘Dear Brother,’ (and I have the letter here in my hand, if anyone wants to see it after,) ‘In reply to your letter of June 24th, 1985, postmarked, in which you ask if Adrian van Leen is a Jesuit plant, to which Dr Rivera replies simply, “Yes, he is!”’”¹⁹³

Incredibly, here we have a situation of a church in Western Australia writing to Rivera in California for information concerning another ministry in Western Australia. Rivera had never visited Australia up to that date so far as is known, and the example of the above tape message shows how highly A.I.C. had come to be regarded in this distant place. Did they believe A.I.C. was a well-organised fount of information on such matters? All those with whom I have met and who were formerly with A.I.C. testify that it was not.

Charles Younts of Calvary Baptist Missions in Toledo, Ohio wrote to Walter Martin’s *Forward* magazine in 1983 to defend the claims of Todd and Rivera. Yet, he was not ready to accept everything which came from Chick Publications. Younts himself was one of the first to expose Rebecca Brown, MD. Similarly, Penfold Book and Bible House, blind to the John Todd and Alberto Rivera deceptions, give support as Chick Publications’ exclusive distributors in England, but will not include Rebecca Brown’s books on their list.

Battle Cry stories reflect Chick’s support. A banner headline in 1988 read, “100,000 tracts sown in Ireland.” We read that John Kealy “raised money for the tracts by selling hot dogs.”¹⁹⁴ Two years on, John was spearheading the research for Dino Badaracco, the president of the Hispanic Pastors’ Group, C.E.L.E.M., and eventually for this book.

Researchers such as John Kealy have found the Chick material to be unreliable. They have found that most of his stories are from people who are not who they say they are.

I have continued my search for any evidence of fruit from a regenerated life, and I have found none who will testify. There is one exception.

Jack Chick on Alberto Rivera: “The Most Godly Man I Ever Met”

Jack Chick told Gary Metz in a telephone conversation on 30th January 1981 that he had never met a more godly man than Alberto Rivera.¹⁹⁵

Also, Jack knows Alberto's story is true because he "prayed about it," and he said he expected his own life to be taken by Jesuit assassins.¹⁹⁶

Certainly Rivera continues to be well-supported by Chick's publications. In the past, Jack has also written many circular letters to bookstores. He has shown an unwillingness to meet with, or speak to, this writer. There is no certain reason to suppose that he doubts the picture book information, but the result is that the paranoia of both Rivera and reader goes on being lavishly fed.

In an early example of one of the letters to bookstores, Chick writes: "Dr Rivera tells me the Vatican put out 2 billion dollars to get anti-Catholic material off the shelves and the presses became quiet."¹⁹⁷ In another we read, "While we worked on it there were three attempts on Rivera's life. We must take a stand while there is still time."¹⁹⁸

We need to ask ourselves if the Jesuits, or some Roman Catholic agency, were responsible for attacks on Rivera. Or were the stories all part of a strategy to sensationalise and sell books?

An Example from Chick's *Alberto*

Jack Chick tells the story of persecution supposedly suffered by a Christian man at the hand of a professing Christian dentist. *Double-Cross*,¹⁹⁹ a picture book both illustrated and written by Jack Chick, describes the treatment given. The story is of a patient, Alberto Rivera, who, we are told, had been a Jesuit priest, converted to Christ. Now he was preaching the Gospel. Allegedly, attempts had been made upon his life, supposedly by agents of the Vatican in an endeavour to stop his soul-winning work. He had been pushed under a tube train. He had ground glass put in his food. He had been shot at. His bedroom had been blown up by the IRA in Ireland. Now here was another Vatican agent – the dentist.

It is an extraordinary tale. *Double-Cross* tells it in careful detail. Many have believed it. Many among Mr Chick's readers who have had their itching ears tickled are ready to believe whatever charges against Rome and the Vatican are trumped up. For many, the focus is upon attacking Rome rather than upon the truth. For many, in the story of the dentist, the focus is on the belief that Rome did such a thing. They do not examine the facts. Many more stories have been told about Rome, some true, some false. The danger comes when no one checks the facts.

The testimony of Alberto Rivera, the patient, as seen in the illustrated captions and balloons of the *Double-Cross* picture book, were submitted to the scrutiny of two dental surgeons.

Alberto's Visit to the Dentist According to *Double-Cross*

"A 'Christian' who is a dentist and very active in the 'Love Gospel' movement, performed dental surgery on me. While I was under anaesthesia, the dentist worked on my upper left second bicuspid tooth... He drilled through the crown to expose the nerve canal, reamed it out... then... He used a lentulo paste filler to insert the sealer... It broke off!... Instead of removing it or telling me about it... I believe he purposely left it in there... which left me open for infection... Then he covered the tooth with a porcelain crown, so there would be no detection. I believe he knew it could cause infection... which COULD reach the brain causing death... But the Lord held it back for two years." (the foregoing text is complete and with emphasis as in the original). "... Later the dentist insisted on cleaning my teeth – so he could make his final move."²⁰⁰

In the next two pictures it is explained that the teeth were sprayed with nerve gas, and almost immediately Alberto collapsed in the dentist's chair. We read the exaggeration that "his blood pressure dropped to zero."²⁰¹ The dentist gave him a shot to revive him. We see the dentist explaining to Rivera's wife that her husband was "too frightened" and that when he got home he would be fine.

Next we see Rivera collapsed on the bathroom floor with the following observations: "... My organs and nerves were becoming paralyzed. I knew I was being poisoned because I had worked with nerve gas when I was a Jesuit studying poisoning techniques. Rome almost won..."²⁰² Referring to Christians "all over the U.S. and Mexico," we read, "God answered their prayers, and saved me from

certain death once again.”²⁰³

Thus the next picture seems to be some time later than that. We read: “I was in tremendous pain and my face was badly swollen... I went to another dentist who X-rayed my teeth... He discovered the instrument and spotted the infection and sent me to an endodontist (a specialist in root canals)... The endodontist tried to remove the instrument from my tooth... He couldn’t. The infection had spread into my cheek bone... He scraped the bone and drained the infection.”²⁰⁴

The Professional Assessment of the Story by Two Dentists²⁰⁵

The two dental surgeons I consulted were as one in their observations:

- (1) When any root canal instrument breaks, and they do sometimes break, it is almost certainly going to be impossible to remove it. It is normal practise to do as was done, i.e. to leave it in and to seal it.
- (2) Again, just as was done in the story, it is normal practise to X-ray the tooth later, routinely every two years.
- (3) While infection could reach the brain causing death, this is so unlikely that the dentist would not take this into account when making the decision.
- (4) Cleaning teeth is normal but no surface anaesthetic is normally used. It appears Rivera had an anaphylactic shock, i.e. an exaggerated response to a substance that would not normally be harmful. Some are allergic to surface anaesthetic, and cocaine is one of the drugs that can cause it. However, any agent can cause a shock in some people.
- (5) By page 19, picture 1, it appears as if the patient simply fainted in the chair.
- (6) By page 19, picture 2, it is clear that it wasn’t a shock. What we see is a normal physiological response to over-breathing. He has been hyperventilating because he was afraid of dentists. The comment of the dentist, “too frightened,” got it exactly right. He was literally poisoned by fresh air, not getting enough carbon dioxide.
- (7) As for scraping the cheek bone, the two dental surgeons each had occasion to do this two or three times each week, a common and routine procedure.
- (8) On the evidence he himself presents in *Double-Cross*, the kindest thing that could be said is that he is guilty of grossly exaggerating his condition.
- (9) On the patient’s assertion that it was a ‘close call,’ the two dental surgeons remained as one. It was ‘rubbish,’ they said.

The facts had been checked in the only way possible – by two dentists. This author was a long time settling in his mind the matter of Rivera’s fraud in this and many other Chick stories. The reason was the confusion in the areas of spiritual discernment and plain straight thinking. It was one thing to apply spiritual discernment to Roman Catholicism. It was another to think straight regarding all the evidence, true and false, thrown against Rome by Alberto Rivera. The only way was to study the situation carefully, and this meant making some effort.

Jack Chick’s involvement, his openness, and his personal weight behind the Rivera stories served for a time to satisfy many of us, even as we sensed something was not quite right. For example, in a personal letter on the subject of Rivera and the dentist, Chick wrote: “The night Dr Rivera was dying from poison given to him by a dentist to kill him, his wife called me and others and we went before God and asked for Dr Rivera’s life. God graciously healed Alberto. Two days later he came into my office covered with thousands of blisters. God heals – regardless of what people teach.”²⁰⁶

Paranoia, Pride and Lies

In *Double-Cross*, Jack Chick shows the alarming words coming from Rivera’s mouth in the usual comic book balloons. Tim, one of the characters in the comic, has asked Alberto if there have been any attempts to kill him. Rivera replies:

“Oh, yes, Tim... Only God almighty has kept me alive.

*** “In London, I was pushed in front of a subway train.

*** “...and in Ireland my bedroom was blown up by the I.R.A.! (footnote: I.R.A. is the Irish Republican Army – killing the British and Protestants in Ireland – and is under the command of the Jesuits under oath)

*** “(and in the United States)... someone put ground glass in my food at a prayer meeting.

*** “I have been shot at, at least five times.

*** “And then a few years ago, Satan made his most deadly attack on me. It was through false brethren.” (At this point Rivera tells Tim of his visit to the dentist described above).²⁰⁷

A consistent mention of five assassination stories, nearly ten years after this account in *Double-Cross*, appeared in 1990. The A.I.C. magazine included a “Newsflash!”:

“On Tuesday August 14, 1990, Dr Alberto Rivera met for the first time with a 33 degree Mason, after receiving on the 9th August a telephone call from this person. The man revealed letters about Alberto’s sister’s assassination, as well as five failed assassination attempts on Alberto’s life. We cannot reveal the man’s name at this time (we will later). But, when he was given the order to kill Dr Alberto Rivera, he was prompted to do some research on Alberto which led him to the Chick Publications which carried Alberto’s testimony series. This same man is now a BORN-AGAIN person, and is no longer a Roman Catholic! (PRAISE THE LORD!)”²⁰⁸

Rivera’s sister, Maria, had not been assassinated. I met her *after* 14 August 1990 when Rivera had his alleged meeting with the 33 degree Mason.

Back before 1990, Rivera had related to Dr Guerrero and others in a Sunday morning service the story of finding out about the murder of his sister. Rivera had a letter then, and he cried as he read it.

Throughout Rivera’s story we have seen testimony and evidence of his paranoia and delusions. Apart from the many small pretences such as starting a hunger strike when he was at the seminary, or, more recently, claiming to have 187 students in his school, there have been the major deceptions. Examples:

1. Dino Badaracco, who assisted Rivera for a time, described to me the unanswered letters arranged around the room at 2580 North Soto Street. He spoke of the times Rivera would go off on his own into some other room or office, not to pray but seemingly to do nothing. Mr Badaracco spoke of the time with Rivera’s ministry there: “He received money for radio equipment from Puerto Rico... He received letters and money, took the money, then stored the letters for several months without sending the goods... The letters lining the room had contained donations as well as money for tapes etc.... While at North Soto he (Rivera) regularly represented to people that he was the owner of the building.”²⁰⁹

2. An “Urgent!!!” notice appeared in an early issue of the A.I.C. magazine. We include it to be considered alongside the above: “A.I.C. is being attacked through the mail system. All orders received have been shipped. Please drop us a note letting us know whether or not you have received the material you ordered.”²¹⁰

3. Dr Ismael Guerrero: “He could not be moved from his stand as an authoritative figure with some kind of God-given authority to act and interpret as he saw fit, while other people were wrong in their view of Scripture. I commented to him, ‘Then you never make mistakes?’ to which he answered, ‘If I must pride myself I must say that I may forget a name or a date, but I never make mistakes with Scripture’ (Infallible?).”²¹¹

4. Envelopes used by A.I.C. for mailing carry the bold printed message: “\$2000.00 FINE or 5 YEARS IMPRISONMENT or both for any person who interferes with or obstructs delivery of this letter or otherwise violates 18 United States Code 1702 et seq.”²¹²

5. Mrs Nury Rivera, conversation in Spanish (taped and translated): “We have in these last three years lost more than \$350,000. This is not money that the company has not paid us. It is money that we have lost – property and our belongings that amount to \$350,000.”²¹³

6. On behalf of the local church, Dr Guerrero wrote that: “...Dr Rivera announces by radio that he has a medical office (without a doctor), and a Christian school for children (without accredited teachers), violating all laws and regulations enforceable from their respective government agencies.”²¹⁴

Chick Compounds the Confusion

Battle Cry is a Chick publication. Whilst a useful source of information, it is another vehicle which reflects the paranoia seen elsewhere in the Chick camp. It also reflects the Chick logic: “Roman Catholicism is bad. *Alberto* shows Roman Catholicism is bad. Therefore Dr Rivera is a reliable storyteller.”

The problem for Christians is that Chick’s publicity and promotion skills are as considerable as his painting skills and production capacity. Two *Battle Cry* headlines provide ready examples.

The *first* headline noted relates to John Todd and is “Satanism: The Ultimate Rebellion. Network Program Verifies Accuracy of Chick Comic.”²¹⁵ Unfortunately Chick’s logic is comic logic. The article makes reference to an ANC 20/20 show which is supposed to confirm what John Todd had told him. However, did the programme even mention John Todd? Ten years after *Broken Cross* was published, supposedly based on Todd’s “testimony” as an ex-witch, Jack was still clutching straws for confirmation.

The *second* example involves Rivera, and we see a similarly misleading headline: “Catholic Theologian Confirms Alberto Rivera.” The article begins by telling us, “Hans Kung, declaring he can keep silent no longer, states that the Inquisition is again in full swing... careers and psyches are destroyed as required.”²¹⁶ Alberto Rivera is laced through the Chick story. Again the connection is at best illogical and at worst, deceitful. Once again we might ask: Has Hans Kung ever even heard of Alberto Rivera?

It is not the well-known Hans Kung who confirms Alberto Rivera! What we have is *Battle Cry* confirming Alberto Rivera. On the experience of the long-running endorsement of John Todd’s information, humanly speaking, there seems little likelihood of any waning in Chick’s faithfulness to Rivera’s long-running fantasies.

Jack Chick has spoken of a policy change. He was now “... going in for Bible stories, strictly nothing controversial, stopped all controversial issues.”²¹⁷ It is right that all the books with false testimony and false history be withdrawn. Chick would be wise to sanitise his entire output by removing all material from John Todd, Rebecca Brown, Elaine Moses and, not least, Alberto Rivera.

Rivera continues to answer his critics boldly. He has not wanted to answer personal communications from me on the new material available. The taped replies to his critics, to which we shall refer, give us the advantage of being able to look at some of the things Rivera has to say.

Encountering Rivera’s Followers

Bartholomew Brewer of *Mission to Catholics International* explained the problem of Rivera’s followers, who attend Mr Brewer’s meetings, in this way:

“Historically it has always been difficult to evangelise Roman Catholic people because of fear, suspicion, religious pride, ignorance of God’s word and a misguided loyalty. Since the Chick comic books, it has been made more difficult. Catholic people have become more defensive and more reactionary.

“In one sense it is easier today because of the crisis of confusion in the Roman Catholic church. However, on the other hand the comic series has made Roman Catholics apprehensive about those Christians who reach out to Roman Catholic people with the sufficiency of His Word. In speaking around the country, we have had a number of Alberto followers, always in groups, and during question and answer time they commonly become rude and antagonistic when we express our concern about the comic books. In every situation they were young enthusiastic people, impressed by the comics, and let down to find that things were not so. For example there is the overwhelming evidence that he was not a priest, and the burden of proof is upon him.

“The same questions have come up in Britain, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and in the Philippines. In the United States ninety per cent of the people tell me, whether in public or in private, that they ‘thought something was wrong.’ The fact that the question is asked is indicative of doubt.”²¹⁸

Wilson Ewin’s book, *You Can Lead Roman Catholics to Christ*, has run through many editions since it was first published in 1961. The 1991 edition lends weight to what Mr Brewer and other ministries to Roman Catholics are saying about wrong evangelism tools. Referring to the bad evangelistic literature that has already reached Roman Catholic hands, Wilson Ewin writes: “This has already created a suspicious or even hostile attitude in the mind of the Catholic as he is approached with your literature... One source in particular must be held responsible for damaging the ministry among Roman Catholics on a global scale. Chick Publications of Chino, California began printing full-size comics on the topic of Catholicism in the 1970s. These have been distributed around the world and advertised as useful for ‘winning Roman Catholics to Christ.’ However the contents of *The Crusaders* produce the very opposite effect when used indiscriminately, that is, without careful selection by the evangelist. No word of caution or warning has ever come from Chick Publications.”²¹⁹

Chick again gave support to Rivera with a tract, *My Name...In the Vatican?* The message was that the Vatican was behind the refusal of some Christian bookstores to sell the picture books. On 25th March 1981, following the Gary Metz exposé, Chick Publications were quick to write a long circular letter which began by praising God, “for the latest broadside Rome has slammed at Chick Publications using Gary Metz.” Always, focus is brought upon the Vatican; no acknowledgment is given to the bookstore owners’ intelligent assessment of the facts. In another circular letter, Chick wrote: “...I know these attacks will continue with endless charges as long as we publish the true story of ‘Alberto.’ But these people will never discuss the truth of what we published.”²²⁰

Jack Chick wasn’t satisfied thus far by what has been made available to him. Accordingly, an early draft of this book was mailed to him in May 1992.

Next, we present more of what Rivera has to say about himself. We labour under some difficulty once again because of Rivera’s use of language. Both his written and spoken word leave some details which are only partly intelligible. Much of what Rivera speaks is completely unintelligible. I write from the experience of hearing Rivera speak on dozens of tapes. However, I must give credit to brothers in Christ who have a different experience. I read in *Canadian Revivalist* (May-June 1982) of Rivera’s language: “His English is very good with enough accent to betray his Spanish background.” That assessment was on the basis of a personal meeting, and again it must be conceded that, since work on the book began, this author has not succeeded in entering into any dialogue with Alberto Rivera.

Rivera – What is His Purpose at A.I.C. and What Does He Himself Have to Say?

Alberto Rivera, “International Director, Bishop, Pastor, Writer, Preacher, Historian, Organic Nutritionist, Educator, Lecturer, Bible Teacher, Scientist, Evangelist and Consultant,” offers us six purposes for A.I.C. alongside the thirteen titles listed on the front page of his magazine.

What does Rivera say about A.I.C., about its mailing list and worldwide connections? Rivera was interviewed and we hear: “... This ministry have hundreds of churches associated around the world... mailing list that go over seven million.”²²¹ This would be a big surprise to those who worked with him. Donald Blanton, Ismael Guerrero MD and Dino Badaracco all testify that Rivera had *no* regular mailings, only “form” letters sent to particular enquirers.

Writing from his experience, Dr Guerrero states there was at least one computer print-out on labels with perhaps 15,000 names and addresses, and in his own words: “...to my knowledge this came from a computer at Chick Publications and Dr Rivera did not have the software. These were used to send out ‘bulk mail,’ around 300 at a time as often as once per week, more commonly every two weeks, during the time I assisted, from around August 1986 to June 1989.”²²²

My own experience as regards A.I.C. in the early 1980s is principally one of unanswered letters,

identical form letters received over and over again, and endless photocopied book covers for *Night Journey from Rome*. One form letter asked me whether I would be interested in the exchange of mailing lists. I was informed the A.I.C. list consisted of about 50,000 names, and told: “Our ministry deals mainly with – (1) people who are dealing with the evangelisation of Roman Catholics; (2) Roman Catholic people; (3) former Roman Catholic people.”

Dr Guerrero, Donald Blanton and Mr Badaracco eventually separated themselves from Rivera’s work, and Rivera was dismissed from his local church. To get Rivera’s account, it is unfortunate that the question was asked by a man who was only pretending as a journalist, but nevertheless we have the advantage of a clear question and of Rivera’s recorded reply. Rivera was asked: “Is it true that you were disfellowshipped from your church at 2580 Nort Soto, Los Angeles?” Continuing and expanding upon the lie told on KBRT Radio, the following is Rivera’s reply:

“I never knew nothing like that. I don’t know about this. There is a lot of rumors. What is true... and the evidence are there in history that I myself personally put under discipline certain individuals that were infiltrating our church and ministry... sent there by the Vatican... and I myself confront them, discipline them and expel them...”²²³

Thus, on Rivera’s account, Ismael Guerrero and the local church didn’t expel *him*. Rather, we are told, *he* expelled Dr Guerrero (this matter is dealt with later in this book).

Rivera was asked about the time when he was supposedly a Jesuit priest: “Did you work with the Christian Reformed Church in 1964?”²²⁴ Again Rivera replied willingly:

“I did not work with them. No sir. This is a fabrication that is going around with this denomination and others because I am against this denominations. I accuse them of being daughters of the Roman Catholic institution. It is a total fabrication.”²²⁵

Bill, the caller, still exploring the year 1964, asked about Johnny, a son whose existence has been denied by Rivera and who, we know, had died in that year. Rivera replied: “No my son is here. John is here.” Somewhat surprised, Bill asked, “John your son is there?” Rivera replied: “He answered your call.”²²⁶

Referring back to the Christian Reformed Church, Rivera, who admittedly does not claim conversion by 1964, said he “did this service as a Jesuit priest on ecumenical grounds,” and as he did it “with the AOG.” Ending with a chuckle, and with the coolness and composure seen throughout the conversation, he added there were “many... under cover-up. If anybody has to be brought to the attention of this, it will be the Pope of Rome.”²²⁷

Another interview, this time with Donald Blanton in 1987, gives Rivera the opportunity to speak about the charges against him with regard to the stolen credit card in Florida – after Rivera’s supposed conversion:

“...every law enforcement agency, Interpol, FBI, CIA, every other... charges on false cheques, forged cheques, stolen credit cards, women, children, and so on... I live in California seventeen years as the instrument of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of more than fourteen churches among the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking peoples... working as a minister for the American Baptist Convention until 1982... and still this is being passed on to those who are drunk, to those who are blind, and only drunks and blinds can believe what is written here... after seven years, what about prosecution for this?”²²⁸

Rivera’s question to Donald Blanton in those early days, “what about prosecution for this?” is a good one. Mr Blanton himself eventually went to court to recover money from Rivera – and won (see further in this book).

The first exposé of Rivera by Gary Metz appeared in *Cornerstone* magazine, for whom he had been asked to write. In 1981, at the Christian Booksellers Convention in Anaheim, California, Brian Onken, in company with Walter Martin, asked Rivera: “Does *Cornerstone* work hand in hand with the Vatican?” Whilst conceding that not every man there was involved, he replied, “Of course.”

