

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY ?

CONFUSION and CHAOS ?

To an objective observer we would appear to be living in an age when bizarre behaviour is the norm even in Christianity. Christendom is split up into numerous organizations each guarding their own preserve. Clerics are trying hard to be "with it", desperate to fill pews at any price. It seems as though Christendom has gained a glut of professional extroverts with their following of exhibitionists and posers. It is even suggested that the same excesses were part and parcel of the church that the Lord Jesus started right at the beginning. These things are giving God a bad name.

The apostles warned that there would be schisms in the church. Even during the lifetime of the apostles self-willed men started divisions. Down the centuries Christendom has taken on-board fads of the times. Many long-standing deviations have become so commonplace that they are now accepted as the norm. It is the modern oddities that astound us.¹

The end product is that most of what we see today is far removed from the Christianity of the Bible. Christianity has become a laughing stock throughout the world. That is why many do not want to have anything to do with it and assume that the Lord Jesus Christ was equally absurd.

The Lord Jesus wants all His followers to be one so that people might acknowledge His credibility. His apostle, Paul, reproved division amongst the Lord's people. The Lord Jesus himself censured man-made religious alliances. Incongruities were denounced.²

The word Christianity is derived from the word Christ. Real Christianity must derive from the teaching of the Christ. Anyone with the slightest knowledge of the teaching and personality of the Lord Jesus Christ can see that the Christianity of today, with its sects and cults, is not genuine Christianity.

Can We Find Pure Christianity ?

The media constantly reminds us that our coastal waters are polluted. No one in their right mind would dream of drinking a cup of water straight from any of our estuaries. If we want pure water we have to go to the source where it springs from the mountain. Similarly, human depravity has progressively corrupted many good causes. To find purity, we have to remove the accumulated dross and go back to the source. This is particularly true with Christianity. If we want pure Christianity, we must go back to the beginning, to the teaching of the Lord Jesus and His apostles. The only historically authentic source of information on this is the New Testament. We have to go back to New Testament principles.³

CLARITY and SIMPLICITY !

People tend to expect truth to be complex. The Christianity of the New Testament is so uncomplicated it is too simple for many to accept.

Simplicity in the Universal Church

It is not possible to join the church of the Lord Jesus Christ like joining a club. The New Testament shows that if you comply with certain conditions the Lord Jesus will add you to His church. The Lord Jesus is building his church by adding people to it.⁴

The Lord Jesus adds to His church anyone who:-

- 1) believes that the Lord Jesus is what He claimed to be,
- 2) repents of their life of sin to follow Him unquestioningly, and
- 3) submits to baptism in water appealing to God for their sins to be forgiven⁵

There is no other way of becoming a member of His church than this. Also it does not make you a member of any denomination. It simply makes you a member of His church. You will be a Christian only, not a denominational brand of Christian. The Lord does not want you to join any religious sect of any kind.⁶

Simplicity in Baptism

The New Testament was written in Greek. Baptism is from the Greek word baptizō (βαπτίζω) meaning immersion. So when you read the word baptism in English translations of the Bible it means immersion.⁷

There is no record of babies being baptized in the New Testament. Millions have been held in superstitious fear due to unethical teaching on this subject. There is no magic in baptism. The water is simply water. There is no power in any words said by the person doing the baptism. Neither the water, nor the words, nor the status of the person doing the baptism make it valid. Also you can baptize people who don't believe or haven't repented a million times over and all that happens is they get wet. For your baptism to be valid, you must really believe and you must really repent. For this reason there should be witnesses at your baptism, to hear you confess that you do believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God. If you trust Him you will try hard to do what He says.⁸

Simplicity in the Christian Life

Baptism is the beginning. You should then continue to learn from the New Testament more about the Lord Jesus to become increasingly like Him in your life. He also wants you to worship with others whom He has also added to His church.⁹

Simplicity in the Local Church

In the Bible the word "church" is never used of a physical building. It always refers to people. You do not need a building to be a proper church. The first Christians did not have church buildings. The earliest churches met in houses and in hired rooms, wherever it was convenient. They were, none the less, real, fully fledged churches, the Lord's churches. The Bible attaches no importance whatsoever to church buildings. On the other hand the church which is His body of people is so important to the Lord Jesus that He died for it. He did not die for buildings.¹⁰

There is the universal church which the Lord is building. Then

there are local groups. These are His local churches. Only those that the Lord has added to His universal church can legitimately be members of one of His local churches.¹¹

Simplicity in the Worship

In New Testament times all of each group made a point of coming together for a special period of worship every week. This gathering would take place sometime between Saturday sunset and Sunday sunset. This period is called "the first day of the week" and is derived from the Old Testament way of reckoning days, i.e. from sunset to sunset.¹²

The main purpose of that meeting was to recall how the Lord Jesus died for our sins. During that meeting someone would pray, giving thanks and they would share an unleavened loaf to represent His body which He had given for them. Then someone would again offer thanks and they would share a cup of grape juice to represent His blood which He shed for them.

