

A Brief History
of
The Church of Christ
(Temple Lot)



**Origin of the Church
and Some of the Differences
Between It and Other
Factions of the Restoration**

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THE CHURCH OF CHRIST (Temple Lot)

A Brief History of the Origin of the Church and Some of the Differences Between It and Other Factions of the Restoration

The spring of 1830 was no different to the people of New York than any other year. The farmers were preparing for their spring work and the merchants in the city and villages, as well as the housewives, were getting ready for the spring clean up, all unmindful of the meeting in the home of Mr. Peter Whitmer, Fayette Township, Seneca County, New York, where six young men had met to organize the Church of Christ.

These six men were Peter Whitmer, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, Samuel H. Smith, Hyrum Smith and Joseph Smith, Jr. It may seem strange to some that only six men were present at so important a meeting, for it is a historical fact that quite a number had been baptized before this date of April 6, 1830. By a careful study of the history as given by several of the writers of that day, we can safely say there were about seventy, at least, who had already gone down into the waters of baptism, many of them living in the vicinity of the place where this meeting was held.

Concerning this meeting, we want to call the reader's attention to an excerpt from a document that refers directly to this event:

"The rise of the **Church of Christ** in these last days, being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh, it being regularly organized and established agreeable to the laws of our country, by the will and commandment of God in the fourth month, and on the sixth day of the month which is called April; . ." Book of Commandments, Chapter 24:1, 2.

There are two things that we want to call to your attention in the foregoing quotation: first, the name of this church, "Church of Christ," and second, "it being regularly organized and established . . . by the will and commandment of God." This should be sufficient authority, and should fix the name by which the church should be known as long as it should continue to be in existence, or till such a time as God should see fit to change the name, but since He makes the statement in the Book of Mormon that the Church should be called by His name in the last days, we shall not expect Him (God) to make any change in this name.

From this time on, the church grew rapidly. In the fall of 1830, four elders of the newly organized church were sent on a missionary trip to the western borders of Missouri. On their way, they stopped at the village of Kirtland, Ohio. Here, at this place, were added to the church a number of new members, among whom we find the names of men who subsequently became quite prominent in the events and development of the church. Here, we find Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, Orson Hyde, Lyman Wight, Edward Partridge, and many others became members of the Church (see Reorganized Church History, Vol. 1, page 128).

We introduce these names because in the subsequent events that make up the history of our church, these men played an active part and were the men responsible for some of the outstanding changes that crept into the Church.

On the 3rd of May, 1834, the Church of Christ held a conference at Kirtland, Ohio, which had become the center, or headquarters, of the Church. At this conference, one thing outstanding in its nature took place, and we read in the minutes of the conference as follows:

"Minutes of a conference of the elders of the

Church of Christ, which church was organized in the township of Fayette, Seneca County, New York, on the 6th day of April, 1830 A.D. The conference came to order, and Joseph Smith, Jr. was chosen moderator, and Frederick G. Williams and Oliver Cowdery were appointed clerks.

"After prayer, the conference proceeded to discuss the subject of names and appellations, when a motion was made by Sidney Rigdon and seconded by Newel K. Whitney, that this church be known hereafter by the name of **The Church of the Latter Day Saints.**"

Reorganized Church History, Vol. 1, page 453.

This resolution was passed and the "churches abroad" were duly notified of the change in the name of the church. There had been other changes made in the organization which we may touch upon later, but we call attention to this change in the name as it has a very significant bearing on the question of this tract. We are told by some writers that there were some who objected to this change of the name of the church; however, the church went by this new name, "The Church of the Latter Day Saints," till April 26, 1838 when a revelation was received that again changed the name of the church to, "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." See Utah D. and C., Section 115.

In July, 1831, certain instruction had been given to the church relative to the "Land of Zion," designating Independence, Missouri as the "center place," also designating the "spot" where the "temple" was to be built. From this revelation we wish to quote as follows:

"Hearken, O ye elders of my church saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together, according to my commandments in this land which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints; wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the

city of Zion. . . . Behold the place which is now called Independence, is the center place, and the spot for the temple is lying westward upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse."