However, what does Rivera mean? It was in reply to the above question that we have the advantage

of Rivera's three tests which, in his view, connect a man to Rome.

1. One who states that the Roman Catholic institution is a Christian Church.
2. One who states that there are Christians in the Roman Catholic Church.
3. One who states that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is taking place within the Roman Catholic institution.

It is true that such views do encourage Rome. However, in the context of the dialogue with Walter Martin and Brian Onken, as with many others, and even accepting the three points, the conclusion of working "hand in hand with the Vatican" grossly overstates the situation.

Rivera is a very able performer. He acts well. He can look after himself well. He is a good decision-maker. He can competently manage the confusion that surrounds him, whether or not this is of his own creation or of gullible Christians. Rivera makes mistakes. He is not always cool and composed in his interviews. However, he seems to judge well when it is time to show anger, when to interrupt, when to be polite, when to be rude, when to shout and when to be silent. He can keep the attention of those interested in the idea (certainly true enough) of a Jesuit conspiracy, and such is his purpose.

Reports from Around the World – Rivera has Boldness

Rivera is bold. Carl Tornbom, a missionary for 32 years in Mexico, wrote to me of his visit in May 1991 to a church in Torreon (Mexico), where Rivera was preaching:

"... We went to hear him in the same church in May. Screaming loud music. Drums, electric guitars etc.... Alberto proceeded to lambast Catholicism. My good friend that was with me said, 'Boy, he sure is brave to say all those things against the Catholic Church here in the heart of Mexico.' When he finished talking, a man got up to say that he (the man, that is) was a Jesuit, and even though he was in agreement with Alberto in many things, there were some things he was not in agreement with and he would like to have a public debate or talk about these matters. To our grand surprise Alberto ran to the edge of the platform and, pointing his finger at the man, began screaming that the man was possessed of the devil. He then went back to the center of the platform and ran again to the edge pointing his finger, shouting for the devil to come out of the man. He did this several times. The poor Jesuit was dumbfounded, along with other people like ourselves. The members of the church began singing louder and louder and began to rock and roll in place. They call it dancing unto the Lord" (quoted exactly as in the original).²²⁹

Next we quote from a letter received from Frank McClelland of the Toronto Free Presbyterian Church, which described a knowledge of Rivera which extended up to February 1987:

"In all his (Rivera's) visits with us we never had cause to seriously doubt that he was whom he claimed to be. His ministry was scriptural and as far as we could judge, correct. The Free Presbyterian Church has always taken a strong stand against Rome and consequently, is well versed on Rome's teachings. What Alberto Rivera preached was nothing new to us, and we were impressed by his knowledge of the Roman Catholic institution, and his openness to our questions.

"To us he looks like a priest, has the intellectual capability one normally associates with a Jesuit, and preaches exactly what we would expect a born again priest to preach."²³⁰

A letter from a supporter in Australia also suggests we are to expect a different approach, or even behaviour, from any ex-Roman Catholic priest who is saved: "Nothing speaks louder for his (Rivera's) authenticity as an ex-priest than his behavior and manner of operation."²³¹

Such is not my own experience of saved men who were priests and who enter the Lord's work.

Rivera is a Formidable Opponent

In the manner of a Hollywood celebrity, Rivera invariably appears centre-stage, and he accommodates himself to his surroundings. Also, he can use his mistakes well. On one occasion I

heard him, deliberately or otherwise, give a date which put his first doctorate at the age of twelve years in 1947. Often it seems it is better for him, even allowing the rhetoric in which he indulges and the evident poverty of his grasp (true or not) of the English language, to promote a new confusion *within* a debate or interview. In this way the confusion becomes the subject, and deflects a more substantial subject that ought to have been pursued. In this example, someone in the studio eventually picked up the matter of the dates and returned to the subject of a doctorate at twelve years old. But how many listeners even registered that Rivera was born in 1935 anyway, even if they had been told? At worst, many a listener is left frustrated by it all, and he switches off. When, after all, the 1947 date is returned to, the remaining listeners easily see that no intelligent man could give such a date for his doctorate, other than in error. The explanation becomes a simple one and most don't doubt Rivera's intelligence. The reason is assumed to be confusion and misunderstanding in the heat of the programme. Rivera isn't helped by such heat or diversion, but neither is he necessarily hindered. For him, long experienced and skilled in these matters, it can have served a purpose. Apart from a clear-thinking host who has done a great deal of homework, will not interviewing Rivera always be a thankless task?

Of course it is tempting to ask about Rivera's seven doctorates. True or false, the only possible explanation the average listener could ever expect is that they were special Jesuit doctorates. This is indeed the answer they eventually get if the interviewer persists that far. Isn't the better question: why, as the head of a supposedly "Christian" ministry, does he use Jesuit doctorates long after his "conversion"?

Rivera has had many opportunities to explain himself and he has been more than ready to do so. However, the point here is that in these interviews, Rivera's main aim is not to establish a credibility with discerning Christian leaders. Isn't his aim for publicity, to promote interest in his limited themes? Interest in public exposure in the media contrasts markedly with his unwillingness to engage in correspondence with professing Christian leaders.

Bill Jackson heads *Christians Evangelizing Catholics* and is one who wrote a succession of polite letters of enquiry to Rivera between 1979 and 1982. During that time he received one "form" letter and eventually a more personal two-page letter, written and signed on Rivera's behalf. It gave four reasons why Rivera had "instructed" the writer to "discontinue completely all correspondence..."²³²

One of Rivera's statements has particular significance. Whilst Rivera will avoid questions, rarely one to dodge a challenge, he issued this statement:

"I have been requested to make a statement concerning the validity of the account of my life story in the book, '*Alberto*,' published by Chick Publications, Inc.

"'*Alberto*' is a true and actual account, and I will face a court of law to prove the events actually took place. I hereby challenge anyone who would refute or try to prove the facts and information in this book are untrue. I will defend every statement made regardless of the embarrassment it may cause any person or church. Sincerely – Alberto M. R. Rivera, D.Th."²³³

"*He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him*" (Proverbs 18:17).

There appears at the front of the first *Alberto* picture book a statement which reads:

"No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental, with the exception of references to God or the Lord Jesus Christ or direct quotations from God's Word, the Bible, or references to historical persons or institutions used for documentation purposes."

Such seems to allow Chick's "Alberto" a fictitious or uncertain status, separate from that of Alberto Rivera. However, as we have seen, Rivera meets his challenges head-on and he issued his signed statement with his usual boldness.

On Radio KBRT, Avalon, California, Rivera received another challenge. He was asked a most

extraordinary question. It had been already asked and answered clearly, but still interviewer Tim Barrons wanted to make sure: “So let me repeat so you fully understand. You are willing to have your soul damned in hell if what you’re saying is not the truth?”²³⁴

His reply: “Absolutely.”

“*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*” (Proverbs 16:25).

The story of Rivera’s life according to the facts and the testimonies is in marked contrast to the picture book account and to the further explanations Rivera has given.

The book, *Is Alberto for Real?* compiled by Sidney Hunter, invites us to “Read the Facts... then you decide!” We read: “...enquiries have been made by the Canadian Protestant League... We hear of alleged inconsistencies, contradictions, impossibly conflicting dates; yet we have never been given the sources of information – *letter, tapes, photocopies, individuals, interviews, etc.* – not even a newspaper clipping!”²³⁵

More than two years of research involving hundreds of “*letters, tapes, photocopies, individuals, interviews, etc.*” is to hand. The result is this book. We have presented the facts and the testimony. Is Alberto really for real? The latest from Jack Chick (January 1992) is that he will continue to stand behind the *Alberto* books. He writes: “... I know the message is accurate and that the Lord put Dr Rivera in my life so that the precious Roman Catholics could be reached.”²³⁶

There Comes a Point at Which Rome is Helped by the Chick Message

It would not be right to say that the harvest from either Todd’s or Rivera’s stories is the Lord’s. Back again to 1981, in a letter to Gary Metz in appreciation of his work of warning about Alberto Rivera, Bartholomew F. Brewer wrote: “My greatest concern is that Rome can reap a propagandist harvest from these stories (referring to the picture books) and claim that all criticism against the system is fraudulent. The situation makes me appreciate how important it is to stick to the truth even when criticizing falsehood.”²³⁷

My friend Bart Brewer, who wrote those words, faces many audiences. As head of a mission to Roman Catholics, and because he was a Roman Catholic priest, he faces many questions from those who are doubtful about the Alberto Rivera message. He faces questions from those who want to know if what is written in the *Alberto* books is true. In more than a decade which has passed since the Gary Metz exposé, and which has seen Rivera go from strength to strength, the questions about Alberto have taken much time in Mr Brewer’s meetings. Often Rivera’s supporters, surprised at his answers, have become rude or angry. He has been able to answer them. However, Mr Brewer testifies that the subject of Alberto has presented a hindrance. The *Alberto* story has introduced a diversion from the real business with which Mr Brewer is concerned.

Some may turn for answers, as I have done, to the traditional Protestant organisations. Many Christians want to know if Alberto Rivera really was a Jesuit priest. Following dialogue with various Protestant organisations, I wrote of the progress on the present book in a general letter to some 100 people around the world who had been supportive of the effort to expose *Alberto*. I made reference to the traditional Protestant organisations:

“Among the few remaining in Britain and America who still recognise Rome and the Pope as the biblical *MYSTERY, BABYLON* and *antichrist* respectively, the Chick/*Alberto* impression of Rome is the prevailing one. A similar scenario is painted by various traditional Protestant organisations. I do not say that groups like the *Protestant Alliance* take on board the extreme revelations Rivera has brought to light from his supposed insider role in the Vatican, but except Rivera be exposed and these Protestant groups recognise him as the fraud which he is, may we not suppose that, before long, more and more of Rivera’s stories from the Vatican archives will be accepted by the gullible? We emphasise that as struggling Protestant groups work hard to send out publications by the dozen, Chick is mailing in thousands and tens of thousands.

“Still concentrating on the bloody history of Rome, Protestant groups like the *Canadian Protestant League* are persuaded by the *Alberto* testimony. They miss Rome’s more subtle strategy. For Rivera’s part, where he didn’t invent the material, he certainly didn’t get it as a Vatican insider as he claims. He got it mostly from Protestant sources, and the temptation for these is to welcome Rivera as an up-to-date example confirming the picture of Rome which they have for so long described... Our purpose is not to oppose these Protestant organisations but to warn of the hazard which *Alberto* presents to them and to all of us...

“Some tell me God will deal with Rivera as He has dealt with Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart. However, the question is not how Bakker, Swaggart or Rivera should be dealt with, but how we are to warn of false teachers. This is a purpose central to my writing.

“In the words of the *Protestant Alliance* (England):

“Leave them alone. If they are false it will come out. We mean to be rather like Gamaliel over this particular thing. If it is of God it will flourish, and if it is not of God it will perish.”²³⁸

“Gamaliel was not warning about deceivers. Acts 5 speaks of a Pharisee urging restraint in dealing with the Apostles. Again, at the end of correspondence with the *Canadian Protestant League*, its Secretary, who read my manuscript prior to publication, remained unconvinced. He wrote:

“I have no reason to think of changing anything from the original article which appears in *Is Alberto for Real?* (Chick Publications, 96 pages, 1988)... I still feel the warning of Gamaliel might be listened to by you’.”²³⁹

“The brethren at the *Canadian Protestant League* cannot warn because they do not see. Yet how many *can* see, and yet still fail to warn?

“I believe it is important and urgent to alert the Church about Alberto Rivera. The Roman Catholic church has to be exposed effectively with both Bible truth and facts, yet is it not dishonouring to the Lord to present a mixture of truth and error, fact and fantasy, based on the fables of an impostor who never was a Roman Catholic priest as he claims? Apart from his own false testimony, Alberto Rivera’s descriptions of contemporary Rome draw upon stories from the past as well as the inventions of his own imagination. Since Vatican II, Rome is far more dangerous, far more subtle, than Chick and *Alberto* present her. Compared to the blood-letting of the past, and the days of the Protestant martyrs burned at the stake, untold billions of *spiritual* lives are now at stake. They are still being led by the Pied Piper of Rome. She now leads with a different face, an evidently caring hand, but still by a diabolical route, the broad road, to a lost eternity. It is the way of syncretism and ecumenism to the one-world religion headed by the Pope.”²⁴⁰

In all of this, what is Rivera but an unwitting *agent provocateur* for Rome, one who continues to make the whole Protestant cause look ridiculous with his extreme claims against Rome? In the next chapter we consider Rivera’s involvement with “Sister Charlotte.” She was a woman where there remains some mystery, but, assuming she was a genuine former nun, it has neither helped her, her “ministry,” nor her memory to find Rivera involving her name with his in the way that he does. We look at these endorsements, both of “Sister Charlotte” and of others who have opposed Rome.

Chapter 11

RIVERA, “SISTER CHARLOTTE” AND CLARK BUTTERFIELD

The picture book *Alberto* has served as a passport. Wherever he travels in the world, if they don't have copies already, and in their own language, then Rivera has copies he can present to them. Alberto Rivera is known by the story related in *Alberto*. Incredible though the story is, Rivera is given credibility by the printed word. He has been promoted by Chick Publications. *Alberto* has been the key to his fame. The fame has enabled Rivera to step out and be heard. He has been promoted as the authority on all things Roman Catholic. As a result, Rivera has polluted the Chick work and that of the other authors to which his comments and opinions have been yoked. Yet, beyond that, Chick has served as the vehicle to provide credibility for Rivera's personal enterprises. Foremost among these is Rivera's *Antichrist Information Center* (A.I.C.).

Rivera Pollutes the Testimony of “Sister Charlotte”

Alberto first appeared in 1979, and an A.I.C. advertisement in that year describes the tape where we hear “Sister Charlotte's” story. Her story is an interesting one, just as the Jesuit story told in *Alberto*. However, once again we are concerned here, not so much with Charlotte as with Alberto Rivera. The A.I.C. advertisement was as follows:

“*Escape from a Catholic Convent – Sister Charlotte's Testimony*; the shocking truth about what goes on behind convent walls in the U.S. – It cost Charlotte her life – \$10 Donation.”

The price of the tape at \$10 was a high one, particularly in 1979, but more significant here is the price that we read that Charlotte paid – according to Alberto Rivera.

In a statement from A.I.C. we see listed six “Purposes” of A.I.C. One of these purposes draws upon the name of “Sister Charlotte,” and the wording is found right into the 1990s:

“To establish a base or refuge for Roman Catholic nuns, priests and monks who are converted to Christ. Why is this important? Because Dr Rivera came out of this jungle of fear where every priest is watched and spied upon by his fellow priests to report... whatever he says against the teachings of the Roman Catholic Institution. Those in danger are the ones who know what is really going on. *Many who have come out have been killed or kidnapped as was Sister Charlotte in 1959*. Only with your help can this be accomplished” (my emphasis).²⁴¹

Tapes by Charlotte made in 1958 and in 1968 are circulating. I have not found others. The tapes have also been published and re-published in booklet form. Some appear with various introductions and conclusions added by those who present them. One such introduction to the 1958 tapes was given by Donna Eubanks. This former Roman Catholic nun of 23 years testified to the truth of “the things that were said from the beginning to the end of these tapes.”

Donna Eubanks, formerly mother superior of the Convent of St Joseph in Orange, California, is today on the staff of Chick Publications. Her photograph, taken when she was a nun, appears inside the front cover of the current editions of the *Alberto* series. Alongside we read: “I can state from personal knowledge, that Dr Rivera is telling the truth about the Roman Catholic system.”²⁴² Donna has previously been national director of Rivera's *Antichrist Information Center*.

Donna Eubanks' Introduction to Charlotte's 1958 tapes is as follows:

(extract) “... we honor the memory of our dear Sister Charlotte by once again bringing to the public the story of this faithful daughter of God with this new edition of the tape of her experiences as she obeyed the commandment of the Lord saying ‘Come out of her my people.’”

“Sister Charlotte, before she disappeared, left a personal message on Dr Rivera's answering service

device, and in the middle of her call for help she was in terrible pain and anguish wherever she was incarcerated. She made it clear in her appeal that wherever she was being taken by that force she would be one more of the martyrs of Jesus Christ. It is Dr Rivera's personal conviction, and he challenges the Roman Catholic institution, and those who follow the call of the spirit of the antichrist, to prove otherwise that our Sister Charlotte was murdered by the priests and the Jesuits of Rome. Her disappearance occurred in Napa Valley, California, after she delivered for the final time her testimony of conversion and freedom, not only from the Roman Catholic institution, but from the liars and heresies and blasphemies of the charismatic movement. May God bless you as you listen to the personal testimony of our beloved Sister Charlotte."

After Charlotte's testimony on the tape, we hear Donna Eubanks' conclusion:

"The testimony you have just heard was given in a church in Napa, California by Sister Charlotte in 1958. No one seems to know where she is today. Dr Rivera, an ex-Jesuit priest, after his conversion to Crist tried to locate Sister Charlotte. The search continued for over 10 years. The last information about Sister Charlotte was that she was supposed to have boarded a plane to go to another speaking engagement and has never been seen since."

Escape from a Catholic Convent – Sister Charlotte's Testimony (tape) appears to have been first advertised in the second issue of *A.I.C. News*. That was Vol 1, No 2, dated November 1979. It is not known if those first tapes carried Donna Eubanks' Introduction and Conclusion as quoted above. However, A.I.C. published *Escape from a Catholic Convent* in booklet form with Rivera's copyright in 1984. I have two editions, one by Mr A. Campbell of Belfast, Northern Ireland, and the other is from A.I.C. Both editions of the booklet carry the above "Conclusion" passage, as well as the full text of the "Introduction" as spoken by Donna Eubanks on the tape. This time it is written as if from Rivera, and signed by him. There is no mystery here. We simply acknowledge that it isn't evident which came first, the booklet or the tape with Donna's Introduction. What is clear is that as early as November 1979, Rivera was already declaring in his advertising that the message "cost Charlotte her life."

What Effect Has Rivera Had on the Credibility of Charlotte's Testimony?

In *Escape from a Catholic Convent*, aside from Charlotte's testimony, thirty-nine pages are given over to Rivera's own comments and promotions. Four of these pages show seven pictures of his sister, Maria, taken from *Double-Cross*. She is seen in her blood-soaked robes on her bed in the convent. The date was 1967. The place was London, England.

The question of "Sister Charlotte" is now before us, and Alberto Rivera introduces his blood sister Maria. Reading *A.I.C. News* in 1990, readers would be entitled to assume that Rivera had not heard what happened to either of these women – in the case of Charlotte, since 1959. The first facing pages of the twenty-page magazine in 1990 reveal:

(1) "Many... have been killed or kidnapped as was Sister Charlotte in 1959."²⁴³

(2) "... No 7 and 8 of the *Alberto* series... No 8 will be titled, "*The Holocaust of a Nun*" dedicated to the memory of Alberto's sister. We urge you to place your orders now, as this will help with the financial need for the printing..."²⁴⁴

On the basis of what we have presented thus far, readers may reasonably suppose both women may have died in horrid circumstances. What we see here are efforts to prop up Rivera's credibility. Does he use Charlotte and Maria to provide evidence for the dangers under which he himself claims to labour? Reliable testimonies of dreadful maltreatment in Roman Catholic convents are not denied, although those which I have read about date back many years. Whether either Charlotte or Maria were nuns as Rivera claims, I have found no proof and little evidence.

What is significant here is the fact that Rivera's sister Maria was still alive when Rivera was

dedicating a book to her memory. I have met with Maria since Rivera's book.

As for Charlotte, she died at the good age of 85 years. Her death certificate²⁴⁵ shows death from "CVA," which means Cerebro Vascular Accident. Her "primary occupation" is shown as "evangelist." Charlotte lived on Pine Street in Napa. She died in the Queen of the Valley Hospital in Napa. It was Paul Price, the long-serving pastor of Charlotte's church in Napa, who was the official "informant" as to her death. Just five days after her death, Charlotte was buried in the Tulocay cemetery in Napa. She had died on 28 September 1983, after a long life and from a perfectly normal and common cause.

One of the consequences of Rivera's testimony is that it encourages doubt as to testimonies of others.

The Question of "Sister Charlotte"

Win Worley is a well-known Pentecostal preacher who was one of the first to alert me to Rebecca Brown and the *Closet Witches* deception from Chick Publications. Worley has edited a booklet, *Escape from a Cloistered Convent*,²⁴⁶ again using Charlotte's tapes. Published in 1981, the booklet includes a favourable reference to the first *Alberto* book. Whatever is Win Worley's view of Rivera now that ten more years have passed, I do not know. It is the words from his "Preface" which are interesting:

"To those who say Charlotte's story is all a hoax, we say, open all the cloisters for public inspection if there is nothing to hide. Prove the story is false by letting impartial investigators examine the cloisters. I am merely recording Charlotte's story as she told it on the tapes."²⁴⁷

Some I have spoken to have listened to the tapes. Their suspicions have been aroused that Charlotte may not be who she says she is. I have myself discovered no evidence at all that Charlotte was a cloistered nun as she describes. Correspondence and conversation with Paul Price, with members of Charlotte's church and others in Napa, have been a help only so far as providing the information related in this chapter. I have had much correspondence, including with the headquarters of the United Pentecostal Church denomination, for the purpose of establishing the veracity of Charlotte's testimony. I have followed every research lead that I have been given, and still, apart from Charlotte's own word, I have not a shred of evidence that she was ever a nun. I am bound to conclude that there may have been some carelessness on the part of those in authority around her, given the ignorance of any detail at all of her life as a nun.

I do not write that Charlotte was not a nun. I simply seek to emphasise the point made by the many examples throughout this book. There are – and have been – many in "ministry" who invent a testimony, and the most extravagant are found amongst those who claim to have been Roman Catholics or Satanists. If we can thank the subjects of this book for one thing, perhaps it is that our experience of them has caused us to be careful, and realise the need of straight thinking.

An impartial investigation of cloistered convents in the 1990s, as Worley suggests, could well reveal just those things which Worley has published. Certainly such horrors have happened, as other books on my shelves very well evidence.

Barbara Ubryk comes immediately to mind. As in Charlotte's story, Barbara also entered a Carmelite convent. In Barbara's case we know the date, the location, the name of her confessor and the name of her mother superior. "Two years after serving her novitiate... because of her alleged bad conduct... she was thrust into a half-underground cell next to the privy-sink of the Convent. The cell window was then walled up with bricks and cement, by Fr. Calenski and the Lady Superior, Mother Josepha."²⁴⁸ *The Convent Horror* is the story of Barbara's "Twenty-one Years in a Convent Dungeon Eight Feet Long and Six Feet Wide." The story is "From Official Records." The place is Cracow. Let us not mistake the place and the century when this took place. It was not the United States of America, and the dates were 1848 to 1869.

