

true Church of Christ. As a result of his investigations, he resigned his priesthood in the Church of England, and eventually became a Roman Catholic priest.

The reason so many people in America are not Catholic is because they have been robbed of their inheritance of truth. There is also a high level of complacency or comfortability. Most simply believe, and take it for granted that theirs is the true religion. But if and when they begin to examine their religious roots in the light of history, they will invariably come to the conclusion that they have been misled as the Protestant position lacks foundation. Some will give up religious faith altogether, others will become Catholic. That is the experience of thousands, even hundreds of thousands. The best and most intellectual of Protestants are the ones who, if they investigate, become Catholics.

A few years ago, an Evangelical minister telephoned me to say that he wanted to learn the teaching of the Catholic Faith. Out of curiosity, I asked why he, as a Protestant minister, wanted to begin this study. He informed me that his brother was considering entering the Catholic Church and he wanted to save him. I told him that if he studied Catholicism, that he would become a Catholic. He answered by saying, "I'll take that chance." Nine months later I was kneeling beside him as he received his first Eucharist.

Protestant disintegration

Recently Protestantism has been going from bad to worse. There are tens of thousands of denominations and more are springing up daily. Protestantism has no fixed creed or direction. Truth never changes. Protestantism is disintegrating into rationalism, infidelity, and materialism.

Most of the inquirers who come to me for information about Catholicism tell me that they are Protestants in name only. They do not know what they should believe; in fact, many travel from church to church searching for the truth. Others travel the same road seeking comfort. They search for a theology that coincides with their level of commitment, one that does not challenge their sensibilities. There is the old adage that "God made us in His image and we've been making him in ours ever since."

Protestantism has no central authority other than the subjectivity of Scripture. Contrast that with the Catholic Church, which has not changed one article of faith from the day of the Apostles. That does not mean

that it is static. It is alive and growing in numbers. Since the truth never changes, the universal Church can weather all crises, even today's.

Dispassionate investigation

My answer, then, to the question of how could so many h so wrong is this: They take it for granted that the religion they are born in is true. Their ancestors were robbed of the true faith by violence, flattery, and worldly inducements and history and literature have been perverted to serve the cause of error. But those who sincerely investigate usually come back to the Mother Church, the Church founded by Christ, the Catholic Church.

Lest it may seem that the foregoing statements represent an unfriendly or extreme view of the matter, I beg the reader to enter into your own investigation into history and the truths of Catholicism "Test everything; retain what is good" [1 Thess. 5:21].

- 1 One who is devoted to the ideal or pursuit of wealth.
- 2 Marcy, *Christianity and its Conflicts*, pp. 342-343.
3. For an overview of this period see: William Cobbett, *A History of the Protestant Reformation in England and Ireland*, (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1930). Though the author was a Protestant, he defends the Catholics.
4. Philip Hughes, *The Reformation in England*, Vol. III (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954) p. 338.

First published in Christian Order, Feb. 2007
©2006 Victor R. Claveau, MJ

The Evangelization Station
Hudson, Florida, USA
E-mail: evangelization@earthlink.net
www.evangelizationstation.com

Pamphlet 151

How Could So Many Be So Wrong?

Victor R. Claveau, MJ

The United States of America is for the most part a Protestant society. In many European and South American countries, the society is for the most part Catholic. Prior to the beginning of the sixteenth century, all Europe was Catholic. Then came the Protestant Revolt against the teachings of Christ. The chief antagonist, Martin Luther accused the Church of teaching error. In actuality, his pride kept him from submitting to the rightful authority of the Church. Jesus divinely founded the Catholic Church and as such, it is perfect and incapable of teaching error in faith or morals. It all boiled down to a very basic issue, either the Catholic Church was right or Luther was right; there could be only one truth. If the Church was in error, so was Christ, who had guaranteed it against error. Between Luther and Christ, we must stand with Christ and His Church.

Dissolution, depravity and chaos

The Reformers claimed that they were separating from the Catholic Church because of its doctrine and morals. We should expect then that the Reformers would be men of high morality, and that their teaching would be the truth. What do we find? Martin Luther broke every vow he ever made to God. He was also a demagogue and a congenital liar. John Calvin was a man to be feared rather than loved. He was heartless, vindictive, cruel, and bloodthirsty as was his unrelenting persecutions of his controversial adversaries. Ulrich Zwingli died with a sword in his hand in a war against Anabaptists.

The leaders of the Reformation opened Pandora's Box. Soon there were numerous sects, each condemning the other, and denying to others the right of Scriptural interpretation that they claimed for themselves, this soon created religious chaos. Their own morals and those of their followers were far worse than those of the members of the Church, which they sought to reform.

No arguments are necessary to show the deterioration of morals and manners, which everywhere followed in the footsteps of the Reformation in Europe.

The simple admissions of the leading "Reformers" contain the most pregnant and conclusive testimony on this point.