Reorganized D. and C., Section 57:1.
Reorganized Church History, Vol. 1, page 204.

Nothing was ever done by the church, as touching these matters, except the dedicating of the "Land of Zion" and marking the "spot" and dedicating the same where the "Temple" was to stand. Edward Partridge purchased the land that had been shown to them as the place for the Temple; it consisted of a plot of ground containing 63 and a fraction acres, and cost \$130.00. The revelation states that on a "lot" was the "spot for the Temple." This property was not plotted into lots till 1851, and upon one of the lots thus plotted was the "spot" for the Temple.

One of the peculiar things about the purchase of this property by Edward Partridge is the fact that the property at the time of "dedicating" was still state land. Nearly six months after the dedication Jonas H. Flourney purchased 80 acres from the government and six days later sold 63 acres of this 80 acres to Partridge. The original deed is in Salt Lake City; a photostatic copy of the original deed was printed in *The Deseret News*, January 23, 1932, in which no mention is made of the church. Neither is Edward Partridge mentioned as trustee for the church.

It was not long after the dedication of the Temple Lot that the first signs of trouble started in Independence, Missouri, and within a few years all the Saints had been driven from the State of Missouri; but in spite of the persecution, the church had rapidly grown in numerical strength. The name of the church had been changed again, as is found in the history, and in the Utah Doctrine and Covenants. We quote from the Reorganized Church History, Vol. 2, page 151, footnote:

"Revelation given at Far West, April 26, 1838, Verily thus saith the Lord unto you, my

servant Joseph Smith, Jr., and also my servant Sidney Rigdon, and also my servant Hyrum Smith . . . ; and also unto my faithful servants, who are of the High Council of my church in Zion (for thus it shall be called), and unto all the elders and people of my church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints scattered abroad in all the world; for thus shall my church be called in the last days, even the **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. . . .**"

Reorganized Church History, Vol. 2, page 151.
Utah D. and C., Section 115.

This was the name by which the church was known from that time on till the death of Joseph and Hyrum Smith in 1844. Within only a short time of about a year from the date of this revelation, the Saints were all driven from the State of Missouri.

The next place of interest in this narrative is the city of Nauvoo, Illinois. Here the church gathered and grew for a short time even as it had done at Kirtland, Independence, and Far West. Here it built a city of many thousands, and from here the dispersion of the church took place.

At the death of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, June 27, 1844, a new question began to make itself heard: that question was, who shall be the successor of Joseph as the leader or head of the church?

Disintegration now set in, and within a short time several groups had formed, under various leaders; William Smith, brother of the martyrs, claimed the right to the presidency because of his relation to Joseph; J. J. Strang led a group up into Wisconsin; Sidney Rigdon, claiming the right to leadership, had gone back to Pennsylvania; Lyman Wight led a colony to western Texas; Alpheus Cutler led a group up into Minnesota; and Brigham Young, as the president of the Quorum of Twelve, went to Utah with the largest group, and there established the church in Salt Lake City. There were a number of other groups, but these were the principal ones that claim-

ed some right to the leadership of the church.

It is a known fact that, scattered over the land, there were many groups of Saints, some of which continued to carry on as best they could for a time. Among these were a group of Saints in Illinois. Here a number of branches of the church, the Round Prairie, Half Moon and Crow Creek, and others remained just as they were, refusing to follow any of the various leaders, but continued to function in their local capacity till 1852.

About this time (1852), the church in Utah, under the leadership of Brigham Young, came out in the open and proclaimed polygamy to be a tenet of the Gospel and an ordinance of the church. Along with this doctrine, which had long been secretly taught and practiced among many of the divisions of the church, came the teaching of other doctrines such as the Exaltation of Man, Adam God, Celestial Marriage, and other doctrines just as unscriptural as these. This open teaching and practicing of these false doctrines, seemed to arouse the more sober-minded men throughout the Restoration to a new interest in the welfare of this Church which had been established "by the will and commandment of God."

