
Christian Restoration

Part 1: Reform Was Not Enough

As Narrated by Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

The Protestant Fathers could protest against institutional Christian corruption. They could reform and improve Christianity. They could publish the scriptures and allow the common man to read the words of Christ, prophets and apostles for the first time. What they could **not** do is restore again what had been lost.

Between the close of the New Testament and the 16th Century Christianity had not merely declined, it had perished. It had become an institutionalized belief system with fixed forms of conducting that system. Professional clergy, supported by the tithes and offerings of the believers, was universally accepted before and after the Reformation.

Churches owned property and exercised control. There was no separation between Christianity's right to preach morality and the right to enforce morality. It had never been done, and therefore the Protestant Reformation Fathers assumed that was altogether proper.

What changed was not persecution and abuse. Only the identity of the denomination changed. Whereas Catholic abuses, burnings, killings and rule ended in areas controlled by newly rebelling denominations, in its place Lutheran abuses, burnings, killings and rule assumed that prerogative. The new sects did not know how to behave any better than the Catholics they rejected. During the Peasant Rebellion Martin Luther concluded that the peasants "would not listen; they would not let anyone tell them anything; their ears must be unbuttoned with bullets, till their heads jump off their shoulders." He instructed, "On the obstinate, hardened, blinded peasants, let no one have mercy, but let everyone, as he is able, hew, stab, slay, lay about him as though among mad dogs, . . . so that peace and safety may be maintained."

Zwingli was similarly disposed, as was John Calvin. Calvin wanted Michael Servetus executed for “blasphemy” but thought he ought to be beheaded rather than burned. Servetus did not believe in infant baptism or the Trinity. John Knox believed in killing Catholics, and thought religious freedom belonged only to those who believed as he did. He has been called the Apostle of Murder. Because of his role in the murder of Cardinal Beaton, John Knox was sentenced to years as a galley slave.

In short, Reform was unable to escape the low and un-Christian condition the Reformers inherited from their Catholic predecessor.

It would take generations following the Reformation before the development of benign Christian thought would begin to change Christianity to be more Christian. Reforming is not the same as restoring. And without Christ’s direct involvement, there is no way to recover what was lost.

Protestant Reformer John Wesley reflected on one of the results of losing original Christianity. In Wesley’s sermon *The More Excellent Way* he explained, "The cause of this [decline of spiritual gifts following Constantine] was ... `the love of many,' almost of all Christians, so called, was `waxed cold.' The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ than the other Heathens. The Son of Man, when he came to examine his Church, could hardly `find faith upon earth.' This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church; because the Christians were turned Heathens again, and had only a dead form left."

Once Christianity died, it needed to be reborn. And for that something more than earnest desire was needed. It required God to be directly involved.