

I SAY: STUDENT COMMENT

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TODAY

by Gage Gaudet

This article is an attempt to view in perspective the Christian Church today, in particular, the Roman Catholic Church. I am a Catholic and thus when I refer to Church I will talk mostly about my own, but I think that my remarks apply to all. For those theologians and clerics who seem to regard God, Church, and religion their own special and exclusive domain, let me say that I am qualified to write on this subject because I am a human being, a firm believer in Jesus Christ and the Roman Catholic Faith, and a somewhat less firm adherent to the Roman Catholic Church as represented by its bishops on up. I am, therefore, a Christian and a Catholic, if there is a difference, but like so many others I feel much safer in calling myself a follower of Jesus Christ.

The Church has been validly praised and criticized. But no one can deny that the Church has a significant and purposeful role to play and, to a certain extent, plays it. The real value of the Church lies in the spiritual realm of helping all men find God. Here priests and laymen through the sacraments and simple witness, do an infinite amount of good in the world through Jesus Christ. Nobody seeing the individual and collective holiness exhibited throughout the world by all kinds of people can seriously say that God is dead, dying, or will die. This wonderful work of the Church is put briefly enough here, but its effects will be still flowering when the readers and the writer of this article are all dust and, hopefully, residing spiritually in heaven.

Again, however, nobody can deny that the Church is and has been heavily criticized, and, I venture, no reasonable person can deny that there is frequently good reason for this criticism. The following are several quotations from various and varied people who through the years have given valid objections to the Church:

Jesus Christ: "Hypocrites, well hath Isaiah prophesied of you, their heart is far from me. And in vain do they worship me, teaching doctrines and commandments of men."

Charles Dickens: "The Church is to have its part in the coming time must be a more Christian one, with less arbitrary pretensions and a stronger hold upon the mantle of our Saviour, as He walked and talked upon this earth."

Kahlil Gibran: "Human society has yielded for seventy centuries to corrupted laws until it cannot understand the meaning of the superior and external laws. A man's eyes have become accustomed to the dim light of candles and cannot see the sunlight. Spiritual disease is inherited from one generation to another until it has become a part of the people, who look upon it, not as a disease, but as a natural gift, showered by God upon Adam."

Martin Luther King: "Called to be the moral guardian of the community the church at times has preserved that which is immoral and unethical, called to combat social evils, it has remained silent behind stained-glass windows."

Joseph A. Page (on the political situation in Portugal): "The Catholic opposition has never really recovered from the Pope's visit to the shrine at Fatima several years ago. The government interpreted this as a papal endorsement of Salazar as a rebuff to dissident Catholics, who had pleaded with His Holiness not to come to Portugal."

A Catholic Canonist (on the Roman Catholic marriage courts): "Isn't it incredible that we have to fight with our leaders to take care of our people."

After these equally merited praises and objections, where, then, does the Church stand? I submit that the Church, chiefly in its institutional sense, has in the course of time allowed an invidious expediency to pollute its stream of grace. The Roman Catholic Church is one of the largest and richest corporations in the world. While people die daily from starvation both in the physical and mental sense, a good number of the Church's hierarchy lives in overwhelming wealth, if not in sheer opulence.

At this point I would like to refute a particular tendency in the spokesmen of the Church. They have no right, as for the repulsive governmental habit of ignoring valid criticism by referring to such and such a line in such and such an article in such and such a book as holding proof that they were correct all along. This is begging the question for, if they practiced what they at times so obscurely preach, the people would not be questioning them.

But, aside from this, do you have a conception of what the Church is and/or should be? Are you a Christian first or a Catholic first? What is your answer and why is it your choice? More important yet, why does such a frightening choice seem valid and relevant, at least at first glance? Regardless of your answer or mine, I believe that all of us — blind adherent to the church, blind rejectors of the church, those apathetic to the whole issue, and those belonging to the vast majority who are simply confused about the whole business — can profit by going back, or, to put it better, by going ahead, and listening to Jesus Christ who has given us the answers many times over. For our present situation perhaps the following words of His show us the way:

"A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

In conclusion, with this criterion for recognizing Christianity and Christians, is it any wonder that most people are confused and lost in the world on the identity of Christianity? And whose fault is that?? Yours and mine???

DEFINITION — COFFEE SHOPPE

By Hap.

Definition — Coffee Shoppe — it's where you go to relax, to drink coffee, to discuss events, sensible things and to make friends. Woe — to those — individuals whose main concern is Mary's new shoes, or who went home with hom last Saturday night.

I'm sure you've seen more imaginative restaurants. Is that what you want our Coffee Shoppe to look like — a mere half-hearted, food-only restaurant. Take a good look at those bare, desolate, dreary, dull, dead, empty, forelorn, bleak, and sick walls. Any chance of a little spirit, just a little creativity. Where are all those industrious and talented artists who could put their ideas in paint?

Even if a few untalented participants splashed a bit of paint on the walls, it would be an improvement.

What about a theme for a month or two, anything to give it spirit. Decorations wouldn't be all that hard to come by, changed every second month, it would be a terrific idea. Of course there's always a few immature destructive little creatures who find it impossible to keep their grubby paws off the merchandise.

And another thing, apparently everyone's afraid to do what they want to! How can you all sit there while your favorite record is on the juke-box, couldn't the tables be moved back and dancing be allowed whenever you want.

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