There is nothing cultic in observing the Lord's supper. It is simply the way the Lord has asked us to remember Him. The loaf remains only bread and "the fruit of the vine" remains only grape juice. Nothing magic happens to the bread or grape juice when thanks is given. Nothing mystical happens to the persons who eat and drink them. "Blessing it" is only another way of saying thank you for what it represents. There is no advantage taking any of it to the sick. It won't do anything for them. The superstition that has grown up around this simple ceremony has enabled the unscrupulous to have a cultic hold over their following.¹³

As part of the worship the members would give what they could afford into the groups fund. This would be used at the group's discretion to help the needy or for promoting church work. Take note that they did not solicit money from non-members. They would also pray, sing, read the scriptures and have teaching from the word of God. They did not use musical instruments in worship. They were introduced much later - into the west. God has asked us to praise him in song. He has not asked for instrumental worship. We must concentrate on worshipping both spiritually and correctly. That is what God wants. "Obedience is better than sacrifice".¹⁴

That meeting was called "the breaking of the loaf". There might also be other meetings for prayer and study but the meeting for "the breaking of the loaf" was specifically observed as a group, once every week. Taking part in this ceremony does not procure forgiveness of sins. On the contrary, it is vital to be in the right frame of heart and mind before taking part. To be forgiven their sins Christians should repent and pray to the Lord Jesus. He is the Advocate with the Father.¹⁵

Simplicity in Organization

Anyone who was a member of the Lord's universal church qualified for membership of the local church.¹⁶

Each local group was independent and self governing. They were simply Christians only and churches of the Lord Jesus Christ only. When a group had qualified men they were to appoint them

as supervisors over their congregation. All members were encouraged to carry out their role in the work and worship of the church.¹⁷

There was no clergy and laity. There were no diocese, no central authorities, no pyramid organizations. There were no denominations or alliances. Neither Jerusalem nor Rome were headquarters. The Lord's church has no headquarters on earth.¹⁸

The Lord Jesus is the head of the church. He is the only head. His church has no head on earth. There is no organisational hierarchy between Him as head and the local congregation. The common bond between all groups was the Lord Jesus, and the teaching of the apostles.¹⁹

The only historically authentic source of information on this is the New Testament. Creeds and articles of faith are man-made and fallible. The New Testament is the only reliable authority on matters of faith, worship and Christian living.²⁰

Current Eccentricities

The early church was required to do everything in a decent and orderly manner. Nowadays extrovert cranks make specious claims of cures. Sick folk come away disappointed. Worship has become a farce. It would be comical if it wasn't serious. They bring the Holy Spirit into disrepute.²¹

The ability to perform miracles was a temporary measure. It was transmitted by the laying on of the apostles' hands. The apostles of Christ have passed away together with the miraculous gifts. Faith, hope and love remain the hallmarks of the Lord Jesus' followers. In the next life, faith and hope will have fulfilled their purpose and love will be supreme.²²

Love must not be confused with lust. Love does not seek self gratification and does not have devious ulterior motives. Love is a genuine, unselfish and active concern for the ultimate welfare of others. The love of the Lord Jesus imbues us with love if we let it. He said: "If I am lifted up I will draw all men unto me." He died on the cross for you.²³

YOUR REACTIONS:-

These things will be a problem to the self-deluded, to those who have a feeling of their own importance or who have a feeling of superiority because they think they have miraculous insight or powers, and to those who have vested interests. What does it mean to you the objective observer?²⁴

What You Can Do

These ideas might seem too simple, raising more questions than solutions. If you have any queries, please feel free to write to us.²⁵

There are people all over the world who are simply Christians. They meet together to remember Jesus each first day of the week in independent groups. They have no set of dogmas or articles of faith but simply try to follow the principles of the New Testament.²⁶

We are not a denomination nor an association nor an alliance. We have no ulterior motive. We are not saying you must join us. We are not after your money. We don't get any income from doing this.

All we are asking is:-

- 1) Please take note of what Christianity should be like according to the New Testament, so that the Lord Jesus regains the respect due to Him.
- 2) If you have not already done so, consider Jesus' claims and become a Christian the Bible way.
- 3) Meet with an independent group of such Christians to worship in the New Testament manner.
- 4) If you cannot find such a group, it only needs two to begin one.
- 5) Use the New Testament as your guide in worship and in life.

It's a simple as that. Should you decide to act on it, it would encourage us if you wrote to us about it. If you would like to look into the matter further, please write to:-

Simply Christians, PO Box 71, MANCHESTER, M32 8EJ.

[OR E-MAIL:- MUQADDAS@AOL.COM]

We will not try to contact you unless you ask us to.

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CONFUSION and CHAOS
or
CLARITY with SIMPLICITY

The Christianity of today has brought shame on
the name of Christ.

This is an attempt to set the record straight
and an appeal to the genuine believer in the Christ.

Whether you are a Christian or not:-

Please do not destroy me.

Kindly keep me for reference.