Under the pretext of liberating mind and conscience from the rigid discipline of the Church, from the tyrannies of the priesthood, a loose rein was given to all the evil tendencies and passions of the heart. Under the banner of "religious freedom," every sort of crime and depravity was committed. Indifference and skepticism replaced religious faith and the natural concupiscence of men dominated actions and lives. All the beneficial checks and restraints of the Church were set aside and each person reserved to himself the office of interpreter, censor and judge of everything sacred and profane.

Fornication, adultery, greed, drunkenness, conflict and divorce became so common among the followers of the new religionists that modesty and virtue were scoffed at as antiquated and as popish weaknesses calculated to repress and enslave the tender emotions of the heart. The Catholic notions of priestly celibacy, of sticking to and bestowing affections on one spouse, were denounced as priestly devices to enslave the individual.

Indeed, the connection between the progress of Lutheranism and the corruption of public morals could not be put more strikingly than in the words of Luther himself. Luther saw the seeds of the Reformation he initiated grow to fruition and he was appalled. He wrote:

"Our evangelists are now sevenfold more wicked than they were before the Reformation. In proportion as we hear the gospel, we steal, lie, cheat, gorge, swill, and commit every crime. If one devil has been driven out of us, seven worse ones have taken their place, to judge of the conduct of princes, lords, nobles, burgesses, and peasants - their utterly shameless acts, and their disregard for God and his menaces. Under the papacy, men were charitable, and gave freely; but now under the gospel, all alms giving is at an end, everyone fleeces his neighbor, and each seeks to have all for himself. And the longer the gospel is preached, the deeper do men sink in avarice, pride, and ostentation. The peasants, through the influences of the gospel, have become utterly beyond restraint, and they think they may do what they please. They no longer fear neither hell or purgatory, but content themselves with saying, "I believe, therefore I shall be saved" and they

become proud, stiff-necked mammonists,¹ and accursed misers, sucking up the very substance of the country and the people."²

There can only be one truth. The teachings of the Catholic Church never change. Every Reformer then and now believes that he is right and all others before him were wrong. You had Lutherans and Calvinists, Baptists and Anabaptists, Episcopalians and Presbyterians, all contending among themselves, each declaring the other in error. In actuality, all were in error to one degree or another.

Wicked motives

But what has all this got to do with the question I began with, namely, how could so many be so wrong? At first glance, it seems impossible that so many could be in error. How did this happen?

The leaders of the Reformation had personal motives for their stand. First, there was wealth to be gained by confiscating Church property. Second, they would gain independence from the Mother Church and its authority. With some temporal princes thus won over, and by making the new religion easy for the people at large, the reformers gradually won over a considerable following. Most importantly, the theology of the Reformers removed the responsibility for sin. They taught that Jesus paid the price for our sins, so we are not to be held accountable. Consult the history of the period, and you will find substantial foundation for this assertion.

Henry VIII, King of England, either imprisoned or put to death everyone of importance who did not follow him in his revolt from the Mother Church. Thus the Reformation made its bloody way into Henry's domains.³ The Franciscans and Dominicans were ordered to leave England. All the monasteries were looted and the booty went into the royal purse. For those who resisted Henry, there was torture on the rack, burning at the stake and/or the hangman's noose.

Henry's blind hatred did not end there; he shocked Europe when the relics of Saint Thomas Becket (1118-1170), Archbishop of Canterbury, were destroyed in September 1538, and when he ordered the destruction of nearly all the Catholic shrines in England. With the fury of a madman, Henry VIII created havoc throughout all England.

During the years 1577 and 1603, Good Queen Bess,

Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603), had put to death 183 of her Catholic subjects. Of these, 123 were priests, one was a friar not yet ordained and 59 were lay folk, three of them women.⁴

In the beginning, some joined the Protestant movement out of greed, some for power, and some to escape imprisonment and death. Those in control did everything they could to blacken the name of the Church in an attempt to justify their actions. Luther especially, but others followed, who knew the power of the printing press and tens of thousands of pamphlets were distributed debasing and misrepresenting the Catholic Church. After years of hearing and reading lies, the average person no longer knew the truth.

Breeding heresy

C. S. Lewis wrote in *The Screwtape Letters* (a fictionalized account of a communication between a senior demon and one of his deceptive servants):

"And since we cannot deceive the whole human race all of the time, it is important thus to cut ever: generation off from all others; for where learning makes free commerce between the ages there is always the danger that the characteristic errors of one may be corrected by the characteristic, truths of another."

The cutting off of history breeds Heresy. Gradually new generations take it for granted that the religion they were born in is the true one, and they simply continue in it.

The very sources of truth were tainted, so that those who late investigated the claims of their religion came back to these false documents. Even today, it is difficult to find an honest biography of the chief Reformers. Their evils are glossed over for fear of rocking the collective Protestant boat.

John Henry Newman, one of the most influential Protestants of his day, declared that English history since the sixteenth century has been a conspiracy against truth. Newman, a minister of the Church of England, was opposed to the Roman Catholic Church. He set out to prove that the Church of England was the legitimate heir of Christ. He traced the doctrines of both the Church of England and the Catholic Church back through time, and in spite of his environment of prejudice, found that the Catholic Church was the one