

Was the Early Church Corrupted?

by Sebastian R Fama

Some Protestants will argue that being a Christian and being a Catholic are two different things. The Church, they claim, became corrupt when Constantine legalized Christianity around 312 A.D. They say pagan beliefs and practices were introduced and what was once Christianity became what we now know as Catholicism. But our friends are mistaken. And for several very obvious reasons.

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).

History tells us that the so-called pagan additions were neither pagan nor additions. The writings of the early Church Fathers give testimony to 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.

Our friends 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, and their sole rule of faith?

Apparently, we are supposed to believe that Jesus established a Church and soon thereafter it went bad. Twelve centuries later, the true Gospel would be discovered by Martin Luther. Soon after that, others would join the party. As a result, we would be presented with a myriad of conflicting interpretations of Scripture that we can confidently refer to as the truth.

Jesus prayed that we would be one as He and the Father are one. He further indicated that our unity would enable the world to believe in Him (John 17:21). So, the very structure of Protestantism runs counter to our Lord's vision for His Church.

In the final analysis, we find that Catholicism is historic Christianity. To be Catholic is to belong to the one Church established by Jesus Christ. To be Protestant is to belong to a church established by men. Perhaps sincere and well-meaning men, but established by men nonetheless. Thus, any teaching not found in Catholic tradition would necessarily constitute a corruption. Thus, to be Catholic, is to be Christian in the truest sense.