

An Explanation (Part Four)

By

Kenneth Fortier

This article is not really a part of the last three articles you may have just read. This article is in response to a person who wrote to us with a question, and some comments.

“From your three articles entitled ‘An Explanation,’ you seem to be saying that you do not believe that Jesus founded the Roman Catholic Church. Is that true?” Mr. Richard D.

My fellow friends, and all who read what I said. I will not say just a plain yes or no, for I am a bit reluctant to state it just the way this man did. I hardly feel that one should lay his head on the chopping-block for careless thinkers to lop it off with a dull axe. A great number, sadly, of Roman Catholics, and many Protestants also, prefer to wander around inside of traditional fenced in areas, and if someone is attracted to the larger range of God’s grace, they feel obligated to practice their quick-draw and shoot him down as a sign of their loyalty to the institution that has them fenced in.

But, how about facing up to reality with me. I have said that Jesus founded an ekklesian by the shedding of his own blood, and that the word “church” does not represent or translate what Jesus founded. Boiled down and simmered away, this means that I do not think of Jesus as building a large structured organization upon the magnificent and profound truth that he “is the Messiah and the Son of the living God.” Startling as it may seem when I enunciate it, a “church” was not in God’s plan at all.

All of the stupid debates about which is the true divine organization are so much poppycock. What Jesus did found is a “community,” the people of God, ransomed and redeemed, and drawn unto him who shed his blood to make us one. A community is composed of people drawn together by a common bond, and that common bond, in this instance, is a trust in God’s Son, Jesus the Christ, or Messiah, and in our English language, “the anointed one.” It is not a trust based upon man’s philosophy and teachings, but by the compelling weight of testimony and fact. It is a communion, or better yet, a fellowship, and this is what Jesus really founded, a “koinonia” of sharers in the common life; a part of the body of Christ, his “ekklesia;” of whom he is the only Head. This common life, the life of God, is eternal life. All who belong to Christ’s ekklesia are sealed with the Holy Spirit, who is our common bond. The spirit is our earnest payment from God who purchased us for an immortal life through his Son Jesus, whom he made our Savior and King.

A lot of people think it is sheer folly for an insignificant voice like mine to be raised out against the relentless crushing power of the juggernaut of institutionalism. A great number, even though they think this, praise God and say, “Go to it!” They write and say, “It’s about time someone spoke up. I’m right behind you.” But, when it comes time to stand up and be counted, they are so far back behind me that I can’t find them. They love it when they read or hear me say the following:

“A true Christian cannot use his financial wealth to really relieve the needs of humanity. He is forced by the ‘church’ into funneling his ‘giving’ through their institution. A man is forced into surrendering his wealth into the hands of men who make all of the decisions, and, after taking his hard-earned money, throw him out if he protests the way it is used or abused. There is no other organization in our modern world which practices ‘taxation without representation’ with the same degree of flagrant disregard for the rights of individuals as our ‘church.’ Huge corporations at least mail out proxy ballots to remote investors, and among believers, the women, our sisters in Christ, are threatened with hell if they don’t submit to authority. They contribute much, but then are debarred from attending ‘business meetings’ in which others decide on how their money is to be spent. And this on the basis that women are to keep silent in the ‘churches’—and in ‘business meetings’ at that.”

I say again, and will continue to say, that if our church was the same as the ekklesia Jesus founded, every individual would have a say as to who he wants to lead the local assembly in their area, and if this local overseer, the episkopon, fails to maintain the requirements that the Apostle Paul laid down, then the same ones who elected him should have the same right to depose him.

People seem to love to hear this, but where are they when the counting starts? They say they back me up in my stance, but where are they when I need their support (not financial)? I am not certain when my fellow Christians will come out of under the rocks and return to the ideal of the “family of God,” the ekklesia of Christ. So I continue to call out to them in hopes that some will hear. As I visualize it, we must quit trying to be a “church,” for this is something God did not found. We must seek to become, instead, the people of God, just as the Apostles Peter, Paul and John say.

If we can become a family we will be brothers and sisters and not merely “members of a church.” There is nothing much warmer than the relationship of brothers and sisters, and there is nothing colder than being members of an institution. The “church” is filled with people who are lonely or forlorn. They are sad, they are distressed, and they feel forsaken; and they don’t know it! This is especially true of our very “Legalistic churches,” where the threat of damnation hovers over you everyday if you do not “conform to their opinions” and “their rituals of practice.”

In a family circle each have the same care for one another. It is real and genuine. It is not an attitude adopted only when you come together at the table. It is manifested 24 hours a day, not just one hour per week. Family love is a magnetic force which draws all brothers and sisters closer together. Many of our ills will pass away if we will just be a “family” instead of a “church.” That is what God designed for us: An “ekklesian” of brothers and sisters united by a common bond of which Christ is the glue. This is what I am really pleading for today. I think that there is real hope for us yet!

Jesus said, “These words I speak are spirit and they are life.” So, I urge you all to accept his words and put them into practice, just as he commands. If you think that you have his Spirit and the life without knowing Christ’s words, what spirit do you have? And, what is your faith based upon? It will be only a faith in what man has told you. If you do not love your brothers as Christ loved you, you are a murderer, and no murderer will ever enter into heaven! (See 1 John 3:15).

To Mr. Richard D., I stand by what I wrote in those three articles entitled “An Explanation.” Jesus never founded a “kuriakon.” He never founded the institution of the Roman Catholic Church, nor any Protestant Church. It was an “ekklesian”—the assembly of those who believe and obey him in all things as they come to see them. “Church” is the translation of “kuriakon,” not the “ekklesian” that Jesus spoke of!

This being true, then I will continue to say that Jesus never started a “church”—a house of a Lord: at least in the sense it is now used.

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