Whether or not terrible horrors existed in the United States in the lifetime of Charlotte, straight thinking must direct us to insist on one thing. Whatever examination might be carried out in any cloistered convent, it could never provide sensible evidence that Charlotte is who she says she is, nor

that her story was a hoax. The scene can be accurate, but the actors may well not belong to it.

In a letter written to *C.I.B. Bulletin* (Bend, Oregon) following its advance notice of the publication of this book, one correspondent wrote:

“I was surprised to see your little newsbrief on Alberto Rivera... I believe Rivera’s testimony. And even there are still others who have exposed the Roman church... Is Maria Monk a fraud? Was Avro Manhattan a liar? Is the testimony of Sister Charlotte just a fairy tale? Was her mysterious disappearance just a coincidence?...”²⁴⁹

Maria Monk, making her disclosures more than 150 years ago, ensured that her description of the “Black Nun’s Convent”²⁵⁰ where she lived was on the record. She wrote:

“When this book is read by the Priests they will acknowledge to themselves the truth of my description; but they will deny it to the world, and probably try to destroy belief in me.”²⁵¹

Maria Monk’s forecast has been taken by Rivera for his own situation, but there the similarity ends. Rivera can copy, and give a similar warning to help try and substantiate his false claims, but, unlike Maria, he doesn’t have any relevant evidence to present.

We trust we have answered the question as regards Rivera. I do not know about Charlotte. I believe the above correspondent to *C.I.B. Bulletin*, unwittingly or not, has prompted a pertinent question in her case. Such tapes as those made by Charlotte will continue to be copied and circulated, and in order that her testimony is not left open to undue doubt as the years pass, and indeed as further doubts are raised on account of the Rivera deception, the search for at least the basic details of her convent can usefully continue. My enquiries have extended to the church in Napa, California, which employed her, and to the “evangelist” who travelled with her for many years. I also had correspondence with the general secretary at the headquarters of the United Pentecostal Church.

Word on “Sister Charlotte” from the United Pentecostal Church

It would have not been right to leave unanswered questions when simple answers would most likely be available. Unfortunately, details of Charlotte’s life in the convent were not available.

Cleveland M. Becton, general secretary of the United Pentecostal Church International in Hazelwood, Missouri, was asked for information, and replies were received:

“I knew Sister Charlotte personally, and she had ministered in my church when she was pastoring. I have no reason to believe that she was other than what she claimed and that she was a nun.”²⁵²

“Sister Charlotte was a minister with the United Pentecostal Church since 1948 and continued with her ministerial status until her death... I am not aware of her being kidnapped while she was an evangelist. She traveled for many years with another evangelist, and we believe her testimony to be true as she told it... Sister Mean is the lady evangelist with whom she traveled until the late 1950s or early 1960s. She then continued traveling by herself until she settled in Napa, California.”²⁵³

We have sought light on the question whether Charlotte was ever kidnapped. We do this in view of the stories related by Alberto Rivera and Donna Eubanks. Also, we continue to seek information about Charlotte. How can it be that she was a “minister” of a denomination for 35 years, and yet it remains impossible to produce evidence that she was ever a nun? The usual answer is that there is nothing that is really surprising about the lack of detail on Charlotte. Professing Christians typically believe what they are told by others who profess to be Christians, and I leave it to the reader to weigh the issues and consider if such a situation ought to change.

We would have liked to have discovered, and been able to report, that the United Pentecostal Church were able to authoritatively state that Charlotte Keckler was indeed a nun.

On the testimony tapes of Charlotte which I have listened to, there has been a lack of verifiable autobiography. We have had our sights on Rivera, but there will be other false “Christian” frauds who pose a threat to those who lack straight thinking and discernment.

I hope that one result of this chapter will be the discovery of the name and address of the convent

where Charlotte was a nun. Rivera has polluted her testimony, and I don't wish to detract anything from her memory by the vacuum of information that has been identified in the course of pursuing Rivera.

We can trust the Lord, and be helped by our straight thinking and spiritual discernment. We are armed with the Bible and with understanding.

Rivera Pollutes the Testimony of Ex-Roman Catholic Priest Clark Butterfield

Rivera seems to have pronounced a situation of martyrdom wherever he saw an opportunity. In his Introduction to Chick Publications' *Night Journey from Rome*, Rivera writes of the author:

"Clark Butterfield is now present with the Lord, another saint martyred for Jesus."²⁵⁴

Clark Butterfield is featured with Donna Eubanks and Robert V. Julien on the inside cover of the *Alberto* series, and also, we read a quotation from Clark Butterfield in Rivera's own promotion material:

"Like Dr Rivera, I am a former Roman Catholic priest. I was ordained in 1965. I abandoned Catholicism and the priesthood in 1973 as a matter of conscience with no scandal involved. I was reborn in Christ in 1978."²⁵⁵

Then, some years later, Rivera published Butterfield's death certificate in *Alberto* Part Seven.²⁵⁶ Readers have some difficulty in knowing what is written there in English, for the readers are Korean. Part Seven is, at the time of writing, only available in the Korean language. However, with the aid of a magnifying glass, the English reader can make out the detail of the death certificate. What seems to be particularly signalled for the Korean reader is the fact that the space on the certificate for "hour of death" is not entered.

More significant to the discerning reader is that Clark Butterfield, latterly an administrative assistant in the Detroit Police Department, had died a normal death. He suffered an acute cranial hemorrhage – a stroke – whilst an in-patient at Botsford General Hospital in Farmington Hills, Michigan.

Chick Publications need to consider the effect that Rivera has on the credibility of good people who are opposing Roman Catholicism, like Donna Eubanks, Clark Butterfield and Avro Manhattan.

Following the pattern seen with "Sister Charlotte" where we find him publishing her testimony, complete with 39 pages of his own promotion material, Rivera was eventually to publish Clark Butterfield's book in Canada. I had no realisation of this until, in the providence of God, I purchased a copy of this edition from the book table of the Protestant Alliance in a nearby church in June 1992, and after the manuscript for this book was substantially complete. The pollution was far greater than in the Chick American edition. The following are the distinguishing features of the Clark Butterfield book published by Rivera:

1. The book is published by *Antichrist Information Center – Agapesofia Oikoumene*. These are Alberto Rivera's ministries and titles.
2. Page 3 contains the "Dedication," by Rivera, "in memory of our beloved brother, martyr, and saint... Clark Butterfield." Page 224 of the book refers to "Clark Butterfield's Murder." (N.B. The murder idea follows a pattern in Rivera's fables. Clark Butterfield was not murdered but died in hospital in Detroit. I have met one who according to Rivera was supposed to have been murdered but who was not: Maria, his sister.
3. Page 4 is the "Publisher's Note" by Rivera.
4. Pages 7-9 is the "Introduction" by *A.I.C. International Christian Ministries* (i.e. Alberto Rivera). Here we read, amongst much other nonsense, that "*Night Journey from Rome... to the New Jerusalem* will put to rest any doubts, to those with eyes to see, regarding the validity of Dr Rivera's Roman Catholic priesthood, his conversion to Christ and the Gospel he preaches and to the purposes of *A.I.C. International Christian Ministries*."

5. Pages 209 to 227 are pages devoted entirely to the promotion of Alberto Rivera deceptions of literally every kind, and the following is an extract from the printed words to be found there:

1. pp 210-212 promote the idea that Clark Butterfield was murdered; p 224 includes the advert for Rivera's tape titled "Clark Butterfield's Murder."
2. p 213 advertises the *Alberto* series of picture books.
3. p 214 includes the advert for "A Call for Separation." This contains little more than the so-called "Jesuit Oath" taken from the writing of a 32 Degree mason.

6. Pages 215 to 224 list around *140 audio tapes, all by Alberto Rivera*. Subjects include a tape: "John Kennedy's Assassination organised through Roman Catholic Parish in Houston," and another: "Alberto's Sister,"²⁵⁷ referring to the lady whom Rivera has elsewhere stated to have been martyred. However, this sister, unlike Charlotte, is alive. As stated previously, I have met her in the course of my research for this book. Up to the time of our meeting, she had never heard of the *Alberto* book telling her story, and with probably millions of copies circulating.

Jack Chick cannot be held accountable for what flows from Rivera's own "ministry." Yet we keep in mind that he has promoted Rivera to the four corners of the earth via the *Alberto* books. Jack Chick (J.T.C.) is named on their covers as the author. His books catapulted Rivera to the status of an international personality in the 1980s, and we examine this period of Rivera's life in the next chapter.

Chapter 12

“DR” ALBERTO RIVERA – INTERNATIONAL “CHRISTIAN” PERSONALITY IN THE 1980s

The first *Alberto* picture book was published in 1979, and Rivera was launched to fame by the 1980s. He still goes from strength to strength, heading the organisation with the alarming name – “*Antichrist Information Center*” (A.I.C.). As the 1980s began, Rivera’s post office box address at A.I.C. was in Canoga Park, California, yet his problems with his creditors elsewhere were far from over. However, what *does* happen to the money A.I.C. receives? The search for that answer continues.

Still more court actions were brought. Was this evidence of Rome’s anger at his promotional successes? Or was it more evidence of Rivera’s ways with the Lord’s money and the Lord’s people? The good Hispanic people see their church as the defendant in one of the actions. Rivera’s name is linked, but, as in times past, the stigma rests upon the church. A case was filed in May 1980. A “complaint for money and fraud” was formally brought against him. Money deceptions continued throughout the 1980s. I myself attended one trial in 1991 when Rivera and A.I.C. were the defendants, and the details are looked at later.

Our particular concern in this chapter is the way Rivera conducts himself as a speaker at meetings around the world. How does he explain his extraordinary stories? How is he making out as a celebrity? He has deflected complaints about his picture book stories with remarkable success. As one writer has put it, “Alberto has skilfully created a closed, paranoid defence system which makes it difficult to corner him on specific issues.”²⁵⁸

Rivera has had the advantage of men who stand with him for a time. They leave, but others take their place. Usually these have been men who have known something of the deceptions of Rome at first hand. They have had difficulty in finding a ministry which related to that, at least until they discovered Alberto Rivera. Others, neither with the advantage of the facts of Rivera’s testimony, nor recognising the falsehood in the history and presentation, have been prepared to lend their support to a man who needed help with a great deal of unanswered mail. Dino Badaracco, an ageing pastor of an Hispanic church in Los Angeles and with wide experience as an evangelist in South America, was one of many such helpers over the period of a dozen years of accelerating picture book sales. I have interviewed those who have helped Rivera in this way. I have discovered it is only the rarest exception who did not in due course, usually in a matter of months, discover the real personality of Alberto Rivera which we have described. Moreover, the picture given is of one who is deliberately aloof and dictatorial, a man difficult to get to know, and difficult to understand except by his deeds and his bad fruit.

The true profile of the man with a big mail bag and his name in a million picture books is not of one who is *unable* to cope well with fame, nor of one *unable* to handle the enormous mail. On the contrary, the 1980s was a time of new opportunities. The testimonies of those around him speak of one who is always attending to something more important. Always in view is some new big idea. His former colleagues speak of big talk and big ideas. Just like the fantasies of the picture books, such is Rivera’s way in real life. Yet no doubt some of his dreams have come true.

Rivera Travels Widely – First Class! The Canadian Protestant League Helps to Keep the Doors Open to Him Around the World

Rivera has taken every advantage of the picture books. They are his passport to more countries, more meetings, more conferences. Rivera travels first class.

Rivera went to speak at meetings in Toronto, Canada, in April 1982. We choose this example

because, ten years later, both a published report of that visit and an up-to-date assessment was given to me by the Toronto Free Presbyterian Church. The minister, Frank McClelland, was involved with the 1982 report in their magazine, *Canadian Revivalist*, and he wrote to me from the church in December 1991. *Firstly*, we ask what did this magazine say about Rivera ten years ago? *Secondly*, what is their position on Rivera ten years on, now that Rivera is well-established around the world through hundreds or thousands of meetings and millions of tracts and picture books?

1. What Sort of Man is Rivera? (*Canadian Revivalist* – May/June 1982)

“We had read and heard a lot about Rivera including opposing articles which appeared in magazines like the neo-evangelical *Christianity Today* (The latter in our opinion is a point in favour of Rivera!)

“We were anxious to meet the man personally to question him so that we could draw our own conclusions, and not judge the man, positively or negatively, merely on the hearsay of those who may have had a vested interest in either promoting or demoting him. The opportunity came on Thursday 15th April 1982 when eight brethren, representing different organisations, met with Rivera for three hours. He is a small man of about 5' 5", of slight build, impeccably dressed, graying wavy hair and pleasant manner. His English is very good with enough accent to betray his Spanish background.

“We were impressed with his open manner and willingness to answer all our questions without hesitation or equivocation even when the questions were obviously ‘loaded’ or very blunt. In the three hour session, Rivera never gave any of us cause to doubt his sincerity or genuineness. Further meetings with him did nothing to change our opinion.

“Rivera’s visit was sponsored by ‘*Christ is the Answer*,’ the Toronto organisation that handles Chick Publications in Canada. While we would not accept the Pentecostal distinctives, we would commend Jim Neale for his courage and fortitude in bringing a man of Rivera’s calibre to Toronto. At a special rally in the Massey Hall, Dr Rivera spoke fearlessly as he gave an enthusiastic audience his testimony. On another occasion he addressed the monthly meeting of the Canadian Council of Evangelical Protestant Churches on the subject ‘The Priesthood of Believers.’

“A hastily arranged meeting of Toronto Free Presbyterian Church was well filled on Saturday April 24th to hear Dr Rivera highlight the reasons why he came to repudiate Rome’s position on Mary.

“The opposition of the Roman Catholic Institution to Rivera is understandable. Here is a man who, like Luther, has been transformed by the saving grace of Christ. Not content to passively enjoy the blessings of salvation, Rivera is obedient to God’s Word in actively rebuking error, especially the errors of Rome with which he is well acquainted. Thank God for another faithful voice to speak out.”²⁵⁹

2. Letter from Frank McClelland (December 1991) – His View Ten Years Later

What is a busy minister and pastor to do when he hears stories which might, after all, change his opinion on what he has believed? It is a great shame that such men can no longer look for help with some confidence to the various Protestant organisations who have served so well as reliable founts of information in times past. Apostasy and deception has taken its toll in many quarters.

Frank McClelland has looked to the Canadian Protestant League. He has done so just like hundreds of leaders in Canada, further afield and across the world. Doubters, where Rivera is concerned, are referred by Jack Chick to the Canadian Protestant League on the basis that the League has investigated Alberto and his claims. Frank McClelland’s words are echoed by many:

“One of the reasons why I am not dogmatic in writing Rivera completely off is because of Rev Jonas Shepherd of the Canadian Protestant League. Jonas lives near here and I’ve met and talked with him many times. He made it his business to go to California to examine, for himself, the evidence on Rivera, both charge and countercharge. What he found was proof of the old adage – ‘There are two sides to every story.’ Perhaps you should contact him for his findings. I do not like to make judgement on hearsay or speculation and in this case separating fact from fantasy is no easy job.”²⁶⁰

Canada has been one of the countries where Rivera has found good acceptability. The Canadian

Protestant League, as we have already reported, came out in support of the *Alberto* story, and McClelland has admitted the League's report is one of the reasons he has not written Rivera completely off. The report appeared in *The Protestant Challenge* in 1983, and was subsequently picked up and used in an important pro-Rivera book written by an Australian author and published by Chick Publications.

Is Alberto for Real? is that book, and it was originally a 36-page booklet, compiled by Sidney W. Hunter, and printed in Australia. My own first edition is undated, and the second edition is dated November 1986. It is described as a compilation "from information supplied chiefly by Rev Fred Buick and Helmut Silbach." The enlarged Chick publication came in 1988.²⁶¹ The only substantial reference to the issue of Rivera himself was presented in the form of a section from the report from the Canadian Protestant League.

What then is the view taken by the League nine years after it gave the "all clear" on Rivera? A copy of the manuscript of this book was sent to the Canadian Protestant League prior to publication. After reading it, General Secretary Jonas Shepherd wrote:

"I have had no reason to think of changing anything from my original article, which appears in '*Is Alberto for Real?*'"²⁶²

Upon reading this, I looked again at the conclusions in The Canadian Protestant League's magazine, and at Hunter's in *Is Alberto for Real?*:

Jonas Shepherd (The Protestant Challenge): "We are convinced that Alberto is a man of conviction, integrity, courage and commitment to a great cause consistent with positions held by heroic Reformation forbears... the *Alberto* series imparts reliable information..."²⁶³

Sidney Hunter (Is Alberto for Real?): "Alberto Rivera is exactly what he says he is, a former Jesuit priest who was converted to Christ..."²⁶⁴

Sidney Hunter wrote to me from Evangelistic Literature Enterprise Ltd. They are the distributors of Chick Publications in Australia, and we look next at two interesting events in that land. The *first*, in 1887, shows the sort of historical source from which Rivera draws ideas for his stories. The *second*, in 1987, describes how Rivera was exposed as a fraud at a meeting in Australia. Interestingly, both accounts involve surprise meetings with people from the opposite sides of the world who were once close friends.

Exposing the Evil of Rome – The Providence of God in Australia – 1887

We make room at this point, therefore, to relate briefly the story of the *Trials and Persecutions of Miss Edith O'Gorman, Otherwise Sister Teresa de Chantal of St Joseph's Convent, Jersey City, NJ.*²⁶⁵ The book of this title tells of God's providence in taking Miss O'Gorman, a former nun, across the world to Australia. In 1887 she wrote to Roman Catholic priest, William Walsh, of their providential meeting when she had thought him to be dead:

"REV. WILLIAM WALSH, – After nineteen long years we have met again, and an overruling Providence brought you face to face with me last Sunday morning on board the steamer, thus affording me the chance of recognising you, who for many years I believed to be dead. I could not help pitying you when I saw you turn pale, and quail and tremble in the most terrible agitation as you recognised the one woman in all the world you least expected, and you least desired to see. Although for several years you have hid yourself here in this out-of-the-way miserable place, growing fat in idleness; yet after nineteen years your sin has again found you out, and the woman you so deeply wronged nearly twenty years ago has, in the Providence of God, come to this place, to expose the very errors of the Church which you were then willing to abandon. In order that you may have no excuse I send you a copy of my book – *Convent Life Unveiled* – and if you have not yet read it, do so now, and if there is one statement in it concerning you which is not true, I challenge you to deny it...

"Oh! how you have changed! – but not for the better. Then you had been a member of the Romish priesthood for four or five years, and were not so vividly stamped with its degrading impress as at present. You are now a perfect type of a Popish priest, whose mind for twenty-four years, through the cesspool of the confessional, has become the moral sewer into which has been poured the

abominations and filth of your sinful flock...

“But the woman that you tried to degrade... stands before the world today in God’s strength, clothed in His righteousness, conscientiously exposing the errors of that infamous system...”²⁶⁶

Such true stories provide the material upon which Rivera’s false story is built. In the words of Miss O’Gorman, written just 100 years before in Australia in 1887, Rivera’s sins would find him out. God’s providence was again to be at work. Still drawing upon the words of Miss O’Gorman as she presented a copy of *Convent Life Unveiled* to the priest who had offended against her, I here invite Rivera to accept the similar challenge which my own book offers.

Meanwhile, we look at the challenge Rivera met in Australia. Unfortunately he fits the description of the plausible man, so well described by the Toronto minister, Frank McClelland. Unlike the priest, William Walsh, Rivera did not “turn pale, and quail and tremble in the most terrible agitation” when he saw one from the other end of the world who he least expected and probably least desired to see. On the contrary, sparked by the possibilities of the situation, such confrontations are turned around by Rivera to his advantage. They are taken as opportunities for still further deception, slander and invention. From Rivera’s perspective they become yet further proof of the lengths to which the Vatican will go in order to try and stop him.

Exposing the Evil of Alberto – the Providence of God in Australia – 1987

Alberto Rivera met with a big surprise at a meeting in Australia. Andres and Eloisa del Pino were in Rivera’s first meeting in Perth. We covered Mrs del Pino’s description of the Rivera family earlier in this book. The meeting at the Church of Christ Christian Centre was on 26th November 1987. Rivera had been instrumental in leading Andres to profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour back in the Evangelical church in Las Palmas. Also present at the Perth meeting was Mrs Socorro, like the del Pinos another fellow-member from the days when Rivera had been a young member of the church back home in the Canary Islands. Mrs Socorro had been driven to the church by her daughter, Raquel.

In God’s providence, the del Pinos and the Socorros lived in the Perth area. The magazine, *Take a Closer Look*, had been, and still is, published in the Perth area also. Raquel hadn’t planned to stay at the meeting after dropping her mother, but she did after all decide to remain. Therefore we have the advantage of two accounts of what took place. Firstly, we have an account according to *Take a Closer Look*. Secondly, as described in a letter to me, we have the eye-witness account of Raquel Socorro.

The following is the magazine account:

“Mr and Mrs Andres del Pino, and Mrs Socorro attended Rivera’s meeting in Perth on Thursday 26th November. They went with open minds, and were actually looking forward to seeing Alberto Rivera, a friend from years ago. They were not really acquainted with his many fraudulent claims, because they had not read the comics except for one.

“Andres del Pino, after hearing Rivera make many erroneous claims about himself, went to Fred Buick after the meeting, and warned him to be careful, because he knew Rivera, and his story was not true. Buick did not want to listen to this former friend of Rivera.

“Then the del Pinos, and Mrs Socorro, went to Alberto and greeted him while he was signing autographs. At first he did not recognise or remember them. Mrs Socorro then showed him a photo of the missionary couple who had been the pastor and his wife at the Christian Evangelical Church when they were in the Church together in the 1950s. As Rivera recognised them, he suddenly called out: ‘That’s the devil church I destroyed – she’s (Mrs Socorro) a devil woman. They are Catholic spies!’”²⁶⁷

Alberto addresses problems head on. What was witnessed in Perth is the normal way of Alberto Rivera.

I asked Mrs del Pino to record for me what she remembered from the meeting in Perth. She wrote (translated):

“I remember that Alberto was presented as a priest of the Old Roman Church, that he had destroyed evangelical churches, including the church of Las Palmas. Now, having come to know the gospel, he said he was working to convert the Roman Catholics. But what we could see was all false. He was only interested in selling his cassettes and his books and he had not destroyed any church.”

