

# *It Is Written*

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## **Who Made Up The Church Before The Restoration Movement?**

By T. Doy Moyer

**Question:** The restoration movement began in the early 1800's. From that came the Church of Christ. Before that who made up the church? I am a devout member of the Church of Christ and I just want to know how to answer this question in line with the Word. Thank You.

**Response:** First, I want to comment on the first couple of sentences in the question. "The restoration movement began in the early 1800's. From that came the Church of Christ." May I kindly say that this is not a correct way of stating the point; and once we understand something about the church of Christ, the answer to the question will be obvious.

To say, "from that came the 'Church of Christ'" is to put the church into the framework of a denomination. It is to imply that the church of Christ had its beginnings in the restoration movement. If one is looking at a denomination called the "Church of Christ" (and such does exist), then perhaps the point would be legitimate. However, if a denomination called the "Church of Christ" does now exist as a result of the restoration movement, then it is unscriptural and ought to cease to exist, for we can find no biblical support for the existence of a denomination, no matter what name it uses.

Biblically understood, the "church of Christ" is simply a group or body of people who belong to Christ. It is not a title, and the Bible nowhere uses it as such. Though "churches of Christ" is used (Romans 6:16), it is not used exclusively, and then is simply descriptive of congregations that belonged to Christ. Other descriptions are used also: church of God at Corinth (1Corinthians 1:2); church of the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 1:1); church of the firstborn ones (Hebrews 12:23), etc. Clearly, there is no one single title given for all congregations. Therefore, to use the phrase "Church of Christ" as a denominational, exclusive title is without authority and should be abandoned. I cringe when I hear terminology such as "Church of Christ preacher" or "I'm a Church of Christ," etc. It is patently unbiblical and reveals a denominational mindset.

It should be noted that the efforts in the "restoration movement" were not intended to create a new denomination known as the "Church of Christ." My understanding is that they were trying to get away from that kind of thing so they could just be Christians. This should be our goal always.

To the bottom-line question: Who made up the church before this? The same ones who have always made up the church: those who, by faith, have committed themselves to Christ through obedience to His will (Hebrews 5:9). Just because we do not have a historical record of Christians throughout the centuries does not mean they didn't exist. I would like to think that there has always been a "remnant" of God's people, even during the years that Catholicism had a strangle-hold on the populace.

The requirements for salvation did not change with the American restoration movement. Anyone, living at any given time this side of Christ, could have been or can be just Christians by going to the Scriptures to be and do what first century Christians did under the guidance and oversight of Jesus and the apostles. When one obeys the gospel, the Lord adds this person to His body of saved people who make up the "general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23). Then, God desires that we join ourselves to a local group of Christians as we carry out His will

(cf. Hebrews 10:23-24). In doing this, we should make sure that such a group is practicing truth according to the Bible, working and worshiping in line with the scriptural guidelines. This is the way that we, as individuals, can worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

Just because a local group calls itself a “Church of Christ” does not guarantee its faithfulness, and this is demonstrable. So, that phrase is not some kind of biblical litmus test for soundness. I do not believe that a congregation that is committed to God’s word will call themselves something foreign to Scripture, or identify themselves with some peculiar man, denomination, or doctrine. But ultimately, a congregation is recognized as faithful by the Lord through her holding fast to Him and His will (cf. Revelation 2:8-11, 3:7-13).

Today, if we will hold fast to Christ and His will, He will judge us as faithful. In the end, this is all that really matters.

## *Church Issues And Love*

By Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

Throughout church history, divisive issues have arisen among Christians, even to this present day. While this should concern us, it should not cause excessive alarm. They are to be expected. After all, the apostle Paul wrote in the First Century: “For, in the first place, when you assemble as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.” (1 Corinthians 11:18-19 RSV). Just a causal reading of the New Testament shows that a large part of it deals with early schisms.

During my own lifetime, I have seen a goodly number of church rifts. After the dust settled and dividing lines were drawn, many Monday morning quarterbacks, who were either nowhere near or had chosen to remain aloof during the gut-wrenching struggle, freely alleged that had there been more love by all parties it would not have happened.

It is simply amazing how many people think that all church problems, no matter their nature, can be completely solved with more love. That would be true if they were all hate based. However, in more cases than not, problems spring from deeper disagreements over fundamental Bible teaching. It is possible to love one another dearly while still divided over vital moral and spiritual convictions. While love can HELP repair any breach of fellowship, it is not the “magic bullet” for completely solving all differences.

These folks see doctrinal differences as being no obstacle to unity if all have the right attitude. These minimize the seriousness of issues caused by doctrinal error and moral turpitude. They do not see why the parties cannot meet and work together, united by love for each other. They look for ways to reduce fundamental Bible-based convictions to the level of insignificance. Love is everything to them.

About 45 years ago, three other preachers and I met with four preachers of different persuasion to discuss some of the differences between us. The prayer at the beginning of the session signaled how little would be accomplished by the discussions. Among other things, the man prayed, “Lord, we thank you for LOVE. We know that love is everything. We know that LOVE is MORE IMPORTANT than being RIGHT.”