

If the title of this lesson were true, it would undermine the foundation of the church. If this church is “our church” and if it is of a recent, human origin, then it is not the Lord’s church. It is not, and cannot be the kingdom made without hands in Daniel 2. It is not, and cannot be the church established by God in Acts 2. It is not, and cannot be the church that Jesus promised to build in Matthew 16:18 and Psalm 11:3. If the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Peter, “speaking as the Spirit gave him utterance” said, “Ye men of Israel, hear these words which God did by Him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay: whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it. This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses” (Acts 2:22,24,32). So it was upon that great Pentecost day that the testimony of the prophets, Christ and the apostles was brought together for the first time infallibly and perfectly joined together as the great foundation resting upon the Rock, Christ, the Son of God. Also upon that day, the law was revealed whereby men and women who were “dead in trespasses and in sins,” were enabled to become “LIVING STONES,” fit to be placed upon this foundation to “build up a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5). On that same Pentecost day, by virtue of their obedience to God’s will, “...there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). The great Master Builder prepared His material, and in one day His church was built, composed of Christ the head and chief cornerstone, the apostles, the gospel which is the law of pardon and conduct, and

those three thousand who were added by obedience. It takes all of this to constitute the Lord’s church – the church which Christ said He would build all standing upon this rock of truth, Christ the Son of God.

The Lord’s Church Did Not Originate With The Restoration Movement

To some, the church of Christ is just another denomination, and it is arrogant, they say, for us to suggest otherwise. We sprang to life, they argue, as a vibrant new movement in the 1800’s. The “pioneers” of “our movement,” they say, are the leaders of the restoration movement, and the writings and sermons of those restoration leaders are our source documents.

Under this view, we are no different from the Baptists, the Methodists, or any other denomination. We may differ on certain theological questions, but we are all man-made religious organizations of recent origin.

The primary theme of this attack on the church is that the church of Christ is just another denomination, and we in the church should all just admit it and move on. They argue that we are just deceiving ourselves if we believe that we are Christians only and the only Christians in the New Testament church. They talk of “our religious heritage.” A “heritage” is something that comes or belongs to one by reason of birth. For those who believe that the church of Christ was “born” out of the restoration movement, a study of “our religious heritage” involves a study of the writings that accompanied our “birth” in the 1800’s. Typically, those who stress the importance of studying “our religious heritage” will have very little to say about the book of Acts. Instead, they will focus on the writings of the

restoration leaders, as if those writings were somehow binding on us today. These writings are the writings of men, and are not inspired. These attacks are carried out under the guise of honoring the restoration leaders, but it does just the opposite. Rather than honor the restoration leaders, these attacks accuse them of creating the very thing they were fighting against; that is, man-made religious organizations. The restoration leaders would not feel honored by this modern day attack against the Lord’s church. What did Alexander Campbell or Barton W. Stone come up with that was new? Were they the first to reject the use of instrumental Music? Were they the first to suggest that baptism for the remission of sins is essential? Were they the first to partake of the communion on the first day of each week? Were they the first to reject man-made hierarchies and creeds? They were RESTORATIONISTS! The New Testament gives us a pattern for the church to follow in every age. There is a pattern for stewardship, for prayer, for observing the Lord’s supper, for singing (and the type of music God commands us to use), for evangelism, for church discipline, for training and supporting minister, for giving, for caring of widows, for sermon content and delivery and the list could go on. When one speaks of a “restoration plea,” at least two things are implied. First, there is a divine “pattern” for human conduct. Second, God expects conformity to that pattern. The early church is clearly a model for us in that it “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42). Moreover, the multitude of believers “were of one heart and soul” (Acts 4:32), suggesting a unity of practice in their Christian decorum. Paul reminded the saints in Rome that they had been made free from sin due to the fact that they had been obedient to a

certain “form” (pattern) of teaching (Romans 6:17,18). Paul instructed the brethren in Corinth not to go “beyond the things which are written” (1 Corinthians 4:6 ASV). Christians were warned repeatedly about “falling away” from “the faith” (2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 Timothy 4:1ff; 2 Timothy 4:1ff). Logically speaking, how can men read these passages and not know that there is a body of sacred truth with which we must not tamper? RESTORATIONISTS were restoring in their lives, something old, not **creating** something new. The restoration movement could actually be seen as a type of “Repentance Movement.” It started long before Thomas and Alexander Campbell came on the scene. It really began with the writers of the New Testament epistles. If you examine Paul’s letters to the Corinthians and the letters written to the seven churches of Asia by John in the book of Revelation, you will see the restoration movement in action. Those letters were written to encourage and exhort Christians to return to the apostolic pattern and the doctrine that had previously been taught to them.

Did Campbell Build The Church?

Since all denominations have a human founder and a date of establishment centuries after Christ established His church, many have tried to find a human who established the church of Christ. What does the Bible say? Daniel 2 tells us that the church is not made with hands. It is the church that Jesus Himself promised to build in Matthew 16. The Lord’s church was not built by man; it was built by the Lord.

Most have come to the conclusion that Alexander Campbell established it in 1813. But read from the documents held by Doctor

Robinson, principal of Overdale College, Birmingham, England:

“In the Furness District of Lancashire – in North West England – there existed in 1669, during the reign of Charles II, a group of eight churches of Christ. Most of them are not now in existence. An old minute-book has been found on the year 1669 and it shows that they called themselves by the name of church of Christ, practiced baptism by immersion, celebrated the Lord’s supper each Lord’s day, and had elders and deacons. There was also a church of Christ in Dungannon, Ireland in 1804; one in Allington, Denbigshire. In 1735 John Davis, a young preacher in the fife District of Scotland was preaching New Testament Christianity twenty-five years before Thomas Campbell (Alexander Campbell’s father) was born.”

As you can see, 150 years before Campbell was supposed to have established the church of Christ, it existed just as it does today! It has the same name, organization, doctrine and practices today as it did then. No, friends, the church did not begin with Alexander Campbell or any other man. The church was in the mind of God before time began (Ephesians 3:10-11), and was established on the day of Pentecost. To say differently is to diminish God and call Him a liar, thus fulfilling the Scripture in 2 Timothy 4:4, “And they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned to fables.”

This tract is condensed from a lesson presented at the
29th Annual Mid-West Lectures,
“*They Shall Be Turned Unto Fables*”

To hear or view the complete lesson go to
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**“They Shall Be Turned
Unto Fables”**

“The Church of Christ Began With Alexander Campbell”

by
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