In her letter to me, Raquel Socorro describes how she came in just before Rivera was introduced into the pulpit. As for the message, “all he talked about was the Catholic Church and what he did in the Catholic Church; the Catholic Church was his whole speech.”²⁶⁸

“I sat there in private prayer, the only thing that was making me comfortable as I asked if he was real (a true believer)...” When the meeting was finished, Raquel stayed at the back looking on. “Then I saw Mum and Mrs del Pino approach Alberto Rivera. As soon as Alberto Rivera saw the photo which Mum had of the Carders in her Bible, he became very angry, extremely loud, and accusing Mum and the del Pinos of being spies and devil women etc. I was at the back of the church but I could hear what he said perfectly. I then approached the front. All I could think was that if this was a man of God as he proclaimed, he would not be accusing, nor would he be judging as he was.”²⁶⁹

Those who know Alberto understand that the evening was not much of an embarrassment to him. Such happenings are seen as opportunities. In his address the following night, he spoke of the exchanges with these people. He spoke of their slanders, the character assassination, and, of course, he spoke more of the Roman Catholics whom he said brought it all about. Many who had read the picture books would have come to the meeting fired up by their message. They would have come with expectation. They would want to hear more – now first hand – about the Roman Catholic conspiracy. The very points Rivera was making in the meeting were actually proved before the very eyes of his listeners. They actually had a real example of the conspiracy after the meeting. Rivera’s point, just as we read in the books, is that the true Church is infiltrated. The people of Perth had their very own example. The Alberto Rivera show goes on. Sadly, such a pattern is repeated over and over.

The Second Meeting in Perth in 1987

Take a Closer Look continues:

“On Friday 27th November 1987, the del Pinos again attended Rivera’s meeting. This time they had with them Mr and Mrs Marcial and Oneida Robayna, who had been members of the same church (in fact, Marcial had been an elder in the church). They also had another couple with them, Mr and Mrs John and June Tocknell. John is a minister with Churches of Christ. The couple had previously been missionaries to the Aborigines, and for a number of years were missionaries in the Canary Islands. Over the two meetings, a total of nine people attended who were familiar with where Rivera grew up, an island home in mid-Atlantic on the other side of the earth.

“After the meeting, Marcial Robayna, who had been like an older brother to Alberto Rivera, being about 4 years older, went up and greeted Rivera.

“When he asked, ‘Alberto, do you remember me?’ Rivera replied, ‘No.’

“Marcial then reminded him of how they had gone on preaching trips together, and Rivera muttered that he couldn’t remember that. Then Eloisa del Pino came up and mentioned that she and her husband were returning to the Canary Islands soon. She asked if he had any message for his sister in Las Palmas, as Mrs del Pino would be visiting her.

“He was also asked if he would like to meet the Tocknells, as former missionaries to the Canary Islands. He dismissed his former friends, claiming they knew nothing about missionaries to the Canary Islands – that these were all Roman Catholic spies. He refused to talk with the Tocknells and hurried off with his wife and son.

“Rivera must have been shocked to meet three families who all came from his home city, from his former church – and all of them living in Perth, Western Australia.

“The three families, and their children, have been deeply upset with Rivera’s public abuse of them, and his lies. To be branded as Roman Catholic spies was both spiteful and ludicrous. These families have known past pressures and opposition from the Roman Catholic Church in their home countries.

They were all strong Protestants when they left the Canary Islands, and still are. All three couples have been active members of Baptist congregations since their arrivals in Australia.”²⁷⁰

Already having received good reports from the Canary Islands church, for a confirmation of the good standing of the three couples in the Australian church – the Socorros, the del Pinos and the Robaynas whom I had met in the Las Palmas church which Rivera had once attended – I wrote to John Tocknell, the minister referred to in the above account. Mr Tocknell wrote that Churches of Christ in Australia were doctrinally the same as Baptists. He wrote about the three couples, and he wrote about the meeting he attended:

“We have known Mr and Mrs del Pino, Mr and Mrs Socorro and Mr and Mrs Robayna since 1968 and we don’t believe they are Roman Catholic spies. We highly respect these three couples and have enjoyed fellowship with them.”²⁷¹

As regards the meeting, Mr Tocknell reports that several hundred attended. He said there was no Gospel message as such and that the meeting was chiefly about Roman Catholicism. The talk explained the Roman Catholic church as he knew it and Mr Tocknell wrote: “Rivera struck us as genuine, but Moma Socorro was upset about him.”²⁷²

Rivera had spoken about the Roman Catholic Church as if it were from his own experience. With the advantage of much practise and many books it would not ordinarily be difficult for a man like Rivera to appear plausible. Like many before, Mr Tocknell could properly write only of the situation he found.

Those who write books do well to have good ground for that which they write, and I speak also to my own heart. There are few who have properly addressed the subject of Rivera himself. Sidney Hunter, also from Australia, was no exception. He edited *Is Alberto for Real?* and tells us it was an issue of *Take a Closer Look* which prompted the research which went into it.

Is Alberto for Real? – an Answer from Australia

An article, “Jesuit Priest Confirms Alberto’s Claims,” by Sidney Hunter, in *Battle Cry* (June 1984), follows a style much like that of the eventual publishers of *Is Alberto for Real?* – Chick Publications, also the publishers of *Battle Cry*. The article first appeared in *The Biblical Fundamentalist* in Queensland, Australia, and it includes an extraordinary letter from an unnamed Jesuit priest:

“I have just read the *Crusader* series distributed by your organisation. As a teacher and priest at a Jesuit-run Church of England school and a member of the Society of Jesus for many years, I would like to agree on all points with Dr Alberto... the main aims of our organisation have been directed against a Christian Church which we have very thoroughly infiltrated. They are the remnant Church.”²⁷³

“There we have it,” Hunter tells us, “the Roman Catholic Church is at war with the Christian Church.”²⁷⁴ There is nothing new in that, yet does the letter from the alleged Jesuit priest make any sense at all? Would he be expected to write in such a way except his tongue was firmly in his cheek? Why does Mr Hunter believe such a Jesuit anyway? The message of his article seems to be only that Alberto is for real. Is not the intended message of the article the one found in its headline?

In a similar manner, *Is Alberto for Real?* has a powerful title and an impressive cover. Yet there is no content when it comes to answering the question. By page 8 of the book we are already being told in the “Publisher’s Foreword”:

“Without question, Dr Rivera is for real:

*** The fact that no one has ever disproved his priestly credentials proves he’s real

*** The persecution he’s endured since he began exposing Rome proves he’s real

*** The thousands of souls that have been saved through his ministry prove he’s real

*** History, and the writings of many others prove he’s real.”²⁷⁵

The responses to these four headings will be clear to readers by this time, and they are as follows:

- ** Rivera has no valid priestly credentials
- ** There is no evidence of such persecution
- ** Whether or not thousands of people have been saved, it would prove no such thing
- ** History, and the writings of historians, prove Rivera to be a fraud.²⁷⁶

The second part of *Is Alberto for Real?* deals with what he calls the “twelve most frequently heard charges against Alberto”.²⁷⁷ Here, Hunter takes twelve aspects from *Alberto* history, mixing fact and fable. We consider Hunter’s own view of Roman Catholic history to be unimportant here, where our subject is Rivera. Examples of Rivera’s view of history have been dealt with by Wilson Ewin in *Jack Chick and Alberto Rivera... Deceivers*. However, we take one example of history from *Is Alberto for Real?* Hunter quotes two paragraphs from a German author on the Crusades:

“...During the first crusade, which was called by Pope Alexander II in the year 1063, the north Spanish city of Barbestro was conquered...”

“In Constantinople the most horrific Jewish pogroms were conducted”.²⁷⁸

Against the *first* statement, a history scholar, Herbert J. Pollitt, who is well known to this author, has written: “The first crusade was proclaimed by Urban I in 1095.”²⁷⁹

Against the *second* statement, this scholar has written “nonsense,” and he adds, “No credence can be placed in a writer who has got his facts as wrong as this and therefore in the man who has put all this together.”²⁸⁰

The third part of Hunter’s book is mainly devoted to the report of the Canadian Protestant League, referred to earlier.

The “Conclusion” asks us: “In the light of all this, how can any honest person believe the Roman-inspired lies about A. Rivera and J. Chick?”²⁸¹

In reply I can answer that I read *Is Alberto for Real?* before ever commencing any research of my own. I dismissed the book because it failed to address the question in its title. It presents no evidence to show that Alberto is for real, and the Canadian Protestant League have produced nothing either. It should be easy for Rivera and his supporters to produce positive evidence, assuming Rivera is not a fraud. Inevitably it can prove to be a major task to prove a negative, particularly where such a smokescreen has been sent up, and with a subject who has been a fraud, virtually unchecked, for getting on for forty years. Yet I trust that by this point in our book most readers will have been persuaded that no stone is being left unturned in addressing Rivera’s claims, and those made on his behalf, by his dupes among the professing Christian leaders around the world.

Different reports and different stories come from different people and different places. Most are ugly stories. This author has encouraged every kind of testimony in the hope of getting some kind of balance and evidence of something good. It was an ugly story that was related to me in Colorado, where I was staying in a lovely, spacious home. It belonged to an Evangelical author and her husband. When speaking locally, Rivera was taken there with his family, but he was not satisfied. Strangely, he said it was important that he had *five* telephones. He was taken by my friends to a smart hotel. They duly settled him in at their own expense.

Rivera Has a Base in Korea

Rivera was in Korea in 1990 to speak at the *12th Asia Prophecy Conference*. It was at about the same time that the new picture book in the Korean language was published there. I sent a copy to the author in Colorado, referred to above. Like me, she didn’t understand the Korean language, but recognised one of the Korean books displayed on the cover. The girl who was photographed for it was her personal friend. The broken globe the girl was holding belonged to her children. The cover was the same as her own book – *Can the Elect be Deceived?* by Pauline MacPherson.

No consent to use the cover for this Korean book had been requested or given. The translated title of the book is *The Churches Drunken with Leaven(s)*. The text and photographs are drawn from various sources, including Ian Paisley, Bob Jones University, and Wilson Ewin. Even more incredible, the

credit for the entire book is corruptly given to Wilson Ewin, an authority on Roman Catholicism. As with Pauline MacPherson, the whole affair was a complete mystery unknown to Wilson Ewin until I mailed a copy of the Korean book to him.

The publishers? These are shown as A.I.C. International Christian Ministries, the “ministry” of Alberto Rivera. Further enquiries were made at the Korean address, and a reply came from Seo Del Seok, President of New Life Mission Services and Publications. Mr Seok wrote that he had “invited him (Rivera) to Korea three times and had fellowship in America several times with him.”²⁸²

Also in 1992, a letter from Cornelis Glas in Holland sought information from me about Rivera. He wrote that he had been in Korea with his wife. He shared the conference platform with Rivera in 1990, and warned their Korean friends to be careful with Rivera. Mr Glas later wrote of H.J. Hegger, the former Roman Catholic priest referred to previously, and who had written a report exposing Rivera:

“From our own direct contact with him (Rivera) during our stay together in the President Hotel in Seoul and in the meetings of the Bible Prophecy conference in the Campus Crusade for Christ auditorium, we are left with the eery feeling that we were in contact with a spiritually impure couple.

“Since we read Brother Hegger’s magazine for years and years, and are always blessed by it, we were very curious to find out, after meeting the Riveras on October 14, 1990, if they knew of Brother Hegger. Within half an hour of our first meeting he had said that Brother Hegger was a spy of the Vatican and it was from that moment on that we felt very uneasy about both him and his wife too.

“His preaching was never like a dew from heaven but more like being cut to pieces by a sharp razor. Several times that I sat under his preaching tears came to my eyes for sheer pain of heart about the way he presented what he felt he had to present. Often he misinterpreted Scripture in my opinion.

“At the home of an elder of Pastor Seo Dal Seok’s church he presented himself as a medical doctor who had specialised in the working of vitamins on cancer patients. He advised the wife of the elder, who had had surgery for cancer, to follow his strict advice on the use of vitamins.

“He left a day before us and all I have done, not on the basis of facts, but because of personal observation, intuition, and, I am for myself convinced, an inner warning of the Holy Spirit, I have warned Pastor Seo Sal Seok about the Riveras...

“From 1956 - 1974 we were in Korea as missionaries, so I speak Korean...”²⁸³

Cornelis Glas wrote me again,²⁸⁴ helping still further with the research for this book, and after looking at *Alberto Part Eight*, written by Alberto Rivera and published only in the Korean language:

1. Mr Glas wrote of the details found in the Korean *Alberto*, and as to when Rivera was in the London convent in 1967 to rescue his sister, we are told that Rivera had been born again only a short while ago and was 40 years in the Roman Catholic church. In 1967 Rivera was 32 years old.

2. Part Eight is the story of how a nun received new life in Christ and became a martyr because of the Gospel of Christ. Rivera tells us (translated): “This nun is not just my only physical sister, but also, because of Christ’s precious blood”,²⁸⁵ my sister in Him. Mr Glas confirms the comments about his sister in the book already translated by the Korean pastor in the United States and quoted previously: “She is now resting in heaven in the bosom of Jesus.”²⁸⁶

3. Of the Church of God of Prophecy, referred to previously, Rivera tells us, “They thought that I had become a charismatic believer. They turned against me when I criticised the Pope, the Mass, the priesthood, and even threatened to have me returned to Spain.”²⁸⁷

4. I asked Mr Glas about the letter and the picture of the priest seen in the picture book kneeling before an altar with a skull on it, and a picture of Hitler above.²⁸⁸ This related to the “Waffen SS”, and I made further enquiries.

The “Voluntary Waffen SS” – Fact or Fable?

On pg. 39 of this large format 44-page picture book, the letter is reproduced. For those who can make out the text – in Korean, English and German – and for those who will not simply look at the pictures of Hitler, swastikas and Rivera, it presents an elaborate mixture. The letter is on elaborate German SS

notepaper, sealed and stamped and with swastikas and symbols. It is in English and dated 1985. It is addressed to Mr Jack T. Chick.

I asked one who is competent on the subject to make some observations, and the letter appears to emanate from a so-called “Voluntary Waffen SS” group. The address is blocked out, and with the stamped heading, *GEHEIM*, meaning that the letter is “secret”.

The following is the letter duly transcribed:

“Dear Mr Chick:

“Welcome to the National Socialist (Nazi) branch of the Vatican, run and controlled here in the United States of America by Arch Bishop Vincent Barraco, a 33 degree Freemason in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish rite of the United States of America, Grand Council of Deliberation of Active 33 degree Masons. This man is a Jesuit Lt General.

“I do not yet have a documented photograph of this man, but I may be able to obtain one if I am not discovered to be a Christian. The goal or aim of this branch of Vatican, that by the way is headed by a senior Officer of the Italian Secret Police in W.W. II, is to find a strange sort of Jewish group and get rid of them. This group is those Jews who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord! They must be killed at any cost.

“I am not sure of the reason behind these orders, but in the Nazi branch of this great plan, I am a Captain in the Elite Schultz Staffel (SS Haupt-sturmfuhrer). I work to great extents with the Archdiocese of Chicago, which in turn acts as liaison with the German Nazi Party (NSDAP-AG) in West Germany, and the Vatican, in Rome.

“The word Archdiocese comes from the Latin word *DIADEM*, meaning a crown, or Pope – the King of the World! Before I became a Christian, I had to take a most deemonic Oath to the dead soul of Adolf Hitler before becoming a member of the SS.

“Aside from my membership in the Nazi SS, I am also a 33 degree Mason, and active in the Roman Catholic Church in Chicago. The Communist Party is a smaller branch of the Vatican than the Nazi Party, in a different sence here in the Chicago area. All Politics in the City of Chicago are controlled by the Vatican.

“Respectfully...” (name blocked out) (incorrect spelling as in the picture book photograph).

What are Korean readers to make of all that, assuming that they can understand it or even the Korean commentary which Rivera gives? What is the American or European reader to make of it? I leave the summary to the competent authority whom I consulted. He wrote:

“... But the whole letter reeks of the bogus. What is the point of writing to a publisher in this frank vein, particularly if it is supposed to be from an ‘undercover’ source (... if I am not discovered to be a Christian.) and then printing ‘SECRET’ (- in German) at the top? Certainly the publication of the letter will have ensured that anyone interested in the matter will know all he needs to about the identity of the author...”²⁸⁹

What confusion Rivera sows in places like Korea and in the Third World! Rivera regularly “ministers” in Spanish in Mexico. The Chick picture books are printed in more and more languages, including Spanish. Rivera is known around the world. He is known across the world in New Zealand. One who produces “warning” bulletins as a regular mailing, telephoned me from there quite recently. He was a supporter of Rivera and wanted more evidence before he would withdraw his support.

Some will question the need for all the research that this book must surely evidence to every reader. It has been done because often godly men, ministers knowing sound doctrine, and often with a lifetime of Christian service behind them, want still more evidence before they will reject Rivera as unreliable and a fraud. One root of the problem is that the deception has gone on for so long. Leaders have, understandably, been unable to do all their homework on these subjects. One thing after another, like the Waffen SS letter which they cannot positively disprove, has a cumulative effect and influence. The focus of attack is upon we who oppose Rome. We can be gullible and all too ready to keep an open mind for anything that seems to help our cause. However, eventually weary, it is all too easy to

believe what you want to believe, quite apart from research, facts, and common sense.

What about Robert V. Julien? Was He Really a Roman Catholic Priest?

Robert V. Julien is an ex-Roman Catholic priest, like several with whom I have been in contact in the course of research for this book. By 1981, *Antichrist Information Center* (A.I.C.), now moved to Alta Loma, had printed Julien's testimony, *From Slavery to Christ*. Rivera's own Introduction preceded the story. Rivera wanted Robert Julien to travel to Israel with him. He could not go. Nevertheless, many brochures were printed for the tour. According to Rivera's publicity, two departures were scheduled for 1983. Each day during the journey, Rivera would be teaching and lecturing. Whether Rivera himself went, or alternatively how he used the brochures, we do not know. The printed word was more and more important in advancing Rivera as the 1980s moved ahead.

By reason of the picture books, Robert Julien's photograph probably has appeared in print more times than any other ex-Roman Catholic priest alive today (see Picture 20). The difficulty arises with the quotation credited to him. In a letter to me, Robert Julien put it this way:

"But let me share with you some things about him (Rivera). I met him personally about ten years ago, or perhaps twelve years ago. He hugged me like a long-lost brother and we had a chat for ½ hour, at the end of which he prayed aloud for the work of evangelising Catholics, and he prayed for me. I had a good impression of him, and felt he was genuine, especially since Jack Chick approved of him. I also met Mr Chick at that time.

"Later on, in a letter, he requested a statement concerning him that would help him establish his credibility. I wrote a few words to the effect that I considered Alberto a dear brother in Christ who loved the Roman Catholics and desired their salvation, and was not afraid to tell the truth no matter how much it would offend them. And I quoted Proverbs 27:6 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend.' That's substantially what I wrote about him. Later, in some brochure he published, I saw my photo and that very same statement that I had written.

"As for the statement in the comic book that you mentioned, with my photo, I've seen that statement, but I do not recognise it as something I ever said. It was not my original statement, which was intended to praise Alberto for his courageous stand for the truth and for exposing the errors of Romanism. To me, it didn't seem to matter whether he was a priest or not."²⁹⁰

After corresponding with Robert Julien I had little doubt about him being a priest, even though all I had seen in print about him was in the *Chick Alberto* picture books and in Robert's testimony booklet, published by Rivera himself.

However, one day I came upon a quotation from an article in the big-circulation Roman Catholic newspaper, *Our Sunday Visitor*. This reminded me that I hadn't done my homework adequately on this matter. Gerard E. Sherry, in an article in the issue of 3rd April 1988, wrote of his researches into the background of Robert Julien and of Donna Eubanks, the other former Roman Catholic featured in endorsement of the *Alberto* series:

"...the Sisters of St Joseph of Orange said she (Donna Eubanks) belonged to the Order, and was the superior of a small convent in Ontario, California for several years before she voluntarily left the Order in 1968... On the other hand Maryknoll officials tell us they have no such record of a priest by the name of Robert V. Julien. They say he might have been a seminarian, but he doesn't show up in their archives as ever being an ordained priest."²⁹¹

Chick Publications were quick off the mark, drawing from this story in their own *Battle Cry* (March/April 1988). Were Chick in any position to rush to the defence of Robert V. Julien, the subject on hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of photographs in circulation in the front of their picture books? Had they checked whether Robert had been a Roman Catholic priest or not? I do not know the answers to those questions, but one wonders if some Chick publicity may not have been right in fairness to Robert Julien.

Chick concentrated on Donna Eubanks. “National Catholic Newspaper Admits Donna Eubanks is Real”²⁹² was the unremarkable headline. A photograph of Donna carried the now-inevitable caption to promote the veracity of Rivera: “She says, ‘Alberto is Right’”²⁹³

On reading the *Our Sunday Visitor* article, I determined I had better check more carefully into Robert Julien’s priesthood. Accordingly I wrote to Robert to tell him of this article, and to ask him for evidence of his priesthood. The reply came back that he suspected he had become an embarrassment to the “Maryknoll Fathers Society,” of which he was a member, due to his “connection to Alberto Rivera and his vivid depictions of Roman Catholicism.” He wrote further, “The Maryknoll officials have doubtless decided to erase my name off their books. This is what I suspect – but I may be wrong.”²⁹⁴

I wasn’t very encouraged when he wrote that he didn’t have any official proof of his priesthood ordination. All he could offer was a news cutting from the *Salem News*. He said that he had been interviewed by one of their reporters when he was visiting from Tanganyika (now Tanzania) in 1961. I was reminded of the reporter who interviewed Rivera when he returned to the Canary Islands in 1967. The news report looked genuine enough, but could my readers be any more expected to believe the *Salem News* than the Rivera report?

However, Robert invited me to write to a Maryknoll priest who said he was his assistant at a mission station, and who was still in Tanzania. In due course this Maryknoll priest, Ernest Brunelle, wrote to me to say that he knew Robert Julien well, and that he was indeed a Maryknoll priest, ordained at Maryknoll, N.Y. in the class of 1955. Mr Brunelle came up with what seemed to me the most likely explanation for the poor communication between Maryknoll and *Our Sunday Visitor* – inefficiency or carelessness on one side or the other (or both), with the result that the true information wasn’t forthcoming.

I was more than ever convinced that my excellent correspondent, Robert Julien, was indeed who he said he was. Yet still I didn’t have the sort of proof appropriate in all the circumstances. Indeed, there was nothing forthcoming that seemed to answer the “sixteen useful questions for an ex-priest” set out by ex-priest Bartholomew F. Brewer, referred to previously.

Robert couldn’t put his hand on a Roman Catholic directory for one of the years he was a priest. However, by this time, and prompted by my enquiries, he made contact with *Our Sunday Visitor*, to encourage their more profitable enquiry of the “Maryknoll Fathers.” At length Robert telephoned the “Fathers” himself. He asked to speak to the superior general, the top man, but he was out of State. Robert says his secretary, a nun, acknowledged him as a former member, and she said the superior general would issue a signed affidavit, and that he would be happy to address that to me.

