

*In
search
of*

Truth and Right

Tim Henderson, Editor

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"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things." Phil. 4:8 (NASB-U)

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Christ**

Restoring the New Testament Church

By: Robert F. Turner

The original writings of the New Testament were completed before the end of the first century, and they clearly describe an existing, functioning "church." Paul wrote *"unto the church of God which is at Corinth"* (1 Cor. 1:2). He said, *"As I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye"* (16:1). Paul took wages of churches (2 Cor. 11:8). *"The churches of Christ salute you"* (Rom. 16:16). The *"saints in Christ Jesus which (were) at Philippi"* had overseers and servants (Phil. 1:1), and as a unit this "church" (taking a singular verb, 4:15), sent support to Paul.

The word "church" identifies a "called out" body of people. The word may "assemble" metaphorically all those in Jesus Christ (*"I will build my church"* Matt. 16:18); or it may refer to those saints distributively, the units which make up the whole (Acts 5:11). But it also is used with reference to a local body of saints treated as an entity, having overseers, servants, collecting funds, paying wages, etc., as we see above. The word may even be used to characterize the saints' regular assemblies, common for worship or other "church" work. The Greek of 1 Corinthians 11:18 is simply *"when ye come together in church (en ekklesia)."* Significantly, however, "church" is never used in the N.T. for a universal functioning organization or institution.

The "establishment" of the church in its universal sense, was more accurately the declaration of Christ's rule (*"both Lord and Christ,"* Acts 2:36), so that now those who submit to his authority are saved from sin (2:38). The Abrahamic promise of blessings for "all nations" had reached its fruition (3:25f), and those blessed were designated by collective terms such as "church" or "flock" (20:28). The Word of God was the seed of this kingdom (Luke 8:11); and it was the Law and Word of



TIMES OF SERVICES SUNDAY

Bible Classes*
10:00 AM
AM Worship
10:45 AM
PM Worship

6:30 PM

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the Lord, not some universal institution, that went forth from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-3). Henceforth, wherever that "good news" was preached and received (Acts 11:20f), the resultant saints were units of the "church" in its universal sense, and were expected to function together as a local "church."

A proper understanding of "church" is essential to understanding what "fell away" in the apostasies of later centuries, and what must be restored. The Mormons, adapting the priesthood concept of Romanism, believe "authority" was lost and had to be restored. So John the Baptist (Aaronic priesthood) and Peter, James and John (Melchizedek priesthood) had to appear and restore such "authority" (Restoration of the Gospel, Osborne Widtsoe; p. 64f). They also believe the Word of God was so corrupted as to need restoration (1 Nephi 13:24f), which is accomplished by Mormon "latter day revelation." Before you get too carried away with ridiculing these absurdities, explain to yourself your own concept of "falling away." Was the true church "lost," and if so, just how was it lost?

I fear some have the little red wagon concept of "church." Some saving institution was set up on Pentecost, and those who climb in may ride to heaven. But as time went on, the little red wagon broke down (the changes of apostasy) so it could no longer take people to heaven. So the Reformers tried patching it up. They put on new but less than standard parts. They striped the sides; they put on different sized wheels. But the little red wagon was in the disrepair of denominationalism and could not take people to heaven. So one fine morning Alexander Campbell awoke, stretched himself, and said, "Think I will fix the little red wagon today." He replaced all non-standard parts with genuine. He knocked out the dents, sanded her down, and put on a fresh coat of paint. For the final touch, he lettered "Church of Christ" on the side panel. Now that restoration is over, people can jump into the little red wagon and ride home to heaven. Of course, this makes the church the Savior when in reality it is the saved. Surely you do not accept such a concept.

The church is an institution in much the same sense as marriage. Particular marriages may need restoring, but the "institution" itself has never gone anywhere -- it is just like it was when God instituted it. The institution has not changed but the people may have, and if so the people need restoring -- to the God ordained purpose and principle of marriage. Likewise, the scriptural concept of God's people, coming to Christ and serving in keeping with his instructions, is "established" for all time. The declarations, commands, and approved examples and implications of inspired messengers are recorded for us in the New Testament. They were written so they could be understood (Eph. 3:3f) and so we could have them after the messengers were long dead (2 Pet. 1:15; 3:1-2). This "seed" is incorruptible (1 Pet. 1:22-f), and capable of producing genuine Christians today as it did in the first century.

If Alexander Campbell "restored the church" at all, he did so only in the sense of teaching people to be content with the church revealed in God's word. To the extent some followed divine instructions they became genuine saints who made up the church of his day. But we have no less need, no less obligation, to be "restorers" today. This is an ongoing process that will continue as long as there are those who add to, take from, or change God's revealed pattern for his people. It is dangerous, indeed, to think that the need for restoration was limited to Campbell's day. The church of his day is not our standard. In fact, brethren of the first century were warned about "measuring" and "comparing themselves among themselves" (2 Cor. 10:12f). The ideal or perfect standard is found in the N.T. record only by observing the composite picture: noting some things approved and others disapproved by God's inspired messengers.

Should the word of God be cast upon the waters and drift to some shore where people had never heard of salvation in Christ; it could be translated, studied and obeyed. The "seed" would produce Christians, and the church would have come to that place. (See again, Acts 11:20f.) But human nature being what it is, there could come a time when these people would stray from the truth, even to denying their first love (Rev. 2:4-5), and restoration would be needed. The truth is unchanged, the ideal is still there in the Word, but people often move away from the truth. It is people who need restoring, in the first century, yesterday and today. And this "restoration spirit" must be kept alive in our hearts. We must dedicate ourselves to restoration, and be humble -- there is the rub -- humble enough to apply its principle to our own practices.

Brief Exhortations

By: David Riggs

"As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving." (Col. 2:6-7)

Several years ago a man reported his observations of the effects of a hurricane on a southeastern Gulf Coast town. As he walked up and down the ravaged streets, he observed that the palm trees had been uprooted and flung about. Once tall and majestic, their root systems were too shallow to withstand the hurricane force winds. But, as he proceeded, he came to a lone oak tree. The leaves had been blown away and some of the smaller branches ripped off, but the roots had gone deep, and the tree held its position. And, in due season it would again produce leaves. (From **1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching**, p. 120)

Likewise, if we are to endure in times of hardship, stress, and difficulty, we must be rooted and grounded in Christ. Through Him can we be victorious in all things.

News N Notes

Traveling:

- Dave and Wilma Harless will be in Florida for the next couple of weeks.

Sick:

- Susan and Scott Swanson, Dorothy Lancaster's daughter, and their baby.
- Terry Smith; Vicki Renshaw; Cindy North; Blake Headen, Alberta's husband
- Marie Roberts; Amanda (Coen) Dowdy in North Dakota; Terry Smith's brother George.
- Faith Kress, Linda Marshall's niece; Ed Roberts father; Grace Lancaster; Ila Marshall, Harold Marshall's mother.

Nursing Home:

- Hazel Carroll; Pauline Sellers

Shut-ins:

- Rhea Henthorn; Ethel Mahan; Josephine Clow; Mabel Fleming; Pauline Midcap
- A card, phone call or a visit can really brighten someone's day.