

Simple New Testament Christianity

Dub McClish

The only thing that Jesus ever promised to build was His church (Mat. 16:18). It was of such exceeding worth to Him that He paid the ultimate price of His own blood for it (Acts 20:28). He loved it so deeply that He “gave himself up for it” (Eph. 5:25). The apostles began to preach the fullness of salvation through the Gospel on the day of Pentecost following Jesus’ resurrection and ascension to Heaven. As men heard and obeyed their message the Lord saved them and added them to His church (Acts 2:37-47). And so, the church of Christ began and grew as the Gospel spread in ever-widening circles. The apostles, as the personal, inspired representatives of Christ, preached in such a way that the church was established exactly like He wanted it to be. In its organization, its worship, its work, its terms of admission, and its way of life—indeed in every respect, it was built according to Jesus’ Divine pattern. The church was one in doctrine and practice because the same message was taught “everywhere in every church” (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:1-2, etc.). Even the hint of division, wearing human names in religion, or teaching or receiving doctrines that conflicted with the apostolic message were punctually rebuked (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-4; Gal. 1:8-9). The church of God was in no sense a denomination, nor was it composed of denominations. The Lord never gave any man or group of men the right to change His church (Jude 3; Rev. 22:18-19; et al.).

After the death of John, the last apostle, men did not wait long to begin drifting away from the Truth, even as the Gospel had warned (Acts 20:28-30; 2 Tim. 4:1-4; Heb. 2:1; etc.). The departures multiplied with the passing of time until they resulted in the establishment of the Papacy in 606. Non-Catholic historians mark this as the beginning of the Roman Catholic Church, a completely different institution from the simple and unpretentious church of the New Testament (2 Cor. 11:3). As the Pope gained in power, the abuses and corruptions increased, reaching their apex in the depths of the Dark Ages. Those common folk who sought to even read their Bibles, trying simply to be Christians, were driven underground or cruelly tortured and executed when discovered.

By the beginning of the 16th century the force of the outcries against such atrocities (in the name of “Christianity,” no less) was so great that it could not be totally suppressed. Men of great courage and intelligence, such as Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin began to vigorously protest Rome’s corruptions. They were all reared in Catholicism and began their

protests from within. It was their aim to reform the existing church, rather than to start more churches. The Catholic hierarchy refused all suggestions of reform and excommunicated those who sought reformation. The work of these men and others who came after them resulted in the beginning of the Protestant Denominations. From the four or five main groups at the first, these, through numerous divisions in the past 400 years, have multiplied to thousands of separate churches.

As the number of Protestant churches and the divisive spirit increased, some began to doubt that Protestantism was much nearer to the simple Christianity of the New Testament than Catholicism. By the early part of the 18th century, some in the British Isles and Western Europe who had grown weary of seeing creeds elevated above the Scriptures, began to establish independent churches, using no “creed” but the New Testament. By the end of that century, the same phenomenon spontaneously sprang to life in New England. The plea of these men was to disregard all the creeds that keep men divided and go all the way back to the New Testament. Since the Gospel is the seed of the Kingdom (Luke 8:11), they correctly concluded that if only the pure Gospel is followed, only the true, simple church would or could result. The aim of these men was not to reform any existing church, whether Catholic or Protestant, nor to begin a new church, but to restore the church as revealed in the New Testament. It remains the only justifiable course one can pursue, if one diligently loves God, Christ, and the Bible. It requires the disavowal of all human names, creeds, practices, and loyalties in religion, but brings one into the glorious freedom of the Truth of Jesus Christ (John 8:31-32). Is there any other way to please God, our Creator, and His Son who died for us? Is there any other way to be His people, His church.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in the March 21, 1980, edition of *Light of Life*, of which I was editor. This monthly paper was published and mailed to every address county-wide by Granbury Church of Christ, Granbury, TX.]

Attribution: From *thescripturecache.com*; Dub McClish, owner and administrator.