I received a letter from the superior general, in December 1991. It was quite clear and unequivocal:

“...Robert V. Julien was ordained a Catholic Priest, June 11, 1955, at Maryknoll, New York. After his ordination, Robert Julien worked as a missionary in East Africa. He later withdrew from Maryknoll Society and received his Rescript of permanent laicization October 18, 1966 – Sincerely...”²⁹⁵

Robert agreed that if a man who claims to have been a priest is not listed in his appropriate Roman Catholic directory, then we can consider him bogus, and he is eliminated right from the start. In Robert’s case, without a directory to hand, we got the confirmation by a different route. As to Mr Brewer’s sixteen questions, I next sent these to Robert, although this was now something of a mere academic exercise. Robert Julien also passed this test. From his answers to them, he clearly understood what they all meant, a further factor likely to eliminate the bogus priest. Robert Julien gave detailed answers to most of the questions, in much the same commonsense way that any of us would be able to give the main details from an employment twenty-five years ago.

Credibility at Chick Publications

As Chick Publications got into the business of publishing the *Alberto* material, they were also soon publishing other more substantial books on a number of Roman Catholic subjects. These included those by authors Charles Chiniquy, Avro Manhattan and Edmond Paris. All of these publications,

including the early *Alberto* picture books, have been significant where this author's Christian background is concerned. It is readily acknowledged they have served as an introduction to the subject of Rome. This author is no authority on the history and testimony contained in these books, any more than he is an expert on the history covered in the picture books. However, what is relevant here is the opportunity given to Rivera. Today we find books by Charles Chiniquy, Edmond Paris and Clark Butterfield, like Robert Julien, all saddled with an introduction by "Dr Rivera." More and more credibility is heaped upon Rivera.

Apart from the six Chick 32-page picture books in the "Crusader" *Alberto* series, *The Big Betrayal*, 64 pages in the "Sword" series (1981), also features Alberto Rivera. All of these represent the printed word in its most powerful form. Someone has said a picture is worth a thousand words. Certainly it makes a better impact, with less demand upon the reader.

Perhaps even the exposures of Rivera, whilst evidently unhelpful to the credibility of Chick Publications in the Christian book trade, did little harm to Alberto. When he happily debated Walter Martin at the 1981 Anaheim, California, Christian Book Fair, Rivera could fairly be declared as the loser by those who see through him. As for those who don't, he would sell the tapes and keep plugging his own special point – the simple point at the core of his whole message: there was, and is, a conspiracy! It was the conspiracy of Rome that was against him; as ever, he could brand all opposition accordingly.

More articles meant more publicity – and still more examples of the alleged conspiracy against him. The exposé articles in the Christian press soon carried over into the world's best-selling dailies. I have dozens of photocopied pages of published reporting. *The Los Angeles Times* carried one report running over six pages. Rivera remains in the news somewhere in the world each day.

Jim Jones is an Appropriate Comparison

Taking a view from the world's perspective, relatively few had heard of Jim Jones until the final chapter was being written to his "ministry." It should not be thought, therefore, that the case of Alberto Rivera affords an unfair comparison with this man. Indeed, Rivera may well be better known, in more countries, than Jones was.

In *Double-Cross* we find Rivera's mistaken words: "The press and T.V. world-wide implied Jim Jones was a crazy Bible-believing fundamentalist. Immediately, all fundamental churches fell under suspicion. What a diabolical conspiracy!"²⁹⁶

Certainly the main *Newsweek* article²⁹⁷ following the massacre didn't give that impression, and it is valuable to look at the Jim Jones profile in that magazine, and to make comparisons to Rivera's. We trust Christians may be helped with such proper comparisons as are to be found between Rivera and Jim Jones. The purpose is to remind readers that some of these elements in the Jim Jones story are to be discerned in Rivera's. We do not know anything of the facts of Rivera's relationship with his own mother. It is here that the Jim Jones story begins. In the words of *Newsweek*:

"Perhaps the story should begin with the dream... Lynetta Jones... dreamed repeatedly of her dead mother... Finally from the far side of a river, Lynetta's mother called to her that she would bear a son who would right the wrongs of the world... Her first child was a boy. And she was convinced that James Warren Jones was a messiah."²⁹⁸

Given that sort of start, who can doubt the disadvantage with which Jim Jones began? The occult influence seems to have been strong. In the words of *Newsweek*, people were convinced they ought to do what he wanted them to do. According to Raymond Bosler, a retired Roman Catholic priest, "...he had a strange power over people."²⁹⁹

"The paranoia that was his constant companion was also his weapon; he forged loyalty by convincing many members that without him they would be killed or imprisoned by the Ku Klux Klan, the CIA or any number of free-floating forces of evil."³⁰⁰ Jones' father was a member of the Ku Klux Klan. The same paranoia caused Jones to keep moving on; but "he built his travel plans on paranoia."³⁰¹

Just as Rivera is widely acclaimed for warning of Rome, with much excused on account of this, we read of Jim Jones that the public acclaim “was all too genuine.” In his case, it was the establishment of “effective drug-rehabilitation programs, clinics and nursing homes.”³⁰² We read on to find that “much of the state funding for the latter appears to have supported Jones rather than elderly patients.”³⁰³

Newsweek tells us it was Jones’ status that led to his ruin. It started when a *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter came on the scene talking about “a probe behind locked doors of the Temple.” We do well to note the enormous resources that can often be put behind such efforts of the secular media. We note also that it was this which flushed out the testimonies.

“One, Gwen Johnson, told the *Indianapolis Star* of beatings of children as young as four months old. In California, others recalled that Jones had watched punishments with a bemused smile.”³⁰⁴

Jones recognised the hopelessness when he saw the truth unfolding, and he “prepared to move on again. This time it was to his leased tract of 27,000 acres in Guyana.” Jones said he would be back, but when the August 1st, 1977 edition of the San Francisco paper appeared, it was clear that he never would. That was just three months after receiving a kindly personal letter from the wife of American President Jimmy Carter which began, “Dear Jim.”

“His \$10 million fortune was useless to him now... So were his... powers over his flock... Lynetta Jones had died a year earlier, but perhaps in his last moments her son believed that he could speak to a spirit who wasn’t secreted in a ceiling. Just before he put a bullet through his head, Jim Jones cried out to his mother. It could have been the final hopeless shriek of the dream messiah who had long lost his way.”³⁰⁵

Jim Jones had slipped from the position of the “Christian minister” to that of cult leader. In the next chapter we look at Rivera’s cult following in the late 1980s.

Chapter 13

RIVERA: HIS INFLUENCE AS CULT LEADER AND PUBLISHER

“(One) glaring mark of a cult is that its adherents blindly follow the leadership of one man or organisation instead of the Lord Jesus Christ. Generally at the head of the organisation there is an individual who has the charisma to relate to most of the ones with whom he or she comes into contact.”³⁰⁶

Many have attempted to define a cult and the above is one criterion. Much argument has centred on the question of why so many professing Christian cult watchers don't include Roman Catholicism among their lists of cults. Roman Catholicism uses the Bible and Christian terminology, claiming to worship the same God. They believe they honour Jesus Christ and stand for many of the same things as Christian churches. Rome has posed as the *uniquely* Christian church for so many centuries, but I regard Rome as the counterfeit “church.” Roman Catholics do blindly follow the leadership of one man who is uncompromising in his ways, the pope of Rome.

Rivera's enormous influence is through the power of the printed word. However, in order to understand something of the man himself, it is valuable to consider the testimonies of professing Christian people who have worked and lived under him, and who have submitted to him.

I have met with these. Those who were recently close to Rivera have spoken of how, just like Jim Jones, he could build up those around him. At the least, he built up those who were, for the time being, important to his plans. All have seemed to be disposable so far as Rivera was concerned. There were never more than a handful immediately around him who were serving his purposes. When necessary, others would step forward, only too willing to serve Rivera and take their place.

One who served Rivera for three years was a medical doctor. Looking back, Ismael Guerrero MD related to me what he believed motivated him to get involved with Rivera:

“I imagine all those who know me have the question in their mind: How is it possible for such a medical doctor, who obviously is educated, and here in the States, to fall for such a thing as this Rivera character?”

“I don't have an exact answer but I do know of some things that are involved in it, and one of them is pride. I'm speaking of pride on my part, and now that the Lord has delivered me. When you see a man (Rivera) that you think is being persecuted because of what he tells you, when he alone in all the world seems to be speaking the truth about Rome, and you don't see anyone else doing this, and you see that he sticks his neck out, and you see the guts that he has, and that he seems to have no fear whatsoever, and yet he seems to have such an incredible amount of need, with so many debts that are unpaid and so many things that are happening, and here you are in a position where you can assist him, I would say there is a good feeling that you get. I'm speaking for myself... I believe that, deep down inside, my purpose in life was to help Rivera.

“I was helping Rivera, the individual, and not unto the Lord... if you had asked me I would have said, ‘No, I'm not doing that for Rivera. I'm doing it for the Lord.’ Of course Rivera reminded you that you were doing it for the Lord. You end up feeling that the Lord is leading you to do this. I do know that a lot of it has to do with a certain pride we must have – a certain pride that I am helping Rivera.

“I look back and I wonder why, and I must say that if I had been more firm on doctrine at that time, I doubt that I would have fallen so deeply into this. Again, I think back that I was a new convert. I wasn't saved very long when I met Rivera.

“To give you an idea of the kind of controls Rivera had, when he left on his campaigns, he seemed to remember more details than when he was here at home. On one occasion at the property at 2580 Nort Soto, Los Angeles, there happened to be a bee hive in the wall, in a crack in the wall. It was maybe

twelve feet up and bees were coming in and out. Obviously there was a bee hive in there. We couldn't see it.

“Rivera wanted someone to catch these bees and he found someone who was an expert on bees. While Rivera was in Australia, he calls me up and tells me to call this man. ‘Now,’ he says, ‘Call him now.’ It happened to be Saturday and Rivera wanted the bees caught that night. The trick was apparently to smoke the bees out, or something, at night, and catch them. He wanted me to call some man that I don't know and ask him to come over to the property ‘now.’ I was to ask him to catch the bees ‘tonight.’ It was Saturday in the middle of August... This is the kind of thing he would do. In the middle of a busy campaign like he had, he would call me and give me instructions of that kind.

“A similar story was when Rivera was in Puerto Rico. I got a call from James Brown [his name has been changed] about midnight one night. It was Sunday night. I remember that because the following morning was Monday and we all had to be in work. James had just got a call from Puerto Rico, from Rivera, saying he wanted the bulk mail to go out on Monday.

“We would stuff envelopes with advertisements for the book, his literature, catalogue, and that kind of thing, and James asked me to meet him at Rivera's property. That would be about one in the morning. We met and were stuffing envelopes until about two or three in the morning, and I'm asking, ‘James, is it necessary this mail really go out Monday?’ James replied, ‘I don't know, but Rivera called and he wants the mail...’ So there we were on Sunday night. This was another example of a foolish thing Rivera would have us do, and we would blindly do it. Some of us would ask but we didn't have an answer. We just knew it had to be done for some reason.”³⁰⁷

I was privileged to stay in the Guerreros' home on two occasions in the course of carrying out research. The following testimony was written for me by Mrs Bertha Guerrero:

“From the beginning, even before I met him, I didn't want to get involved with Rivera. I figured he had taken my husband away from me and the children, and I didn't need to give any of my time to him. Be it women's intuition or whatever, all the work, time and money my husband put into it seemed so wasteful. Every phone call from ‘Dr Rivera’ was urgent, and towards the end of it all, all I could do was laugh, probably to keep my sanity.

“Sunday services were more than overwhelming for me with three small children and another on the way. I had to transform my living room into a studio for Dr Rivera. We rarely had more than 10 people and that was including the five Guerreros. Many a Sunday I spent up to 2 or 3 hours in the bedroom with the small crying baby so he wouldn't interfere with the taping.

“Our last days with Rivera were the bleakest. Mrs Aguillera [another member of the church] and I would talk daily on the phone, sometimes two or three times, wondering when, and praying for the day that it would all end. It was all in the Lord's hand but our husbands had to be fully convinced that Dr Rivera's ministry was not of the Lord.

“When it finally did end I don't remember having any feeling of joy or happiness. I was just truly exhausted. As the saying goes, time heals all wounds. My husband and I thank God for His mercy, for saving us from the hands of another man. Ismael and I were consoled by the Word of God in Hebrews 12:6: *‘For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.’*”³⁰⁸

A photograph of Alberto Rivera's wife, Nury, pictured with her husband and young son around the same time, is seen in Picture 25.

James Brown, a contemporary of Dr Guerrero's for the earlier part of his time with Rivera and already referred to, went to work in Europe. In 1991 he was listed as an elder in Rivera's organisation, and, like Rivera himself, he did not reply to my letters.

Donald Blanton, another contemporary of Ismael Guerrero's, did leave Rivera's service. I was privileged to visit with Mr and Mrs Blanton also, and I found their time with Rivera bore much similarity to the Guerrero testimony. Donald recalled one all-night prayer vigil. It was 1st January 1988:

“It was one of those times when Dr Rivera tried to make you feel special, and help bring you into his power, and using it to get more promises for future work. The church at Oxnard and one or two other

home churches were having all-night prayer vigils too. Alberto was in touch with them every hour on the phone.

“Alberto would do a Bible teaching. Then we would do a foot-washing. He would wash our feet with a pail of water. We all washed one another’s. That night we prayed for the death of Simon Priestland’s wife. We prayed the Lord would take her life, a Pentecostal woman who dominated Simon’s life. He needed to be freed from her because he could not serve for A.I.C. in any capacity as long as he was under bondage to her. Alberto prayed that prayer. There are certain things you go along with when you are not the leader.

“We prayed for Raymond Green [his name has been changed] because they were very low on money, his wife, the children. Because of that prayer I sent Raymond a small amount of money. I used the A.I.C. address for Raymond to write me. Alberto found out I had sent Green money, and he was furious. This was when I started to see the dictator and cult control. I didn’t have the right to do as I felt, separate from tithes. Rivera said he (Raymond Green) had to give service to A.I.C. before he gets funds, and things given to the Lord had to go to him, to Dr Rivera.

“Also that night we prayed about raising money for Jim McKinnon. His name was mentioned in ‘Night Journey from Rome.’ He owned the rights to Clark Butterfield’s story. Alberto settled out of court to pay him several thousand dollars and so many books. Almost everything that was continually put before us was financial problems.

“When Carlos Orea quit coming, we didn’t know the truth of what was going on. We thought Carlos had just loaned money, and A.I.C. would pay it back whenever it could. We prayed at how bad we felt that Carlos should become an enemy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, how he was persecuting Dr Rivera and A.I.C., and threatening court action. So we prayed about having the money to repay Carlos for the loan.”³⁰⁹

Donald Blanton himself would be the one to advance Rivera (or A.I.C.) a similar amount to that loaned by Carlos Orea. Carlos’ money was requested by Rivera to repay an outstanding account to a TV channel where Rivera regularly appeared. The TV channel never received the money, and Donald Blanton’s loan was later advanced to Rivera to repay the same debt. And still the money wasn’t used to pay the TV channel. As to where all the money went, still I found no one who knows.

Donald Blanton left Rivera by his own decision. Dr Guerrero remembered and put it like this:

“Donald was living in Ridgecrest. It was too far. It was a 300+ miles round trip and he wrote a letter stating his reasons. There were critical reasons also, but still he considered Rivera to be a brother... As time went on Rivera gave a sermon about this fellow Blanton being a Vatican infiltrator... I could not for one minute believe that Brother Blanton was an infiltrator. I knew about the money he had given to the ministry. I knew about everything. We were told not to have any more communication with him.”³¹⁰

Dr Guerrero concluded his description of Rivera’s attitude after Donald Blanton’s departure with very significant words concerning his own departure: “As soon as I left, Rivera quickly told the congregation that I was an infiltrator.”³¹¹

The same pattern is to be seen at various points throughout this book. All who oppose Rivera are infiltrators, agents of the Vatican. This is the whole basis for the exciting mystery upon which the picture books, and Rivera’s more personal stories, rest. It is Rivera’s paranoid way of labelling the opposition. Why should the Vatican care so much about Rivera’s activities? As Rivera would have us believe, he is persecuted in this merciless way because he alone is exposing the truth about Rome. He alone knows that truth because, as a Jesuit priest, he had access – unique among those who have subsequently come to Christ – to the secret files of the Vatican.

The “Rivera Cult” most significantly comprises, not those few who immediately surround him and carry out his orders, but those in America and around the world who buy books and tapes. These are sent out, not only from Chick Publications, but from Rivera’s own “ministry,” *Antichrist Information Center (A.I.C.) International Christian Ministries*.

Antichrist Information Center (A.I.C.)

A.I.C. is the vehicle used by Rivera to turn the tables on those who oppose him or expose him. He consolidates the attacks on the professing Christian personalities which he has already launched in the *Alberto* series.

I bought many A.I.C. tapes when I followed the Rivera message. As I look back to those times, I can see that my attention was won because what I found was an exaggeration of the conclusions I was myself reaching. I was emerging from the Charismatic movement and from Roman Catholic influence. I believe we are vulnerable to those who exaggerate, and I have found that Christians generally are no exception.

As a Rivera follower, I found the detailed A.I.C. tape catalogue very persuasive. We look now at some of the subjects and topics covered, taking these from the 13-page audio tape advertisement found in the Canadian edition of *Night Journey from Rome*.³¹² This book is published by A.I.C./*Agapesofia Oikoumene*, which is Rivera's label. We have selected 50 of the topics and subjects from the tapes list which pollutes Clark Butterfield's book:³¹³

1. "John Kennedy's assassination organised through Roman Catholic parish in Houston"
2. "Kennedy's Assassination plotted by the Vatican, and Dr Rivera's knowledge of it"
3. "Pat Robertson"
4. "Reagan and the Jesuits"
5. "Billy Graham and the Vatican"
6. "Jonestown"
7. "The Moral Majority"
8. "Alberto's Sister"
9. "Bishop Sheen"
10. "The Mafia, unions and Pius XII"
11. "Bush"
12. "George Bush sent to Vatican regarding atomic weapons, and why"
13. "'That witch' Kathryn Kuhlman"
14. "Walter Martin and the Christian Research Institute, the purpose they serve"
15. "Eisenhower, Patton and the Vatican"
16. "Vatican and US nuclear policy"
17. "R.L. Hymers (Fundamentalist army)"
18. "Rasmussen"
19. "Campus Crusade and the four spiritual laws"
20. "What John Todd didn't say"
21. "More on John Todd"
22. "Australia and Roman Catholicism"
23. "Pacelli and the massacre of Jews"
24. "*Alberto* among socialists and communists"
25. "Luther's protectors were Jesuits!"
26. "Hospitals, clinics, attorneys, judges, others"
27. "More details about the death of Clark Butterfield"
28. "Escape from a Catholic Convent – the Testimony of Sister Charlotte"
29. "*De Roma a Cristo* (From Rome to Christ)"
30. "Dr Rivera's experiences as he went through confrontations with certain Roman Catholic doctrines when he was a Jesuit priest, leading to his conversion to Jesus Christ"
31. "Personal Testimony – Dr Rivera speaking about his life"
32. "Interview: Dr Rivera and Pastor Charles Lawson, Nashville, Tennessee"
33. "Interview: Dr Rivera and Pastor Gordon Pierce, Canada"
34. "Why Jesuits want us to think that communists hate the Roman Catholic institution"
35. "Billy Graham's 'Decision' and the Vatican"
36. "The Instructions the Jesuits have on who to persecute first and by what means"

37. "History of Paul III and Loyola"
 38. "Jews and who has been murdering them"
 39. "Church of England"
 40. "Seminaries and Vatican II; the Seminary in Costa Rica"
 41. "Marx, Engels and the (almost) English revolution"
 42. "The Charismatic Movement in the Roman Catholic institution"
 43. "The Southern Baptist Convention. Dr Rivera's infiltration of it when a Jesuit"
 44. "Fuller Theological Seminary; Dr Rivera's work among Fuller when a Jesuit"
 45. "Signs; How to explain charismatics casting out demons"
 46. "KBRT Radio interview, Dr Rivera's confrontation with Gary Metts (correct spelling = Metz)"
 47. "David Wilkerson"
 48. "Walter Martin vs. Dr Rivera: A Debate"
 49. "Bartholomew Brewer; Walter Martin; Gary Metts (= Metz); Brian Onken"
- and
50. "Clark Butterfield's Murder"

The listing on these subjects, and more, all serve to corrupt the testimony of a genuine former Roman Catholic priest who came to know the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord used Jim McKinnon, a detective colleague in the Detroit Police Department where he worked, in the ex-priest's salvation. The author of *Night Journey from Rome* was Clark Butterfield. According to the death certificate of Clark Butterfield, this brother died in 1981. Typically, Rivera reproduces the death certificate alongside other equally innocuous documents, one a letter from Clark Butterfield and another from the Christian detective.

The Chick Publications edition of 1982 carries a Rivera "Introduction" identifying the recently-converted Butterfield as "another saint martyred for Jesus." Rivera's Canadian edition came out in 1985.

As a writer of several books on the occult, the one-world conspiracy, New Age deception in the professing Church and the New World Order, the topics on Rivera's tape list are by no means unfamiliar. Where such subjects are concerned, there is an inevitable mixture of good information and dis-information, truth and error, fact and fiction. A good deal of discernment is called for on the part of the reader, even with the material from the most diligent of commentators.

Rivera has obtained his information second-hand, and not by reason of being a Jesuit, or as one having had access to any significant Vatican sources. The danger to the reader is that Rivera represents himself reporting first-hand from Rome. Again, a credibility is encouraged by other tapes which help identify him as a Christian with sound doctrine. He has tape titles such as *On Election*. There is a series of nine tapes giving a deeper study on *The Lord's Table*. Added to this are tapes of the testimony which we are exposing in this book. Once the Rivera testimony is believed, enormous credibility and authority is heaped upon the deceptive tapes from which our long list above is taken. The tapes are deceptive even though the presentation is typically a shallow one so far as the more mature and discerning Christian is concerned.

It is a tragedy that Rivera has been helped by professing Christian leaders for so long in selling his tapes and books. It is a reflection of the level to which professing Christian discernment has sunk. In these days of fast-advancing apostasy, we find involvement by organisations, which in the past have done well in exposing Rome on the basis of her place in Scripture and history. They believe they need to avail themselves of Rivera's trash in order to help make their case. We have made reference already to the key part unwittingly played by the Canadian Protestant League. The book table in June 1992 from which I purchased the book by Clark Butterfield, sullied by Rivera's name, twenty-four pages of Rivera, as well as the advertisement details of around 140 of his tapes, was that of the English Protestant Alliance.

