

Pope, the successor of Peter and the representative of Christ. No other Christian church dates its origin from apostolic times. Calvinists began with John Calvin; Lutherans began with Martin Luther; Episcopalians with Henry VIII; Mormons with Joseph Smith and so on.

You may say, the Protestant Church is the Church of Jesus Christ, but reformed of error. Unfortunately, this reformed church dates from 1517, not the first century. You must choose between Luther and Christ. Jesus said His Church would never teach error; Luther says it did. If Luther is right, Christ is wrong; but if Christ is right, Luther and all his followers are wrong.

The best way to proceed is to get right down to incontrovertible proof. Was Jesus Christ God? Yes or no? If no, there is no use proceeding, as the whole Christian platform falls and all Christianity is an imposition. If He was God, He is divine Truth, and all that He says and promises is true. Did He establish a visible church? Yes, or no? If He did not, there is no use looking for it; if He did, then it is somewhere in the world today, for He declared it was to last until the end of the world. Did He guarantee His Church against error? Yes, or no? If not, we would never know what must be believed. The church would not be a true guide; it cannot represent Him. If He did guarantee it against error, then it never has erred, for God's guarantee is indeed security.

How then, about the reformers? They were wrong, either they, or Christ. But how about the state of the Church at various periods? Shocking, absolutely shocking. No one observed it more or wept for her more than the children of the Church. They were at times almost ashamed of the Church leadership; they labored and prayed for their betterment. Some of the greatest

saints devoted their lives to remedying matters, but they never thought of denying the Church.

If God saw fit to allow His Spouse to be at times weak and deplorable, it was to try the faith of His children and to show the vitality of their Mother. If the Church always stood forth plainly divine, there would be no astonishment at our faith in her, but to see in her the Spouse of Christ at all times because He declared that she was, that is indeed faith.

The Church has justified this faith. If she were not divine, she would have perished a hundred times. But look at her now, the admiration of the world for her truthful teaching, her uncompromising dogma, her marvelous organization, and her rigorous divine principles! She has indeed seen fighting. She has been through many battles and at times she was hard fought, but she has come through it all worthy of her Spouse, our divine Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is God, He established one true Church, that Church is the Catholic Church.

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#### **Pamphlet 286**

## **Which is the true religion?**

Victor R. Claveau, MJ

The hallmark of intellectual maturity is the willingness to examine our most cherished beliefs. I am a Catholic for two basic reasons, first, because I was baptized into the Faith on the day of my birth. Secondly, as an adult, I have examined the doctrines of the Catholic Church and found them to be true without exception. I have no doubt, whatsoever; that the Catholic Church of today is the selfsame Church Jesus established almost 2,000 years ago. She alone can meet the challenge of truth.

Obviously, for those of you who are not Catholic, this is a very delicate issue. No person wants to admit that he is wrong about an important matter. The question of which is the true religion, must rank extremely high in the minds of all who wish to serve God. The proud Scribes and Pharisees rejected Jesus because His teaching was not to their liking. They witnessed His miracles and still rejected Him. Rather than acknowledging His divinity, they tried to rationalize His deeds away. Some even attributed them to Satan. When Christ refuted them, although silenced, they still would not be convinced.

Evidence is not enough unless the mind that views it is open and forthright. We must put preconceived ideas aside and begin to look at this issue objectively. It is not uncommon for people to come to different conclusions while looking at the same information. Conclusions are reached based upon evidence, filtered through life's prism. The fault is not with the evidence, but with the attitude, background and experience of the beholder.

In the end, God will judge each of us based upon what we know as truth and how we live

that truth. We have a moral obligation to seek Him and to endeavor to understand His expectations in our lives. As we grow in our knowledge of God, we grow in our responsibility toward God. People who heard and saw Jesus were judged differently from those who, living at the same time, neither saw nor heard Him. We must not be content to remain static in our relationship with God. He expects us to seek Him with open inquiry. When you love someone you want to gain intimate knowledge of him or her in order to please. How much more should this apply to our relationship with God?

Christianity exists today because the men and women who heard Jesus preach and witnessed His works were willing to set aside their inmost convictions and change their beliefs and their lives.

So I ask you to look quietly and objectively at the facts, which I am about to present. I ask you to calmly consider these things and to be guided by the light of truth, not by the darkness of prejudice. Personally, I have nothing to gain by influencing you to become a Catholic. My only desire is to please God and to bring a human soul into the light and peace of the true Church.

Which is the true religion established by Jesus Christ? There are many churches or denominations, which claim to be the true Church. We have among us Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholics and numerous others. Are they all right? Are some of them right? Are they all wrong? Is there only one true Church or are there many?

I must confess that it is painful to see so much confusion. I have many friends of different denominations and abhor the idea that many of their beliefs are false. Let me say that in considering this matter, we must distinguish

between the person and the belief. A person may be personally sincere, yet his/her religion wrong. By condemning his/her religion, I do not condemn them.

In this vital matter of religion, we must have the greatest consideration for the individual who may be in error, but for the error itself we must have no tolerance. Although Christ hated and denounced sin He set the example by His love for the sinner.

Assume for a moment that there is but one true religion. Consequently, that would make all other religions false. Persons in these false religions may be sincere, and if in the sight of God they are doing all in their power to live holy lives as God wants them to; they are in a certain sense part of the true Church, though not purposefully so.

A person may be of a religious denomination, which is false, and yet live an exemplary life. I have helped many persons from various denominations into the Catholic faith, and I have often found that in their hearts they were Catholics all along. By this I mean that, although Protestants, or pagans, they were acting on Catholic principles, without knowing it. All the great saving truths of Protestantism originated in the Catholic faith. There is not a single truth in Protestantism that does not exist in Catholicism. I say not a single truth, for you will find that whatever is absolutely true in every religion of the world is in the Catholic religion, only without any mixture of error.

Which is the true religion? From what I have said, I pray you understand that I am considering the creeds, not the adherents to the creeds. I judge no person; that is God's work. I can judge a creed, which is something tangible and subject to analysis.

The heart of the matter is this: There is but one religion in the world, which is divine, and all others necessarily must be rejected as false.

Any system of religion, which proposes false teachings or mingles falsehood with truth, is certainly a false religion. A thing is morally good only if it is completely good; it is morally wrong if it is even partially flawed. A religion is justifiable only if it is in accord with the law of God. A religion is good only if it worships God as God should be worshipped and if its practice leads of its very nature to unity with God.

Man is bound by conscience to search diligently for the true religion. If a religion is presented which, with some real plausibility claims to be revealed by God, we must investigate that religion seriously and embrace it should its claims be proved.

There is but one Church in the world whose origins can be traced back directly to Jesus Christ. In establishing His religion, Christ said to Peter: "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:18-19). This was a visible teaching church, with definite doctrine and external ritual. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matt 28:19-20).

A teaching church is a visible church. A church, which administers baptism, is a church with an external ritual. Consequently I ask what visible church existing today has a teaching ministry and external rites, which go back to the very person of Peter and Jesus Christ. There is but one, the Catholic Church, whose head is the