

Was the Early Church Corrupted?

by Sebastian R Fama

Many Protestant and pseudo-Christian groups claim the Catholic Church is not the Church that was established by Jesus. They hold the view that Catholicism is the result of pagan customs being mixed in with Christian practices. Most say this began around the year 312. That is when the emperor Constantine became involved. Predictably, they all claim to be part of the authentic restoration of the early church. And of course, they all disagree with each other on what exactly the early Church taught.

In making their claim, our friends face one insurmountable obstacle. And that would be Jesus Himself. When Jesus established His Church, He made a promise. He said: "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). If the Church became corrupt, as has been alleged, it would mean the gates of the netherworld (Satan) prevailed. And that would make Jesus a liar.

But Jesus is not a liar. Jesus is God. And if God says a thing will not happen, it will not happen. As He says elsewhere: "So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

Therefore, the so-called corruptions were not corruptions at all, but authentic Christian teachings. The writings of the Early Church Fathers back this up. They provide us with a record of the beliefs and practices of the early Church. These include a belief in the primacy of Rome, the role of Sacred Tradition, the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Confession, the existence of Purgatory, the use of sacred images, the various Marian doctrines, and much more. In short, they taught and believed what the present-day Catholic Church teaches and believes.

Jesus established His Church 2,000 years ago. Thus, the one true Church must be 2,000 years old. We know that our critics all fall short of the mark. It is a fact of history that their churches all came into existence far too late to qualify. Also, their distinctive teachings were unknown to the early Church.

And they have yet another problem. The Old and New Testaments were settled at the councils of Hippo, (393 A.D.) Carthage, (397 A.D.) and Carthage (419 A.D.). This was done by Catholic bishops who then submitted the list to Pope Boniface for official approval. Not only were these councils Catholic, they took place well after the supposed corruption of the Church in 312. So, if the Catholic Church was corrupt, why would our friends consider the product of a corrupt church to be the Word of God?

It is quite natural for people to be attached to the religious traditions they are accustomed to. But logic would demand that an honest believer investigate any credible evidence that contradicts them. The truth must always take precedence over our personal preferences. As the Scripture says: "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth" (Psalm 145:18).