At length, while the Protestant Alliance in England and the Protestant League in Canada were selling books like this, after more than 35 years of Rivera's frauds, a few people much closer to Rivera were

weariness of him. At last some were not walking away. Effort was being made – not yet enough, but some – to stop him. A significant milestone was reached when the local church, of which Ismael Guerrero MD was a member, took appropriate steps to expel him.

Chapter 14

RIVERA EXPELLED FROM MEMBERSHIP OF HIS OWN CHURCH

My introduction to the most recent evidence concerning Rivera came when I received a cassette tape made by Donald Blanton. Like others during the 1980s, Donald Blanton did much volunteer work for Alberto Rivera, giving freely of his time. Also, he gave a great deal of money, over and above a regular offering.

This author met with Donald on New Year's Eve/New Year's Day of 1990/91, and also has the advantage of taped recorded messages and correspondence with him, as well as recorded interviews with Rivera and Donald Blanton from various times past.

The first main meeting between Rivera and Donald Blanton was 18 April 1986, in a motel in El Paso, Texas. Rivera was conducting a ten-day crusade at a Spanish-speaking church. Donald had attended the previous night. He estimates 1,500 people were present. Priests and nuns were throwing holy water on the building and they had to be escorted away.

Donald, a new Christian and a former Roman Catholic, was clearly impressed, and the meeting marked the beginning of a connection which lasted around four years. Rivera performed both Donald's baptism and the ceremony for his marriage to Grace.

The cassette message sent to me gave an up-to-date profile of Alberto Rivera. It was made in 1989, and extracts from this are reproduced and edited with Donald's consent:

"I rented one of the wings of the Dallas Convention Center – 8th to 10th August 1986. I paid the fare for Alberto and his family, as well as for the Convention Center and the publicity to have him come and preach there for three days. In 1987 I rented the Carriage Inn – April 13th, 14th and 15th – and had Alberto come and preach here in Ridgecrest, California. The costs of these two campaigns were provided and the reason I want to make this clear is to show you that I believed very much in the man during these early days of my conversion. I have the records to show that I donated up to around \$20,000 to the ministry during these four years.

"Even though I live 160 miles from where Alberto has his ministry located, I drove down there many, many weekends, and during the week, and tried to help where I could, circulating their mail, filling orders, and many other things to help contribute to the work that I thought was the work of the Gospel...

"Alberto has not been an example in Christian practise. Anybody who has ever ordered anything knows they may wait six months to a year to get their order, even though their check was cashed immediately, and then they may only get an incomplete order. He himself has been evicted from places for not paying his own rent. He's continually being taken to court for not paying overdue TV or radio bills. And those who know him know that he's not a humble man. Even when I tried to discuss all our financial problems, that we shouldn't be in debt, that even heathen ministries run better ministries than A.I.C., the blame would always go that Christians weren't faithful in sending enough money."³¹⁴

The above is the testimony of a Christian who was truly committed to supporting Rivera's work in every possible way. It can hardly be said that such a Christian, who even had Rivera conduct his marriage ceremony, was an infiltrator. Such is Rivera's claim also against Donald's best man, even though introduced by Rivera to Donald. That was Ismael Guerrero MD.

Jewellery

When I met with Dr Ismael Guerrero, one of the incredible stories he related involved jewellery. This short episode well describes the church scene. Ismael had been called urgently to Rivera's home, where he was asked by Rivera to take two boxes of jewellery and put them in the trunk of his automobile. James Brown and Ismael were together. Ismael didn't see the jewellery, for it was contained in two well-made boxes about 10" long and 4" tall. The police were present.

Rivera had stated from the pulpit how many times his wife had left him. On this occasion, in Dr Guerrero's words, this was "a major fight with Nury."³¹⁵

As they were going out to the automobile Ismael observed to James Brown, "James, that's jewellery!" Ismael related to me how James cautioned him: "We don't know... Now the devil's going to try and work on you. If he hasn't already, he's going to put questions into your head. A man that has jewellery, what is this all about? You don't know the answers, and so it's better to silence the devil."³¹⁶

Again in Ismael's words: "Later when Rivera mentioned to me that the jewellery he had was for the printing of the 1655 edition of the Bible, then I felt relieved. I knew there was a good explanation for the jewellery. There had to be (laughter). That's what I believed to be the explanation."³¹⁷

Nury thought it was hers, but with Rivera's explanation the matter was over with for Ismael. The mystery had been solved. This intelligent medical doctor admits he was duped many times during three years of unquestioning service to Rivera. Then at last the light dawned. This gentle giant of a man was, by the grace of God, to be given leadership of the local church.

Rivera is Confronted by His Local Church

It was not long after Donald Blanton's tape was made, and after Donald had left Rivera's church, that matters came to a head. The church formally wrote to Rivera, 21 May 1989,³¹⁸ "to make known the will of God concerning the latest occurrences in the church and the dealing of the members with Rivera." The letter referred to Rivera's victims of deceit among the church members. I travelled to California in 1990 and in 1991 to meet with some of these.

Some of the issues were detailed in Dr Guerrero's own words in a letter to James Brown.³¹⁹ The church's letter had sought a meeting with Rivera to discuss these issues, but no reply was received. The members wanted to do things properly in a scriptural manner, and on 11 June another letter was sent to Rivera. It was signed as from "The Church of Jesus Christ." Rivera was informed that an auto Nissan Sentra, two trailers and furniture belonging to the church would be collected from his property, because the payments were "being made by way of our brother Ismael Guerrero" and because Rivera had fulfilled neither his contract nor his prompt monthly obligations. The letter required that the property be made available for collection on Saturday 17 June.

The next letter was written on 18 June. By then, all had the information of the ugly reception which members received at the Rivera home on 17 June. The letter had the further purpose "to inform other members of the Christian community of the occurrences on that date."

The following month, in Dr Guerrero's words, "we drafted the letter dated 16 July 1989 in which we expel Dr Rivera as Pastor and member of our Church [the Los Angeles Bible Christian Church/*Iglesia Biblica Christiana de Los Angeles*]."³²⁰

The membership was, in its own words in the letter, "leaving him to the consideration of the public as a deceiver of the body of Christ, and as a heathen man and a publican (Mat. 18:17)."

The statement on behalf of all the church members summarises the course taken by the church. It contains words which have an echo with so many Christians who have had close dealings with Rivera:

"That this Los Angeles Bible Christian Church, united in full, can give testimony that from the moment that every member came to know Dr Alberto Rivera personally, we have never seen in him not even one action or testimony that demonstrates a genuine conversion to Christ by new birth, nor have we seen moral conduct that is worthy to be a minister of God as he proclaims himself to be...

Also of the deceit perpetrated against the Christian public when Dr Alberto announces by radio that he has a medical office (without a doctor), and a Christian school for children (without accredited teachers), violating all laws and regulations enforceable from their respective governmental agencies...”

“...the Los Angeles Bible Christian Church remains convinced of the impossibility of dealing with Dr Alberto Rivera, and of the lamentable moral and ethical condition in which said Dr Rivera finds himself, and thereby concludes in expelling him from the pastorate of our church and of its membership. It also agreed that all the evangelical churches in this city, the authorities of California, the public in general, be notified of the condition in which Dr Rivera is found to thereby prevent the addition of numbers of victims of his deceits and swindling of monies.”³²¹

The statement concludes: “This session is lifted to the Lord with prayer that our Heavenly Father touch the heart of this sinner, Dr Alberto Rivera, and bring him to repentance and join him to the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 5:4-5).”³²²

By the time of Rivera’s expulsion, there was seen an urgent need to get the message out to the body of Christ, in the Los Angeles area, throughout America and to the whole world. It may be reflected that the people in Los Angeles Bible Christian Church took a long time to grasp the truth of Rivera, and then grasp the nettle to deal with him. It was because of his extensive travelling and radio ministry that they were mostly apart from him. They now saw the need to warn in Los Angeles, across America, and around the world. The good people of Los Angeles Bible Christian Church had never themselves taken much notice of previous exposés of Rivera. They were controlled, or even brainwashed, by him.

Dr Guerrero is now a man who has recovered. Jim Jones’ followers displayed alarming loyalty to him. Dr Guerrero had shown alarming loyalty to Rivera. We leave the last word on the unhappy events to Ismael Guerrero, the leader of the new church. The following is from a long letter in September 1989, written by Dr Guerrero to James Brown, in which he relates the events around the expulsion of Rivera:

“In conclusion, after all the occurrences, I can say that the Lord has taken us away from Dr Rivera (Ezekiel 34:11-16; John 10:11-16). I spent three years with Rivera. Other brothers and sisters spent much less time, but within the space of two weeks, eight members had all had their eyes opened, and all were rescued of the Lord. We have been duly warned of the Lord (Acts 20:28,30; 2 Peter 2:1-3; Jude 4) that all this may happen if we take our eyes off the Lord, and semi-blindly follow any man. I’m sorry that I have given you so much all at once, and also that I didn’t inform you step by step as every letter went out to Rivera, so that you may have had an influence. But as you can see, it’s all said and done. Perhaps the Lord wanted it this way.

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation” (2 Corinthians 1:3-7).³²³

2580 Nort Soto, Dino Badaracco and C.E.L.E.M.

The local church members who had once met under the leadership of Rivera, continued to meet in homes under the new leadership of Ismael Guerrero. The bills for the church, and accommodation at 2580 Nort Soto, Los Angeles, had not been paid. Rivera’s church was gone. As for the A.I.C. activity, it remained with Rivera and was now managed elsewhere. Rivera had been disfellowshipped.

Yet on KBRT Radio (Avalon, California), interviewer Tim Barrons asked Rivera if the information, given on the programme by researcher John Kealy, was true. Had he been disfellowshipped by the church in July 1989? “It’s not true. This is a lie. This man is a liar.”³²⁴

Such were Rivera’s unequivocal replies, delivered in the same forthright and shocking manner experienced by his old friends from the Canary Islands in the meeting in Australia.

Then, asked if he was still at 2580 Nort Soto by a man who called Rivera sometime after the programme, he explained himself further: “No. We left this place. It was the first time we opened to the public our office ministry. These people were coming in every day... I was not in control of the situation because I travel, preaching the Gospel over nine months out of the year...” He explained how he shortened his time in Korea to be on the programme.

Sam Valdivia and his wife Nancy accommodated me in their home when I visited the Nort Soto church in 1990 and 1991. In God’s providence another church from Los Angeles, pastored by Dino Badaracco, who had previously given help to Rivera at Nort Soto, had by that date moved into the large building. Sam was the only one who remained.

Sam Valdivia told me he had been in Rivera’s church in September 1988 when Rivera preached a sermon against Donald Blanton. From the pulpit Rivera had said Donald was an evil man. Sam told me that he had believed Rivera at the time when he said Donald had taken tapes and materials from the place in which only he had access. At the same time people were instructed by Rivera not to contact Donald.

At that time too, Rivera, in Sam’s words, “powerfully encouraged” him to give two houses. Abraham, Sam’s father, was an elderly retired bullfighter and also a retired pastor from a big church in Mexico City, who lived next door. Abraham also testifies to being duped financially by Rivera. This is referred to in the church’s statement of 16 July 1989. Quicker than most, but no doubt helped by the dramatic events of 1989, the Valdivias came to understand the true nature of Alberto Rivera.

Another member of his congregation who Rivera preached against from the pulpit was Mrs Aguillera, to whom Mrs Guerrero referred in her statement about their troubled days with Rivera. I was able to meet with her and her husband. I was told how Mrs Aguillera always cleaned the church, a large and sprawling building. When Rivera chose to attack those who cleaned the church, he said: “If you don’t obey my orders, no matter if you come to me on your knees, God will not appreciate it, and I will not appreciate it.”³²⁵

Mr Aguillera, also described as a faithful member of Rivera’s church, related another interesting story. Mr Aguillera had a friend who worked in the same company. We will call him Pedro. Mr Aguillera discovered that his colleague had first met Rivera long before any connection between Rivera and Mr Aguillera. Rivera was then living in Southgate. Then he moved to Sherman Oaks. At that time Rivera was building a church. The church was in Oxnard, and Pedro gave him some materials to help build it.

After Sherman Oaks, Rivera moved to Cucamonga. Pedro helped again. After this, Pedro didn’t hear of Rivera until much later.

Eventually Rivera moved to 2580 Nort Soto, in the city of Los Angeles. Mr Aguillera was also with Rivera, and now it was Mr Aguillera, working in the same company as Pedro, who obtained materials from his new friend Pedro in order to help Rivera. The two men discovered they both knew Rivera. Pedro was not a Christian man, and he was surprised when he was given a leaflet with Rivera’s name on it. He was surprised because Rivera had conducted his marriage ceremony some ten years previously in 1978. Pedro observed that Rivera had then been dressed as a Roman Catholic priest.

When these things happened, Mr Aguillera went to Rivera and Nury to tell them of his friend who had seen the leaflet with Rivera’s name on it. Giving them his full name, they asked Rivera: “Do you remember this man?”

Rivera said he never knew the man, and Mr Aguillera gave Rivera a lot of help to assist his memory. Pedro had given him fine details, including the details of a particularly distinctive item which Rivera had sold to Pedro. When he mentioned that, Nury remembered. She exclaimed to her husband (in

Spanish): “*nene, nene...*” That translates as “baby, baby...” Mr Aguillera related to me that the sense of the words were” “can’t you remember?”³²⁶ Finally Rivera accepted. He ended the conversation.

Mr Aguillera emphasised to me that the point of the story is that Rivera was dressed as a Roman Catholic priest when he conducted Pedro’s marriage ceremony. Indeed, the garments Rivera wore were made around that time. The woman who made the robe for him was known to Roland Rasmussen, previously mentioned.

A decade after Rivera was with Mr Rasmussen and others, this different group – Mr Aguillera, Dr Guerrero, Donald Blanton, Dino Badaracco, ex-pastor Abraham Valdivia, Sam Valdivia, John Kealy, and many more – were all deceived in different ways by Rivera. Rivera was now gone from 2580 Nort Soto. Now there were two churches, one led by Dr Guerrero, and one led by Dino Badaracco.

In the aftermath of the Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart scandals, pastors from the large Hispanic community in and around Los Angeles saw the need to be alert to deceivers among the Spanish-speaking churches. In consequence, there had been set up the *Comite Evangelico LatinoAmericano de Etica Ministerial (C.E.L.E.M.)*, a Latin American committee on ministerial ethics.

It was upon the recommendation of Dino Badaracco, the pastor, that C.E.L.E.M. made the case of Alberto Rivera their first for study. John Kealy, a young man who had given out many Chick tracts in his native Ireland, was working in Los Angeles in 1990. He stayed with Mr Badaracco and did a great deal of valuable research on behalf of the committee. He was also instrumental on its behalf in getting the warning message out to Evangelical leaders.

With regard to making known the details of Rivera’s forty years of continuing fraud to the wider Christian world, it was through this author’s contact with Donald Blanton and John Kealy, and eventually with the Los Angeles Bible Christian Church, itself a member of C.E.L.E.M., that work began. This book originates from Mr Badaracco, and owes its initial research and information to Donald Blanton and John Kealy, as well as research materials from ten years previously, made available by Gary Metz. Will we see the end of the Rivera story? Can he be stopped? Can the trail of destruction at last be ended?

The 1990s started with renewed public debate. Again there were the local radio talk shows, just like those after the Gary Metz exposé a decade before. This time the voices we heard were those of John Kealy, Donald Blanton and Ismael Guerrero. Also, once again, there was Gary Metz – now expressing his astonishment that Rivera could have been allowed to continue so long.

How did Rivera cope this time? How did he cope last time? How will he deal with the debate, and with the new detail made known in this book? Christians need to know how to deal with a man like Rivera. He was knocked down by the Los Angeles Bible Christian Church, but he was by no means knocked out, by no means defeated.

How does Rivera deal with the opposition he receives? How did Rivera handle the court case brought by his former colleagues in A.I.C.? How did he handle the TV news crew who were waiting for him in the court? We look at these questions in the next chapter.

Chapter 15

RIVERA IN COURT

“Dr Rivera has for 14 years been preparing a court action to bring the Roman Catholic institution before an international tribunal to charge her for the crimes and suffering she has caused, and is still causing, through her bloody history. His documents will be revealed at that time.”³²⁷ So wrote Jack Chick in 1980.

As I write this chapter, it is twenty-five years since Rivera began his preparation for what would assuredly be the most extraordinary tribunal of all time. This assumes that there ever existed a tribunal before which the pope and his followers could be brought. This is all the fantasy of a paranoid rogue.

Yet I have found little evidence that Rivera is daunted by persecution, and he appears as one who takes his superiority and grandeur for granted.

In 1991 we find Rivera in court as defendant, not as the plaintiff standing against Rome. Rivera hired a lawyer to represent him. He couldn't be interviewed for the TV crew outside the court, because, as Los Angeles KABC-TV viewers heard on the main evening news, he was busy preparing for a conference in Mexico. Rivera wasn't even in court.

The case before the court on 21st August 1991 saw Carlos Orea and Donald Blanton as the plaintiffs, and Dr Ismael Guerrero as a witness. I was in Los Angeles and able to be present throughout. We have seen, in a previous chapter, that Donald Blanton had been there when Rivera prayed, lamenting Carlos Orea's behaviour in pressing for his money. Donald was soon persuaded to part with his own money. Carlos' loan was supposed to pay Rivera's overdue account at the Hispanic TV Channel 52, and when it was still not paid, Donald Blanton loaned Rivera a similar amount. Still the TV account wasn't paid. Ismael Guerrero, the third man addressing the judge, did so only as a witness for the plaintiffs. However, he had been the third in line, advancing yet a further, similar amount to Rivera to pay still the same account.

In Dr Guerrero's words: “Dr Rivera also asked me to obtain a \$7,000 loan for A.I.C. through Household Finance Company with the same arrangement as with Donald, which I obtained in November 1988, and I never received one penny from A.I.C. to cover the payments.”³²⁸ And still the account from Channel 52 wasn't paid.

C.E.L.E.M. Tells California's Press: Rivera is before the Court

The *Comite Evangelico LatinoAmericano de Etica Ministerial* (C.E.L.E.M.) – the Latin American Evangelical Committee for Ministerial Ethics – had followed Alberto Rivera closely and reported accordingly. We remind that Rivera is well known among Hispanic Christians through Chick's *Alberto* books published in Spanish, through his travels in Latin America, through his Hispanic TV programmes shown on Channel 52, and through meetings. Spanish is Rivera's native language, and the Los Angeles area, where Rivera lives, has one of the largest Spanish-speaking populations in the developed world. Dino Badaracco, president of C.E.L.E.M., like Carlos Orea and Ismael Guerrero MD, has Spanish as a first language, and is familiar with Rivera's work in the Hispanic community.

The eve of Rivera's trial was the occasion for C.E.L.E.M. to put out a “press release.” The following is the English text:

“For thirty years, a self-proclaimed Jesuit priest and supposed defector of that Roman Catholic Order, has been deceiving thousands of churches here and abroad, printing false stories of persecution and torture. He also has been taking money from pious people under false pretenses.

“On Wednesday 21st August at 8 a.m. in the Municipal Court at 110 North Grand Street, Dept. 1, the so-called Dr Alberto Rivera will appear before the judge to respond for a couple of swindles by which

he cheated Ismael Guerrero MD out of more than 10,000 dollars, Mr Donald Blanton out of 8,000 dollars and Mr Carlos Orea out of 13,000 dollars.

“Self-styled ‘Dr’ Rivera has a rubber-stamp religious organisation and a church that exists only on letter-head paper. Those entities function without any sort of records or board meetings. Mr Rivera just has opened several bank accounts. It’s about time the Internal Revenue Service (I.R.S.) conduct an audit of Rivera’s illegal finances. A figure-head former Financial Secretary was ordered to sign checks in blank so that Rivera could use them at his own discretion. Finally he lost his own credit because of an impressive amount of returned checks. After the Secretary complained, Rivera said he had ‘expelled’ him.

“Rivera keeps giving virulent lectures against the Roman Catholic religion at those churches around the world who accept his theatrical complaints and fantastic stories. He raises big collections, supposedly destined to the expansion of his ‘ministry.’ Nobody knows where the money goes, but he offers his donors a fake tax exemption status 501(c)(3).

“It’s not known how many times Alberto Rivera has been in jail, but he claims he has been imprisoned by orders of the Vatican, not on account of his own financial crimes that are many.

“For the space of two years, the C.E.L.E.M. has been monthly informing churches and religious organisations about Alberto Rivera’s frauds. The response has been meager due to the great con-artist ability that Rivera possesses. This committee would like to see auditors from the I.R.S. looking for the origin of Rivera’s fake organisations, funding, and how the funds are spent. – Rev. Dr. Dino Badaracco - President.”

Cameras in Court for Main KABC Channel 7 TV News: Publicity for Rivera but the Net Tightening

In Court the judge, Hon. Mel Red Recana, said at the end of the trial that Rivera hides behind high-sounding titles to take money from people who believe in his cause.

Carlos Orea and Donald Blanton obtained judgment against Rivera for the debt, with interest (see Picture 26). Picture 27 is a photograph of Carlos, Donald, Dr Ismael Guerrero and Dino Badaracco taken with the author outside the court room. Except Rivera be stopped in the Lord’s purposes, all of these events may quite well fuel the next cycle, as Rivera explains to supporters, new and old, how those he believed to be Christian brothers turned out to be persecutors and infiltrators. It was out of sympathy for such stories, and convinced of the Rivera message about Rome, that Dr Guerrero and others had themselves rallied to Rivera’s support.

Surely millions more than usual were switched on at the peak viewing time for the main K-ABC *Channel 7* “Eye-Witness News” just before six o’clock. The world was waiting for the latest on the Soviet coup. Wednesday 21st August 1991 will be remembered by many around the world as the day they switched on to see Gorbachev returning from the Crimea after his release by his captors. Yet still, there was a place for news and film of Alberto Rivera. This was the next item.

Rivera wasn’t in court. He only gave a telephone interview to the TV News. However, immediately after the introduction, Rivera was on the screen. A clipping taken from Channel 52 showed Rivera’s most powerful oratory. After this, reporter Mark Coogan described Rivera:

“Here is the inspiration for the books. Alberto Rivera, a fundamentalist preacher based in Fontana. His account of his life is illustrated in the books, that he was a Jesuit priest, but quit and became a fundamentalist when he learned of the Jesuits’ secret plan to rule.”

