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# WEST VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST

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9:30 am Bible Class—all ages	Phone Number: (623) 695-5623
10:30 am Sunday Worship	Website: <a href="http://www.wvcochrist.com">www.wvcochrist.com</a>
5:00 pm Proverbs study (online)	Email: <a href="mailto:wvchurchofchrist@gmail.com">wvchurchofchrist@gmail.com</a>
7:00 pm Wednesday Bible Class	Facebook: West Valley church of Christ

**February 6, 2022**

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## **A Tradition of Restoration – Not, “Restoration Tradition”**

Increasingly, I hear people inside and outside of the churches of Christ describing congregations of God’s people as being a part of the “Restoration Heritage” or the “Restoration Tradition.” While I’m not sure why those inside the church use these terms, the aim of outsiders seems to be twofold: 1) to place the origin of congregations of the churches of Christ within a broader 19th century American religious movement called the “Restoration Movement,” and 2) to place these same congregations within a denominational category of churches which also includes Disciples of Christ Churches and Christian Churches.

There is some merit to be found in learning how several of today’s congregations of the churches of Christ came to be. Studying the history of those early American restorers is like studying the restoration efforts of God’s people throughout inspired history. Many people before and during that so-called Restoration Movement did what Jeremiah encouraged by “ask[ing] for the old paths” (Jeremiah 6:16); they sought to return to Biblical patterns of teaching and practice. However, just as happened in biblical history, these efforts were sometimes incomplete or overcomplete, falling short of God’s revealed desires for His people or going beyond them. Some people never fully escaped denominational understandings and/or practices, while others became entangled in them again after they had escaped.

Having said that, there’s a reason why you might not have heard of the key figures of the American Restoration Movement. It’s not because the hierarchy of the Church of Christ has swept it under the rug; in fact, there is no hierarchy of the churches of Christ, no centralized leadership, and no structure of governance greater than the one over a local congregation of God’s people. It’s not because the creed demands it; there’s no creed, no prayer book, no confession of faith, no manual, no catechism, or any other such document at work among members of Christ’s church. No, the reason for the relative anonymity surrounding these figures is simple: the best of those American reformers didn’t leave behind a Restoration Heritage or Restoration Tradition; they left behind a heritage and tradition of restoration.

I suspect there is no idea that Satan hates more than the idea that people can unite with one another at the foot of the cross based upon their belief in Jesus and His New Testament. This is why he led some at the church of God at Corinth to wear the names of men instead of Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:12-13) and why so soon after the New Testament era he worked to create a widespread departure from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1-3; cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:3). Satan is active whenever there are efforts to return to Jesus and His Gospel. He persuades men to be satisfied with partial reforms, with extrabiblical documents granted authority equal to or greater than the Bible, and with wise and/or charismatic leaders. He leads men and women to mock the concept of restoration by calling it naïve, unnecessary, impossible, or just another form of denominationalism and division.

The concept of restoration will never be a popular one among the academic elites or the worldly wise, just as Paul said the Gospel itself would not be popular among them (1 Corinthians 1:18-29). They find it hard to think outside of the boxes of religious movements and denominational bodies. The Scriptures however affirm that there is a tradition handed down, not from 19th century restorers, but from the Lord and His apostles to us (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 2 Thessalonians 3:6). When one discovers that tradition, he doesn’t discover a “Restoration Tradition” but instead discovers “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3). When he obeys it, he doesn’t join the “Restoration Movement,” but rather is added by the Lord to His body, the church (Acts 2:41, 47; Ephesians 1:22-23).

The outsiders will say what they will. My encouragement to those inside the church though is this: follow the tradition of restoration, a tradition that has worked among God’s people whenever and wherever sin has led man away from God’s pattern, and beware anyone who tries to marginalize or trivialize such efforts.