

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

THE “RESTORATION MOVEMENT”

By Hugh Fulford

PERSPECTIVE is always a valuable commodity. It is needed where the restoration movement is concerned. We must be careful to not canonize the restoration leaders or the restoration movement. I think I see some effort to do this, especially where Stone and Campbell are concerned. I read a lot about the Stone-Campbell this, that, and the other. Stone and Campbell were not the only men pleading for a return to the New Testament order of things. They were not the only able men in the movement to restore apostolic undenominational Christianity.

We must be careful to not see “the Stone-Campbell Movement” as the origin of “our church.” It is not “our church” in which we should be interested, but the church of the New Testament. Stone, Campbell, Scott, Smith, et al were not our “founders.” Christ was the founder of the church and it is the church of the New Testament of which I am a member by virtue of my obedience to the gospel (Acts 2:37-47). I believe in the restoration principle. It is a valid and biblical principle. I believe in the restoration plea and the restoration movement, but my membership is in the church of our Lord and that alone.

The restoration movement is not the end, but the means to an end – the true church of the New Testament. Write about “our” history all we care to. Collect all the trivia and artifacts from “our” history that you care to. But be very careful not to build up a denominational view of the church – “our fellowship,” “our tradition,” “our heritage,” “the Stone-Campbell fellowship,” “the Restoration Movement churches,” etc. I am a Christian, not a Campbellite! I am a member of the body of Christ, the church – not a denomination that originated in the early 19th century. ■

THE RESTORATION PLEA

By Alan Highers

Some will say, “What about the church established by Alexander Campbell?” There have always been some who wanted to ascribe a human founder to churches of Christ. At one time they referred to us as “Campbellites.” Their charge is understandable because all denominations have a human founder, and they wanted to place us in the same category. Campbell never founded a church, but he did call for a “restoration of the ancient order.” His father, Thomas Campbell, was the one who used the phrase, “Speak where the Bible speaks, remain silent where the Bible is silent,” but it is noteworthy he never said, “Speak where Campbell speaks, and remain silent where Campbell is silent.”

Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, Raccoon John Smith, and others did not ask men to follow them, but they sought for men to follow the Bible. It was Raccoon John Smith who said, “Let us, then, my brethren, be no longer Campbellites or Stoneites, New Lights or Old Lights, or any kind of lights, but let us all come to the Bible and to the Bible alone, as the only Book in the world that can give us all the Light we need.”

The call that went forth was not to establish a new church, found another denomination, or devise another human institution, but rather to return to the Bible, to the first-century church established by Christ, and to the pattern he left for us to follow (2 Tim. 1:13). If the first-century church had elders (1 Tim. 3:1-7), we strive to have elders. If the church in the New Testament had deacons (1 Tim. 3:8-13), we want to follow their model. If the early church sang praises to God without the addition of instrumental music (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), we want to do the same.

In other words, we want to be what they were, teach what they taught, practice what they practiced, and to be simply New Testament Christians without ever joining any human denomination, wearing any sectarian name, subscrib-

ing to any man-made creed, or teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matt. 15:9). What could be a more thrilling, non-denominational appeal than this? We simply strive to uphold Christ as Savior, the Bible as authority, the church as divinely established, and Christian as the non-sectarian name by which we are called (1 Pet. 4:16). ■

Bible Basics: The Seed is the Word of God

By Earl Robertson

In the parable of the Sower, Jesus said, ***“The seed is the word of God”*** (Lk. 8:11). In this parable, Jesus was teaching some essentials of the kingdom of God, and they could be illustrated with no greater force than with the elementary lesson of seed sown and its results. God's order has always been harvest after seed sowing; and seed produces after its kind (Gen. 1:12; Gal. 6:6-10). This rule of God does not change. Corn seed produces corn; wheat seed produces wheat. This unvarying rule was understood by the people of Jesus' day, He could, therefore, apply it in his teaching the disciples about a harvest of souls the kingdom of God.

The great commission given by Jesus stresses this same fact (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15, 16). Every case of conversion in the book of Acts also shows the necessity of the seed (word of God) being sown in the hearts of people before their conversion to Christ. Some have the idea that Christians are made without the gospel being preached, but such is not true. The power to deliver sinners from darkness is the gospel (Col. 1:13; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:21). You cannot make Christians without sowing the seed! Jesus further said, ***“Come...learn of me”*** (Matt. 11:28-30). The same is taught in John 6:43-45. God does not operate directly upon sinners in converting them; but rather, He uses His word—the seed—in the accomplishing of it.

The seed produces after its kind! The word of God only is the medium used by God to make Christians. No other cause will effect such an accomplishment. The words of men have never been able to make saints out of sinners. The doctrines of men in Jesus' day only made the religion of men vain. It can do no better today. The disciplines, manuals, articles of faith, confessions, and catechisms, have men as their authors and do not have within them the power to unerringly guide one soul out of darkness and lead that one to the Lamb of God! The word of God and only the word of God makes Christians. The word of God will make only a Christian—and there are no kinds of Christians—no human adjectives attached to the noun Christian either! Are you what you are because of the word of God and only the word of God? – ***Truth Magazine***, September 28, 1978. ■

The Word of God

By Joe R. Price

“22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, 23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, 24 because “All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, 25 But the word of the Lord endures forever.” Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you” (1 Pet. 1:22–25, NKJV).

This passage identifies the word of God and describes what it does. First, the word of God is ***“the truth”*** (v. 22). The word of God is not a truth among many other truths. It is the truth, it is exclusive, accurate and reliable because it is the word of God, not the word of men (1 Thess. 2:13). The truth of God purifies the soul when it is obeyed (v. 22; Heb. 5:9). Our souls cannot be purified unless we obey the truth. Next, the word of God is the seed that produces the new birth (v. 23). The sinner is ***“born again”*** when this seed is planted in the heart and obeyed from the heart (Lk. 8:11, 15). Those who believe sinners are born again without obedience must ignore this verse (Jn. 3:3, 5). The word of God is powerful, incorruptible and ***“endures forever”*** (v. 23, 25). The first-century gospel will do its work in this century. We must receive and obey the truth – the incorruptible word – to be purified of sins and to truly love one another (Jn. 8:31-32; 13:34-35). – ***Sword Tips***, January 10, 2019. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250