TV viewers next saw Carlos Orea. His broken English limits him to a few words. What viewers heard could hardly be more perfectly explicit: “I discover he’s an impostor. He’s a liar. He’s in the church because - money.”

Viewers saw this author interviewed, then Dr Guerrero who told how Rivera was “...getting a lot of Christians who are in a vulnerable state, and he will draw money from you because you think you’re helping this super cause.”

Rivera himself was well represented by the words of Mark Coogan: “We called Alberto Rivera at his

home in Fontana. He said he didn't have time to do an on-camera interview because he was preparing to leave for a religious conference in Mexico. Rivera insisted that he is the genuine article. Otherwise, he asked, why should I be under attack?"

Finally, one of Chick's *Alberto* pictures of a Vatican seminar was shown on the screen to illustrate the point. Quoting Rivera, the finale was a line which typically serves Rivera best of all:

"Quote. I happen to be the person they go after because I have more inside information than anyone else. – Mark Coogan. Channel 7 *Eye-Witness News*, reporting."

Many have been the radio and television interviews with Rivera. Invariably, he can bring the subject around to the fascinating subject of the Jesuit conspiracy. Among the millions of viewers, like all his audiences, there will have been an assortment of perspectives, with an overwhelming majority hardly interested at all. Yet in any large group there is a small number who echo, "Rivera is right. I've always said so. How can I get in touch with him? I'd like to give him my support."

Out of such a minority, there will be those who will actually do something about it. They will step forward and offer help, offer their time or offer their money. This is where Orea, Guerrero and Blanton came in! The cycle repeats itself. They realise their delusion. More come along and take their place.

After the court, and after the TV News, I was speaking to the director of K-ABC News and Sport. He was by then familiar with the outline of the material I had available. His words were encouraging: "Keep in touch. There's more than one story here."³²⁹ Indeed there is. It is only when the full measure of all Rivera's deceptions can be seen in some detail that many Christians, opposed to Roman Catholicism and supporting Rivera to that end, will be persuaded it is unhelpful to have Rivera on their side.

The net is tightening around Alberto Rivera. Also, the weight of his false history is heavy. Long after Rivera and Chick have been forgotten, the false history which they have promoted will continue in its effect. Millions of ordinary believers have been brought up on a diet of Chick and *Alberto*.

POSTSCRIPT

Although Roy Livesey was hopeful that by 1992 the net was finally tightening around Alberto Rivera, this did not happen. Rivera was not hindered in the long run. He continued his deceptions until his death a few years later in 1997. Nor did his story end even then. The comic books continue to be published, and the myth of “Dr Alberto Rivera, ex-Jesuit priest converted to Christ” continues to be believed by multitudes around the world.

After his death I wrote the following, published in *The Bible Based Ministries Magazine*, No. 84, April-November 1997. Entitled *Alberto Rivera: a Con-Man, Not a Converted Ex-Jesuit*, it is being reproduced below (slightly edited) to bring the account of Alberto Rivera up to the time of his death:

Alberto Rivera, the man who claimed to be an ex-Jesuit priest converted to Jesus Christ, and whose supposed life-story was published as a series of comic books by Chick Publications, died in the United States in June 1997. I was in the United States at the time. We heard the news from Roy Livesey, the British Christian author who has done extensive research into the life and claims of Rivera. Very soon it began to circulate that he died of deliberate food poisoning. His widow, Nury, in the first newsletter she published after his death, claimed that Rivera himself said he had been poisoned, and that the poison caused cancer. If he really did make such a statement it would not be at all surprising, and would fit right in with his known character, and with all the other sensational claims he made, including the many supposed attempts on his life by Jesuit agents.

Donald Blanton, my friend and brother in Christ who lived in California, and I visited Chick Publications in California to find out whatever details we could about his death. We were unable to meet with Jack Chick, but we spoke with Donna Eubanks, an ex-superior of a Roman Catholic convent who worked at Chick Publications. As we suspected, Chick Publications appeared to prefer the food poisoning story. Donna Eubanks said that he had been poisoned. And yet, significantly perhaps, Jack Chick himself made no mention of death by poisoning when he related the death of his friend in the Chick Publications magazine, *Battle Cry*. A preference for a theory is not proof, and perhaps Chick, for once, was being cautious!

Like so many thousands of others, I first heard of Alberto Rivera way back in the early 1980s, when I read the comic books published by Chick Publications. The first of these within what is called the *Alberto* series is entitled, simply, *Alberto*; and this and its sequel, *Double-Cross*, claim to be based on the true story of a man who was a Roman Catholic Jesuit priest, an undercover agent of the Vatican who infiltrated Protestant churches, and who was eventually converted to Jesus Christ and left the Roman Catholic system, becoming a Christian minister. The other comic books in the *Alberto* series, entitled *The Godfathers*, *The Force*, *Four Horsemen*, and *The Prophet*, contain information about the supposed intrigues of the Vatican which Rivera gave to Chick to publish. Some of the information is certainly historically accurate, and has been documented in other sources (from which, no doubt, Rivera himself gleaned it); but there is also much in these picture books which is utterly *inaccurate*, yet which we are supposed to believe merely on Rivera’s say-so.

Back in those days, I did not know this. And, finding myself in a position to travel to the United States, I decided to meet Alberto Rivera personally. I wrote to A.I.C. Ministries (Rivera’s outfit) in Upland, California, and received a positive response. I flew to Los Angeles in April 1985. I spent three weeks with Rivera and his co-workers – more so with his co-workers than with him. While there were a few things which concerned me, I gave him the benefit of the doubt, believing in general that he was who he claimed to be (with no evidence at the time to indicate otherwise). I was later invited by A.I.C. Ministries to handle all their correspondence from Africa. I never joined A.I.C., but I agreed to do this for them. In this way, a great number of letters, which African people had written to Rivera, were passed on to me, and this was surely in the Lord’s purposes, for in this way many of them ceased dealing with him and began to deal directly with Bible Based Ministries.

In this way things continued for a few years. All that we ever knew of Alberto Rivera, we knew from

my brief visit, and from his literature and tapes. And then, in 1988 and 1989, the Lord began to expose the ungodly conduct of Rivera as never before. One of the men in Rivera's church was Donald Blanton. We had been corresponding. A series of events occurred, too detailed to go into here, which resulted in Donald leaving Rivera's church; and Rivera himself was excommunicated from his own church for his ungodly conduct. The details of these events are given in a lecture I delivered entitled, *Alberto Rivera: a False Brother*. This is available from Bible Based Ministries. In addition, Donald Blanton can provide further information about all these things. His evidence consists of firsthand accounts of people who worked with Rivera, copies of court records showing Rivera made fraudulent loans and swindled money, etc. Contact Bible Based Ministries regarding this documentation package.

Rivera's conduct revealed that he was *by no means* a truly converted man. And he was not to be trusted.

Some time later, Roy Livesey from England (who had also, initially, been intrigued by the Alberto story), began to extensively research the history of Rivera, visiting the Canary Islands (where Alberto grew up), the United States, etc. And what he discovered proved, conclusively, that not only was Alberto Rivera not a true Christian, but in addition, he had never been a Jesuit priest either! Roy Livesey uncovered a life of deceit and fraud going back decades.

The *Alberto* comic books are not to be trusted as reliable sources of information about the Roman Catholic system, nor are they the true story of Alberto Rivera. The *true* story of Alberto Rivera is that of an extremely clever con-man. He has fooled many, and his story will continue to do so even now that he is dead.

Some have very foolishly said that any exposé of Rivera will only be playing into the Vatican's hands. This is absolute nonsense. The fact that the Roman Catholic institution is the Great Whore of Bible prophecy does not stand or fall with Alberto Rivera! Yes, Alberto was a fraud: he was never a Jesuit priest. But this does not in any way alter the truth that the Jesuits are the most diabolical organisation to ever disgrace the face of the earth. There is ample evidence of this; the evidence of centuries of history. And they are just as diabolical today, for which (again) there is ample evidence. Alberto was a fraud; but let none think that the Jesuits are not a danger to the world, and to true Christians, merely because one man was found to have concocted a fanciful story! The literature on the Jesuit Order, written through the centuries, is horrifying. They most certainly do infiltrate churches, and seek to destroy biblical Christianity, to overthrow governments, etc., etc. The truth is, we do not have to resort to Rivera's fanciful tales: the *real* history of the Jesuit Order is terrible enough.

Now that Alberto Rivera is dead, I believe that Chick Publications will profit even more from his story than when he was alive. For the man must have become a major embarrassment to Chick himself, as more and more details of his swindles, deceit, fraud, lies, and other completely un-Christian conduct came to light. His was a record of ungodly conduct stretching back over many years, indeed over decades. Jack Chick stubbornly continued to support Rivera, and refused to heed the solid evidence of Rivera's sinful conduct which was presented to him; but without doubt it all must have provided him with much embarrassment at times. Now, however, with Rivera having passed away, Chick is free to continue publishing the story, no longer saddled with having to ward off the constant stream of evidence relating to Rivera's misconduct; *and*, furthermore, it is more than likely that Rivera will come to be viewed as a Christian martyr, a man who died for the cause of Christ at the hands of agents of the Vatican. If anything, one can expect the comic books to continue to sell for many years to come. Alberto Rivera could ultimately prove to be more profitable to Chick Publications now that he is dead, than he ever was when he was alive!

Meanwhile, the Alberto "ministry" continues. It is now in the hands of his wife, Nury, and their son, Albert, and it is based in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Rivera's "ministry" was called "A.I.C. International Christian Ministries," the "A.I.C." standing for "Antichrist Information Center." Interestingly, although it is still called A.I.C., the first issue of the new newsletter published by his widow (*Contending for the Faith*, Volume 1, Issue 1, July-September 1997) states that it is now called

“Assurance in Christ and Alberto Ministries.”

On p.2 of the newsletter, Nury Rivera wrote that her husband “was intentionally poisoned”, claiming: “Witnesses are everywhere.” She declared that she would, in the next issue, “show to the world” what happened. Rivera himself was always making extravagant claims, stating that he had solid “proof” for this or that. No solid evidence of poisoning has been given; but there is *solid* evidence that Rivera was a fraud, a man who deliberately deceived millions, usually keeping just one step ahead of the law. Tragically, his story will continue to circulate throughout the world, and thus the deception will continue. We urge Christians to arm themselves with the *true* history of this man, and to do what they can to expose the false version which he so successfully promoted worldwide.

(end of article)

No, Rivera was not intentionally poisoned. No evidence to support this claim has ever been produced. And as he was never a Jesuit in the first place, as proved conclusively by Roy Livesey’s book, there was absolutely no reason for the Jesuits to kill him.

Nury Rivera went from bad to worse, becoming a Charismatic-type “preacher” herself, promoting the false story of her late husband wherever she went, and attacking anyone who disputed it in the same aggressive style as Rivera himself had always employed – yet never with any evidence.

Although Jack Chick has also now passed away, Chick Publications continues – and still publishes the comic books and defends the false “testimony” of Rivera. People all over the world are still deceived by the comic books, still quote Alberto Rivera as an authority (often *the* authority) on Roman Catholicism, and will doubtless continue to do so for a very, very long time to come.

Hence the great need for this book by Roy Livesey.

Shaun Willcock
2018

Appendix I

ALBERTO RIVERA CHRONOLOGY – *FANTASY*

Year

- 1942 Enters the Roman Catholic school.
- 1949 (1) Assigned to destroy churches (*Alberto* Part One, p. 18).
(2) Visits the Salesian monastery in Las Palmas with his group from the Jesuit school (*The Force*, p. 30).
- 1953 (1) Responsible for a raid on a church and the imprisonment of the pastor who had given him a personal letter recommending him as a faithful and trustworthy Christian. “I was seventeen years old at the time” (*Alberto*, p. 20).
(2) According to *Alberto* (p. 20), he was sent to Venezuela by Rome; he used the pastor’s personal letter (see above); and he was to infiltrate the Baptist church into which he had been accepted. He would then transfer to a “larger inter-denominational theological seminary in Costa Rica”, and his mission was “to destroy the pastor, the church and the seminary... get as many names as possible and send them back to the Vatican in Rome.”
- 1965 - 1967 Taken into the control of the Roman Catholic authorities after speaking against Roman Catholicism to 50,000 people in Guatemala. “After the meeting they flew me back to Panama. From there I was shipped to Spain” (*Alberto*, p.29). We are told that “after months of failure” their last resort was a place in Barcelona for priests who have gone insane. “By the third month” (*Alberto*, p. 30) in Barcelona, his breathing stopped and he was put in an iron lung. By a miracle Christ saved him and he climbed out of the iron lung. One week later he was sent to Madrid by himself. Soon he was given the papers (see *Alberto*, p. 27) he needed to leave Spain.
- 1967 (1) Assigned to stay at Pl. Immaculada, the address of the Roman Catholic parish of San Lorenzo shown on his ID card (*Alberto* Inside Front Cover), “pending the decision of his ecclesiastical trial in 1967, just before his conversion to Christ.” He is pictured at work as the director of the parish school in San Lorenzo (NOTE: this is *not* the Protestant School where he was in *fact* director during 1967).
(2) Arrives at Heathrow Airport, London, 5.30 a.m. 18 September and begins looking for his sister, Maria. He finds her in a London convent on a bed and wearing blood-stained clothes. He carries her away to safety.

Appendix II

ALBERTO RIVERA CHRONOLOGY – *FACT*

Year

- 1935 Date of Birth (21 September 1935).
- 1944 Death of Teresa Romero Padron (Alberto's mother), aged 27.
- 1952 (or 1953) Joined *Iglesia Cristiana Evangelica* (Evangelical church) in Las Palmas, Canary Islands.
- 1953 Baptized by James Carder, pastor (3 April).
- 1955 (1) Worked as a fare collector on the buses, employed by *Asociacion Patronal de Jardineras Guaguas* in Las Palmas.
(2) Sails for Costa Rica on three steamers via Tenerife and Venezuela.
(3) Spends approximately one month in Venezuela in a Protestant home while awaiting the steamer connection.
(4) Commences studies at *Seminario Biblico Latino Americano*, a Protestant seminary in Costa Rica.
- 1957 Expelled from the seminary (12 October).
- 1958 Employed by the Methodist "Church" in Costa Rica.
- 1964 (1) Birth of Juan Alberto Romero (Johnny).
(2) With Carmen Lydia Torres and baby, employed by the Christian Reformed Church in Hoboken, New Jersey (September).
- 1965 Dismissed by the Christian Reformed Church. Left Hoboken with Carmen Lydia Torres and baby Johnny (27 April).
- 1966 (1) In Mexico.
(2) Travels to Spain.
- 1967 In Spain: (1) Employed as director of Protestant school in Tarrasa (Barcelona) by well-known Spanish Protestant, Samuel Vila. Dismissed after approximately 6 months.
(2) Helps with children in the Roman Catholic parish of San Lorenzo (Tarrasa), claiming persecution by Protestants. Issued with ID card by Spanish Government bearing address of the San Lorenzo parish. Dismissed.
(3) Makes arrangements to raise money on behalf of *Colegio Juan XXIII Las Arenas*.
(4) Travels to Las Palmas, Canary Islands, dressed as a priest.
- 1967 (1) In Las Palmas. Entry in register of *Iglesia Cristiana Evangelica* records expulsion (1 December).

- (2) Certificate fraudulently obtained from archbishopric of Madrid-Alcala to confirm him as a priest when travelling overseas.
- (3) Travels to London: (a) Meets Church of God of Prophecy members.
(b) Meets his sister, Maria.
© Meets Avro Manhattan.
- (4) Travels to the United States with Church of God of Prophecy, and works in the translation department at their headquarters in Tennessee.
- 1968
- (1) Dismissed by Church of God of Prophecy following enquiries made to *Colegio Juan XXIII Las Arenas* concerning his fund-raising efforts supposedly on their behalf.
- (2) Wedding scheduled for Tennessee but Carmen Lydia Torres remained in Puerto Rico.
- (3) Left Chattanooga, Tennessee, 25 May, dressed as a priest to travel to Puerto Rico.
- 1969
- (1) Arrives in Florida as a Protestant with Carmen Lydia Torres, preaching and staying with Protestant families. They have a baby with them in Florida, Luis Marx (approximately 8 months old).
- (2) “Rev Father Alberto Rivera, DD” granted a licence to preach in St Annes Liberal Catholic Church in Tampa, Florida.
- (3) Drives to Washington State with Carmen Lydia Torres.
- (4) After conducting “revival” meetings as an Evangelical, leaves Washington suddenly following police and bank enquiries from Florida.
- 1970s
- California – working in various kinds of churches, and with his own organisations. Published his “testimony” on a Spanish recording with the title, *From Rome to Christ*.
- 1977
- (1) Married Nury Frias from the Dominican Republic whom he met when on the staff of the First Baptist Church of Maywood, California.
- (2) Ordained as a Baptist minister at the same ceremony as the former Roman Catholic priest, Bartholomew F. Brewer, at Calvary Baptist Church, National City, California.
- 1979
- Publication of *Alberto* (Part One).
- 1980s
- Based in California – still working locally; also national and international “ministry” after the publication of the *Chick Alberto* series.
- 1981
- (1) Publication of *Double-Cross* (*Alberto* Part Two).
- (2) Exposed as a fraud in *Christianity Today* (13 March). Article by Gary Metz: “Jack Chick’s Anti-Catholic *Alberto* Comic Book is Exposed as a Fraud.”
- (3) Exposed in *Journal of Pastoral Practice* (Ed: Jay Adams). Special report by Kurt Goedelman: “The Alberto Phenomenon.”
- 1982
- Publication of *The Godfathers* (*Alberto* Part Three).
- 1983
- (1) Exposed in *Forward* (The News and Research Periodical of the Christian Research Institute founded by Walter Martin): “Alberto – The Truth about His Story” by Brian Onken.
- (2) *The Protestant Challenge* (“The voice of the Canadian Protestant League”)

published “Alberto Rivera: Guilty or Not Guilty?” and found in favour of the Chick/Rivera story, concluding that: “Dr Rivera has been subjected to a vicious character assassination and smear campaign, not only from Rome, not only from Jesuits, but from (unwitting dupes who describe themselves as) evangelical Protestants!”

(3) Publication of *The Force* (Alberto Part Four).

- 1985 Publication of *The Four Horsemen* (Alberto Part Five).
- 1988 (1) Exposed in *Take a Closer Look* (Concerned Christians Growth Ministries, Western Australia). Article by Adrian van Leen.
(2) Chick Publications publish the paperback book, *Is Alberto for Real?* which incorporates the findings of the Canadian Protestant League 1983 report.
(3) Publication of *The Prophet* (Alberto Part Six).
- 1989 (1) Dismissed by his local church.
(2) Exposed in *Bible Based Ministries Magazine*. Article by Shaun Willcock.
- 1990 Publication of *Alberto Part Seven* and *Part Eight*, authored by himself, translated into Korean, and published in Korea.
- 1991 (1) *The Protestant Challenge* (Canada) published the findings of its editor’s further investigations in Los Angeles after “meeting friend and foe alike.” The Canadian Protestant League concluded that the visit “certainly confirmed our wisdom in circulating the Alberto series of personal testimony. We will continue to do so!”
(2) Exposed in *New Age Bulletin* (Roy and Rae Livesey, England). Article: “Fact and Fantasy Compared – Forty Years of Fraud.”
- 1992 Lives with his wife and son in Fontana, California. Continues, apparently substantially unhindered, with national and international “ministry.”

Appendix III

SOME PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS EXPOSING ALBERTO RIVERA

1. Gary Metz, *Cornerstone Magazine* (Chicago, Ill., 1981).
2. Gary Metz, *Christianity Today* (13 March 1981). Article: “Jack Chick’s Anti-Catholic Comic Book is Exposed as a Fraud.”
3. Kurt Goedelman, *The Journal of Pastoral Practice* (Ed: Jay Adams), Vol 5, No 2, 1981. Article: “The Alberto Phenomenon.”
4. H.J. Hegger (Holland) – Published Report, 1983.
5. Brian Onken, *Forward* (The News and Research Periodical of the Christian Research Institute), Vol 4, No 2, 1983. Article: “Alberto – The Truth About His Story.”
6. Adrian van Leen, *Take a Closer Look* (Concerned Christian Growth Ministries Inc., Western Australia), Jan, Feb, March 1988.
7. Shaun Willcock, *Bible Based Ministries Magazine*, December 1989. Article: “Alberto Rivera.”
8. Roy Livesey, *New Age Bulletin* (November 1991). Article: “The Alberto Rivera Story – Fact and Fantasy Compared” (An Interim Report).
9. Wilson Ewin, *Comic Book Publisher Jack Chick and Alberto Rivera – Partners in Deceiving Bible Believers, Roman Catholics and the Jewish People* (Compton, Quebec: Quebec Baptist Missions, 1993).

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ENDNOTES

Chapter One: “Alberto” – a Jesuit-Trained Teenager Destroying Churches?

1. Letter. Jack Chick to Mike Adams. 19 March 1992.
2. *The Force*, p. 30.
3. J.T.C., *Alberto*, Part One (Chino, California: Chick Publications, 1979).
4. *Alberto*, p.1.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.
6. *Take a Closer Look*, April 1988, p. 17.
7. Letter, Mrs Mildred Phillips to Roy Livesey, 7 October 1991.
8. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 13 (New York, The Encyclopedia Press Inc.), p. 399.
9. *The Force*, p. 30.
10. Fernando Romero Santana – Statement. Las Palmas, 14 February 1991.
11. Mrs Eloisa del Pino. Written reply to questions by Roy Livesey.
12. Translation of notes made by Ambrosio Medina Sanabria following a meeting in Las Palmas with Roy Livesey at which Mrs Mildred Phillips translated.
13. *Ibid.*
14. The Spanish editions in the *Alberto* series are: *Alberto*, 1981; *La Cruz Doble* (Double-Cross), 1983; *Los Padrinos* (The Godfathers), 1987.
15. See *Alberto*, p. 20.
16. Letter. James L. Carder to Roy Livesey, 12 November 1991.
17. *New Age Bulletin*. Vol III, No 5, November 1991.
18. Letter. James L. Carder to Gary Metz, 6 March 1981.
19. Letter. Vincent Phillips to Brian Onken, Christian Research Institute, 28 January 1981.
20. A.I.C. *Walter Martin/Dr Rivera – A Debate* (tape). The debate took place while attending the Christian Booksellers Convention, Anaheim, California, July 1981.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. Interview (taped): Tim Barrons, Gary Metz and others, KBRT Radio, Avalon, California, May 1990.

