

Church Renovation

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“Church Undergoes Renovation,” the newspaper headline read. The words were positioned above a photo of a church building surrounded by scaffolding, with workmen on its roof. The article described the modernization of a church **building**, which the article referred to in common—albeit mistaken—parlance as a “church.” A church, however, is a **group of people** drawn together by distinct doctrines and practices that meets in a **building**.

From reading the New Testament and even a smattering of post-Biblical church history, it is clear that “the church” most people know today is not the church as Jesus built it (Mat. 16:16–19). His church underwent—and continues to undergo—major “renovations.” The simple beauty of the original church has been lost in endless complex, corrupt, and unauthorized changes.

The first century had its change agents, whom the apostles and other faithful saints kept in check (Rom. 16:17–18; Gal. 1:6–9; 2 Tim 4:2–4; 2 John 9–11; et al.). The inspired men left behind the inspired Word both to instruct in salvation and to keep the church pure, but some were not long content to honor the Divine will after the last apostle died. Innovations, leading to renovations, began arising as early as the second century.

Scripture indicates that a plurality of men called “elders,” “bishops,” and/or “pastors were to oversee each congregation of universal church (Acts 20:17, 28–31). These men met strict qualifications before appointment (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Tit. 1:5–11). By mid-second century, one of these men came to be exalted above his fellows, which, in the course of five centuries, led all the way to the papacy and all of its attendant monolithic understructure.

The millennium of the Middle Ages brought countless additional alterations in doctrine and practice in Roman Catholicism (e.g., a separate and celibate priesthood, Mariolatry, the Mass, transubstantiation, sprinkling for “baptism,” instrumental music, et al.).

These corruptions provoked the grand attempt to renovate the many Roman Catholic renovations. Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and others led the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. Their efforts, while nobly reforming some of Rome’s most egregious renovations, resulted in additional renovations, some of which were as anti-scriptural as those of popery.

The Protestant concept of the church is “unity in diversity” on a grand scale. That is, all the divergent non-Catholic churches compose The Church. This concept may be the greatest renovation of all, when compared with the consistency of doctrine and practice required of the

congregations (not separate denominations) that composed/compose the Lord's church (Eph. 4:1–6).

To love Jesus and His Word involves rejecting the innovations and renovations of men following the pattern for His church (Eph. 5:25–27; Heb. 8:5). The duty of the Lord's people regarding the church is to guard its purity in doctrine and practice at all costs.

[Note: I wrote this article for and it appeared in the *Denton Record-Chronicle*, Denton, TX, July 20, 2012.]

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