Chapter Two: *From Rome to Christ* – Earlier Testimony at Odds with *Alberto* Story

24. *Alberto*, p. 2.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-15.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-20.
31. *The Force*, p. 30.
32. *Alberto*, p. 27.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.
37. The full translation handed to Bartholomew Brewer comprises twelve typed pages and a cover. This author’s photostat copy was given to him by Mr Brewer and it carries a signed statement attached: “This manuscript goes with a playing album which Rivera gave to us when we first met him... (signed)

Bart Brewer.”

38. *Alberto*, p. 27.

39. (Details of source awaited from Gary Metz)

Chapter Three: Alberto Rivera in Venezuela and Costa Rica

40. Rosita is not the woman’s real name.

41. Carlos is not the man’s real name.

42. Letter to Brian Onken (Christian Research Institute), 19 December 1980.

43. *Alberto*, p. 20.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

45. *Ibid.*

46. Letter. Plutarco Bonilla to Brian Onken, 21 November 1980.

47. *Alberto*, p. 23.

48. Letter. W. Dayton Roberts to *Instituto de Lengua Espanola*, San Jose, Costa Rica, 28 October 1980.

49. *Alberto*, p. 24.

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

52. Letter. Plutarco Bonilla to Brian Onken, 21 November 1980.

53. Telephone Conversation, 28th May 1990.

54. Letter. Richard T. Foulkes to John Kealy, 30 May 1990.

55. *El Diario de Las Palmas* (Las Palmas Daily), 26 August 1967.

56. *Walter Martin/Dr Rivera – A Debate* (tape), 1981.

57. Letter. Richard Foulkes to John Kealy, 30 May 1990.

58. *Ibid.*

Chapter Four: Alberto Rivera’s Ten-Year Trail of Personal Destruction

59. *Alberto*, p. 28.

60. *Ibid.*

61. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

62. Report by H.J. Hegger (Holland) following his visit to meet with Alberto Rivera in Upland, California, September 1984.

63. *Journal of Pastoral Practice* (Ed: Jay E. Adams). Special Report by Kurt Goedelman: “The Alberto Phenomenon.” Vol V No 2, 1981, p. 85.

64. *Ibid.*

65. Letter. Juan M. Isais (Mexico) to Wilton Nelson (Costa Rica), 29 January 1966.

66. Letter. Edson T. Lewis, Jr., to the Dean of Students, *Seminario Biblico LatinoAmericano*, 9 December 1965.

67. Letter. Edson T. Lewis, Jr., to Wilson M. Nelson, Rector, *Seminario Biblico LatinoAmericano*, 11 March 1966.

68. See Note 7 above.

69. Gary Metz, *The Alberto Story*, pamphlet, 1981.

Chapter Five: Spain 1967 – Conversion to Christ or Conversion to Rome? (Or Neither?)

70. *Alberto*, p. 29.

71. A.I.C. International, P.O. Box 16, Yeung Deung Po, Seoul, Korea. Leaflet promoting *12th Asia Bible Prophecy Conference* at Korea Campus Crusade for Christ Training Center, 15-19 October 1990. Guest Speaker: Alberto Rivera.

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72. *The Alberto Story*.
73. Letter. Vincent Phillips to Gary Metz, 28 February 1981.
74. Author's conversation with Augustin Santana Navarro (Tenerife-Spain), 7 February 1991.
75. Letter. Samuel Vila to Roy Livesey, 15 January 1991.
76. Letter. Samuel Vila to Gary Metz, 4 March 1981.
77. Letter. Samuel Vila to Roy Livesey, 15 January 1991.
78. Ibid.
79. Conversation (taped), Tom Babcock and Samuel Vila, Tarrasa, Spain, 18 October 1991.
80. Conversation (taped), Tom Babcock and Eliseo Vila, Tarrasa, Spain, 18 October 1991.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. Here Samuel Vila speaks of "Armando." The true name is altered.
84. Conversation (taped), Tom Babcock and Armando, Tarrasa, Spain, 18 October 1991.
85. The name has been altered to "Grace."
86. Ibid. The name has been altered to "Grace's husband."
87. Ibid.
88. Letter. Samuel Vila to Roy Livesey, 15 January 1991.
89. Ibid.
90. Letter. Damian Sanchez Bustamente to Roy Livesey, 12 May 1992.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
93. Letter, Samuel Vila to Roy Livesey, 15 January 1991.
94. Ibid.
95. H.J. Hegger Interview (September 1984)
96. *Alberto*, p. 27.
97. For example, Gary Metz writes that Jack Chick told him that he knows Alberto's story is true because "he prayed about it" (*The Alberto Story*).
98. Circular letter ("Dear Ones in Christ") from Chick Publications, signed Jack T. Chick, President, 22 December 1980.
99. A copy of the original Spanish version is also available. The translation is by Daniel Abrigo. He also made oath in due form of law as to the correctness of the translation before a Notary Public on 20 April 1968 in Bradley County, State of Tennessee. Whilst the translation lacks the seal of the original, these additional authorities and signatures give seemingly greater authority when placed before the casual observer. See Picture 21.
100. Letter from James B. Wright (World Languages Secretary – Church of God of Prophecy) to Alejandro Garcia, Padre *Escolapio del Colegio Las Arenas*, Tarrasa (Barcelona), Spain, 16 May 1968.
101. Letter from *Colegio Juan XXIII Las Arenas* to James B. Wright. The Spanish language original is translated by Daniel Abrego. He also made oath in due form of law as to the correctness of the translation before a Notary Public on 6 August 1968. That was in Tennessee.
102. Ibid.

Chapter Six: Back Home in the Canary Islands – Dressed as a Priest

103. *El Diario de Las Palmas* (The Las Palmas Daily), 26 August 1967.
104. *Cornerstone Magazine*, "The Alberto Chronicles," Part III, by Eric Pement (Chicago, Ill., Vol 10, Issue 55, 1981).
105. Report obtained by *Iglesia Espanola Reformada Episcopal* (Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church) for Roy Livesey, 15 May 1991.
106. Statement prepared by Clara Montalban, 8 February 1991.

Chapter Seven: Rivera Goes to London – He Meets Avro Manhattan and His Sister Maria

107. *Double-Cross*, p. 1.
108. Ibid.
109. Ibid., p. 2.
110. Ibid., p. 3.
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid., p. 5.
113. Ibid.
114. Ibid., p. 10.
115. Alberto Rivera, *Alberto* Part Eight (Seoul, Korea: A.I.C. International Christian Ministries, 1990).
116. A.I.C. *New Inquisition Vol One. Part 9: Christians and Politics* (tape) by Alberto Rivera, 1984.
117. *Christianity Today*, 13 March 1981, p. 52.
118. *The Alberto Story*.
119. *Gazette* (England, South Shields): 28 November 1990.
120. *Battle Cry*, January/February 1986.
121. Avro Manhattan, *The Vatican Moscow Washington Alliance* (Chino, CA: Chick Publications, 1982). Publisher's Note.
122. *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Washington, DC, 1967), Vol VII. Article, "Index of Forbidden Books," pp. 434-435.
123. Letter. David Murphy (Catholic Truth Society) to Roy Livesey, 16 June 1992.
124. Ibid.
125. Circular letter from Jack Chick, 22 December 1980.
126. Mrs Manhattan, Avro's widow. Information provided to Roy Livesey in telephone conversation (1991).
127. Letter. Avro Manhattan to Roy Livesey, 10 May 1990.
128. Letter. Avro Manhattan to Bartholomew Brewer. The date is either 6-8-83 or 8-6-83.
129. *The Protestant Challenge* (Ed: Jonas E.C. Shepherd), 600 Woodview Road, Burlington, Ontario, Canada L7N 3A3. Vol XXI No 1, January/February 1991.
130. Ibid., Vol XXII No 2, March/April 1992.

Chapter Eight: Stolen Car and Credit Card – from Florida to Seattle

131. Charles Hawkins in a telephone conversation with John Kealy (1990).
132. Ibid.
133. Ibid.
134. Letter addressed to Alejandro Garcia, *Padre Escolapio del Colegio Las Arenas*, Tarrasa, 16 May 1968.
135. *The Alberto Story*.
136. Charles Hawkins in telephone conversation with John Kealy (1990).
137. Ibid.
138. Ibid.
139. Letter. Charles G. Hawkins to Mr George Tuck, U.S. Department of Justice, Atlanta, Georgia, 5 June 1968.
140. Ibid.
141. Letter. Hector Ortiz (Senior Overseer, Church of God of Prophecy, Puerto Rico) to Charles Hawkins, 18 June 1968. If more research were necessary in order to satisfy any who might still hold that Rivera could ever have been a Jesuit priest, the place to pick up the story would be in Puerto Rico. This author's research has drawn a blank there, but the country has not been visited. Carmen Lydia Torres and son Luis Marx Romero have never been traced. Whether they are in fact members of the family of Luis Munoz Marin, the Governor of Puerto Rico featured on the U.S. one cent postage

stamp, is not confirmed.

142. Letter. Henry Lee Moore to Mr George Tuck, U.S. Department of Justice, Atlanta, Georgia, 19 June 1968.

143. The name has been changed.

144. Replies by Mrs Sands written upon letter (20 February 1991) received from researcher and returned to him.

145. Ibid.

146. Ibid.

147. Ibid.

148. Circular letter from Jack Chick, 25 March 1981.

149. A.I.C. Magazine, Canadian Office, Vol 1, Part 3 (June/July 1990), p. 3.

150. *Four Horsemen*, p. 30.

151. Letter. Jack Chick to Roy Livesey, 4 October 1985.

152. Letter. James Brown (A.I.C.) to Roy Livesey, 21 January 1986 [name has been changed].

153. Typed copy – text of Foreword received from Jack Chick.

154. Letter. Jack Chick to Joseph Whitaker III, 10 February 1993.

155. Letter. Jack Chick to Joseph Whitaker III, 10 June 1993.

156. *Journal of Pastoral Practice*. Vol V No 2, 1981, p. 85

157. Letter. Joseph LeSage Tisch, Auxiliary Bishop, Liberal Catholic Church – Province of the USA, Melbourne, Florida to Lawrence J. Smith, Regionary Bishop, Liberal Catholic Church, Evergreen Park, Illinois. 17 May 1991.

158. Ibid.

159. *Alberto*, p. 27.

160. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol XI, 1913, p. 235.

161. *Walter Martin/Dr Rivera – A Debate*. 1981.

162. *U.K. Christian Handbook* (Bromley, England: MARC Europe).

163. Letter. The office of the Archbishop of Utrecht to Roy Livesey, 21 March 1991.

164. *The Alberto Story*, 1981.

165. Ibid.

Chapter Nine: The 1970s – Conning Congregations in California

166. Letter from the Archbishopric of Madrid-Alcala. The name of the addressee has been deliberately excluded from the transcription 12 February 1974.

167. Undated single-page typed letter.

168. From the English manuscript accompanying the Spanish-language record, *De Roma a Cristo* (From Rome to Christ) as presented by Alberto Rivera to Bartholomew F. Brewer in 1977.

169. Letter from John Tvrdevich to Bartholomew F. Brewer 14 June 1983.

170. This is found within the statement of “Purpose at A.I.C.” seen in various A.I.C. magazines since 1979. The latest seen is from Canada, Vol 2, No 5, October/November 1990.

171. *A.I.C. Magazine*, Canoga Park, California, Vol 2, No 5, February 1980.

172. *A.I.C. Magazine*, Canadian Office, Vol 2 No 5 (1990) and others.

173. Certificate of Death - State of California. Copy issued by Clerk-Recorder, Napa County, 30 August 1991.

174. A.I.C. Undated circular letter.

175. I. D. E. Thomas. Written statement given to Roy Livesey, September 1991.

176. Mrs Ruth Brewer. Statement given to Roy Livesey, 12 August 1991.

177. Letter. Bartholomew F. Brewer to Roy Livesey, 5 December 1990.

178. Ibid.

179. Circular letter from Jack Chick. 15 December 1980.

180. *The Alberto Story*.

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181. Letter. Mrs Glenn McNeill to Gary Metz. 6 December 1980.
 182. Ibid.
 183. Ibid.
 184. Bartholomew F. Brewer, Director, *Mission to Catholics International*, "To Whom It May Concern," 22 April 1983.
 185. Copy of A.I.C. letter from James Brown to correspondent in Australia, published in Australia with addressee's name and address omitted. 27 February 1984.
 186. A.I.C. (tape), *The Treacherous Dealer, Vol 1, Part 13 – Bartholomew Brewer*, by Alberto Rivera (1984).
 187. *Christianity Today*, 13 March 1981, pp. 50-53.
 188. Ibid., 24 April 1981, p.9

Chapter Ten: Alberto – Jack Chick Ignores the Evidence

189. Letter. Sidney Hunter (Evangelistic Literature Enterprises Ltd) to Roy Livesey, 6 December 1991.
190. Letter. Derek Pearce (New Zealand) to Roy Livesey, 22 April 1991.
191. Ibid.
192. Notes of interviews with Mr Arthurs and staff at First Baptist Church of Maywood, 15 August 1991.
193. Reproduced in *Take a Closer Look*, January/February 1988, pp 14-15.
194. *Battle Cry*, March/April 1988.
195. *The Alberto Story*.
196. Ibid.
197. Jack Chick (Circular letter), 10 September 1980.
198. Jack Chick (Circular letter), undated.
199. J. T. C., *Double-Cross* (Chino, CA: Chick Publications, 1981, pp. 18-19.
200. Ibid.
201. Ibid.
202. Ibid.
203. Ibid.
204. Ibid.
205. *New Age Bulletin*. Published by Roy and Rae Livesey, Bury House, Clows Top, Kidderminster, Worcs. DY14 9HX England, Vol. 3, No. 3. May 1991.
206. Letter. Jack T. Chick to a Correspondent, 27 May 1987.
207. *Double-Cross*, p.17.
208. *A.I.C. Magazine*, Canada, Vol 2 No 5, October/November 1990.
209. Interview. Roy Livesey and Dino Badaracco. December 1991.
210. *A.I.C. Magazine*, Canoga Park, California, Vol 2 No 5, February 1980.
211. Letter. Ismael Guerrero to James Brown and his wife.
212. The letter was received on 9 August 1991 in a Christian home where I was a guest.
213. Conversation (taped). Carlos Orea and Mrs Nury Rivera.
214. Statement by Ismael Guerrero (President) and Carlos Orea (Secretary), 16 July 1989.
215. *Battle Cry*, July/August 1985.
216. *Battle Cry*, January/February 1986.
217. Jack Chick in conversation with researcher. 5th June 1991.
218. Bartholomew F. Brewer in conversation with Roy Livesey, 12 August 1991.
219. Wilson Ewin: *You Can Lead Roman Catholics to Christ – New World Order Edition* (Lennoxville, Canada: Quebec Baptist Missions, 1991), p. 59.
220. Jack Chick Circular Letter (Undated).
221. Telephone conversation. Alberto Rivera and researcher (1991).

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222. Written statement by Ismael Guerrero to qualify this author's understanding. It is understood there was no mailing list of names built up by A.I.C. on its own to be mailed regularly.
223. Telephone conversation. Alberto Rivera and researcher (1991).
224. Ibid.
225. Ibid.
226. Ibid.
227. Ibid.
228. Interview (taped). Donald Blanton and Alberto Rivera, Ridgecrest, California. 15 April 1987.
229. Letter. Carl Tornbom (Mexico) to Roy Livesey. 4 October 1991.
230. Letter. Frank McClelland to Roy Livesey. 2 December 1991.
231. Letter. Sidney Hunter to Roy Livesey. 6 December 1991.
232. Letters between December 1979 and October 1982.
233. Statement from Alberto Rivera, A.I.C. Canoga Park, California. 20 January 1980.
234. KBRT Radio Avalon, California.
235. *Is Alberto for Real?* p. 35.
236. Letter. Jack Chick to Believers/Overcomers Book Store, 26 January 1992.
237. Letter. Bartholomew F. Brewer to Gary Metz, 14 April 1981.
238. Letter. George Ashdown to Roy Livesey, 1 July 1982.
239. Printed letter from Roy Livesey, 4 September 1992.
240. Ibid.

Chapter Eleven – Rivera, “Sister Charlotte” and Clark Butterfield

241. “Purpose of A.I.C.” mentions Sister Charlotte (Copies of A.I.C. magazines from 1979).
242. *Sister Charlotte's Testimony* Tape available from A.I.C.
243. “Purpose of A.I.C.”
244. *A.I.C. Magazine*, Canadian Office, Vol 1 Part 3 June/July 1990.
245. Certificate of Death – State of California.
246. Win Worley (Ed.), *Escape from a Cloistered Convent – Testimony by Sister Charlotte*, 1981.
247. Ibid., Preface.
248. Book and Bible House, *The Convent Horror – Story of Barbara Ubryk*. From official records (Minneapolis, Minn., 1957).
249. *C.I.B. Bulletin*. Letter from a correspondent. Vol 8, No 3 (March 1992).
250. Maria Monk, *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* (Belfast, Northern Ireland: A. Campbell, undated), pp. 36-37.
251. Ibid.
252. Letter. Cleveland M. Becton (United Pentecostal Church International) to Roy Livesey. 9 April 1992.
253. Ibid., 4 June 1992.
254. Clark Butterfield, *Night Journey from Rome* (Chino, CA: Chick Publications, 1982). Introduction by Alberto Rivera, p. 8.
255. A.I.C. leaflet.
256. Alberto Rivera, *From Rome to Christ (Alberto, Part 8)*, Korean language (A.I.C. International Christian Ministries, Yeung Deung Po, P.O. Box 16, Seoul, South Korea, 1991).
257. Letter. Roy Livesey to George Ashdown, 21 June 1992.

Chapter Twelve – “Dr” Alberto Rivera - International “Christian” Personality in the 1980s

258. *The Alberto Story*.
259. *Canadian Revivalist*, Article “Alberto Rivera Visits Toronto,” May/June 1982. p.10.
260. Letter. Frank McClelland (Toronto Free Presbyterian Church) to Roy Livesey. 2 December 1991.

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261. Sidney Hunter (Ed.), *Is Alberto for Real?* (Chino, CA: Chick Publications, 1988).
 262. Letter. Jonas Shepherd to Roy Livesey, 16 May 1992.
 263. *The Protestant Challenge*, Vol XIII No 4. September 1983.
 264. *Is Alberto for Real?* p. 85.
 265. Miss Edith O’Gorman, *Trials and Persecutions of Miss Edith O’Gorman, Otherwise Sister Teresa de Chantal, of St Joseph’s Convent, Jersey City, NJ* (London, England: Woodford, Fawcett & Co., 1889).
 266. *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190.
 267. *Take a Closer Look*, April 1988, p. 16.
 268. Letter. Miss Raqual Socorro to Roy Livesey, 1 May 1991.
 269. *Ibid.*
 270. *Take a Closer Look*, April 1988, pp. 17-18.
 271. Letter from John Tocknell to Roy Livesey, 21 June 1991.
 272. *Ibid.*
 273. *Battle Cry*, June 1984.
 274. *Ibid.*
 275. *Is Alberto for Real?* pp. 8-9.
 276. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
 277. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
 278. Notes by H.J. Pollitt (Bromsgrove, England).
 279. *Ibid.*
 280. *Is Alberto for Real?* pp. 95-96.
 281. Letter. Seo Dal Seok to Roy Livesey, 21 July 1992.
 282. Letter. Cornelis Glas to Roy Livesey, 13 July 1992.
 283. *Ibid.*, 5 September 1992.
 284. *Ibid.*
 285. *Ibid.*
 286. *Ibid.*
 287. See Alberto Rivera: *Alberto*, Part Eight, in the Korean language (Seoul, Korea: A.I.C. International Christian Ministries), p. 39.
 288. *Ibid.*
 289. Letter. Christopher Clausen-Sternwald, 20 July 1990.
 290. Letter. Robert V. Julien to Roy Livesey, 8 January 1991. Robert Julien’s letter informed me that Chick Publications had written: “At the next printing of each issue both your name and photo will be deleted as you have requested.”
 291. *Our Sunday Visitor*, article by Gerard E. Sherry, 3 April 1988.
 292. *Battle Cry*, March/April 1988, p.4.
 293. *Ibid.*
 294. Letter. Robert V. Julien to Roy Livesey, 9 October 1991.
 295. Letter. Kenneth M. Theising, Superior General, Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers (Maryknoll, New York), to Roy Livesey, 10 December 1991.
 296. *Double-Cross*, p. 31.
 297. *Newsweek*, “The Emperor Jones,” 4 December 1978, p.54.
 298. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
 299. *Ibid.*, p.55.
 300. *Newsweek*, “The Emperor Jones,” 4 December 1978, p. 59.
 301. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
 302. *Ibid.*
 303. *Ibid.*
 304. *Ibid.*
 305. *Ibid.*

Chapter 13 – Rivera: His Influence as Cult Leader and Publisher

306. *The Discerner*, “The 1600 Year-Old Cult,” by Ewald Eisele. Vol. 13, No.10 (April-June, 1991), p. 6.
307. Conversation (taped). Ismael Guerrero and Roy Livesey, 20 August 1991.
308. Written statement, Mrs Bertha Guerrero, August 1991.
309. Conversation (taped). Donald Blanton and Roy Livesey, August 1991. The name of “Simon Priestland” has been used instead of the true identity.
310. Conversation. Ismael Guerrero and Roy Livesey, August 1991.
311. Ibid.
312. Clark Butterfield, *Night Journey from Rome... to the New Jerusalem* (Upland, CA: *Agapesofia Oikoumene*, 1985).
313. Ibid., pp. 215-224.

Chapter 14 – Rivera Expelled from Membership of His Own Church

314. Donald Blanton (tape), 1989. Edited.
315. Conversation (taped). Ismael Guerrero MD and Roy Livesey, 20 August 1991.
316. Ibid. (taped).
317. Ibid. (taped).
318. Letter from the Church to Alberto Rivera, 21 May 1989. The letter was copied also to all church members and to pastors visited by Rivera.
319. Letter from Ismael Guerrero to James Brown and his wife, 25 September 1989.
320. Ibid.
321. Statement by Ismael Guerrero (President) and Carlos Orea (Secretary). 16 July 1989.
322. Ibid.
323. Letter. Ismael Guerrero to James Brown and his wife, 25 September 1989.
324. *KBRT Radio*, Avalon, California, May 1990.
325. Interview (translated). Mr and Mrs Aguilera and Roy Livesey, August 1991.
326. Ibid.

Chapter 15 – Rivera in Court

327. Jack Chick (Chick Publications), “To Whom It May Concern”, 15 December 1980.
328. Letter. Ismael Guerrero to James Brown and his wife, 25 September 1989.
329. Ernie Thornton, Director (News and Sport), KABC-TV, to Roy Livesey in conversation, 29 August 1991.