In the fall of 1857, a little group of Saints in Illinois sent two of their elders, Jedediah Owens and Granville Hedrick, to meet with a group of Saints who were meeting in conference at Blanchardville, or Zarahemla, Wisconsin, October 6, 1857. This group was known as the **New Organization**, and consisted of men from the various groups, mostly from the Strang and William B. Smith movement. That this effort to unite with this group of Saints was a failure was due to a resolution that this "New Organization" had adopted in 1852 in a conference held at Beloit, Wisconsin, from which we quote the following:

"Resolved, that the successor of Joseph Smith, Jr., as the Presiding High Priest in the Melchisedec Priesthood, must of necessity be the seed of Joseph Smith, Jr., in fulfillment of

the law and promises of God."

Reorganized Church History, Vol. 3, page 209.

This resolution establishes the doctrine of Lineal Priesthood, which doctrine the Saints in Illinois could not accept, believing that the Presidency of the High Priesthood came by way of qualification and worthiness rather than from birthright. That they had accepted the doctrine of the High Priesthood, and the Presidency of the Church is evidenced by the fact that Granville Hedrick was ordained to the office of the President of the High Priesthood after the pattern of the ordination of Joseph Smith, Jr., but be it said to the honor of this people, the so-called Hedrickites, in just a few years they became convinced of the fallacy of this doctrine, or practice, and discontinued it, finding no evidence of such an office in the Bible or the Book of Mormon; neither was there any such office provided in the original **Church of Christ** as established, "by the will and command of God" in 1830.

This marked the turning point of the Church of Christ. They had published their position on the question of plural marriage, and many of the other false doctrines that had crept into the church, in the Truth Teller, page 14, which was the first publication of the group of Saints in Illinois.

Eventually, they dropped the office of High Priest, finding no evidence of such an office in the New Testament of the Bible or the Book of Mormon after the time of Christ's crucifixion, or in the organization of the church in 1830, neither was there any provision for such an office made in the early revelations at the time they were printed for the first time. It was after the introduction of this office in the church that the need to change the revelations that had already been received and published became necessary. These saints in this group, known as the Church of Christ, believed, with Paul, that Christ was the last High Priest, who entered the Holy of Holies once and for all. (See Paul's letter to the Hebrews).

In like manner, this group of people dropped the name that had been given to the Church at Far West; the tragic events following so closely proved beyond question, this revelation, April 26, 1838, was another very evident mistake, and we feel sure none today would care to dispute our statement.

So this group of the Restoration, now known as the Church of Christ, has steadily retraced its steps back to the original foundation of April 6, 1830; back to the organization that was **"by the will and commandment of God;"** back to the original name, **"Church of Christ;"** back to the original order of the priesthood, as it was established in the beginning of the church which we find agrees with the New Testament in all its teachings.

In 1864, this group of Saints in Woodford County, Illinois, received a revelation directing them to dispose of their properties and go to Independence, Missouri, and the way would be opened up for them to purchase the property that had been dedicated as the place where the Temple was to stand. These Saints were obedient to this command, and in 1867 they came to Independence, Missouri.

This is significant in face of the fact that it had been deemed very dangerous for the Saints to return to the State of Missouri, because of the hostile feelings of the people against the so-called Mormons.

In March, 1867, they held their first conference in Independence. Two years later, 1869, they made the first purchase of that property known as the Temple Lot. They purchased lots 15, 17, 18, 19 and 22, in the Woodson Maxwell addition to Independence for the sum of \$425.00, and a little later they purchased lots 16, 20, and 21 for \$750.00. Some time later, they purchased a three-cornered piece of land lying just north of these lots from the City of Independence for \$75.00. This brings the total cost of the property now known as the Temple Lot up to \$1,250.00.

In the center, or near the center of the square thus formed by these lots, is the "spot" where the Temple

was to stand. Here was found the stone that had been placed there to mark the "spot" that had been dedicated by Joseph Smith, at the northeast corner of the Temple. (See John Whitmer's History).

The Church of Christ holds the Temple Lot property today by right of purchase; there is no mortgage or lien of any kind against this property; we do not hold this property by "squatter's rights," or any other right, except a clear title of purchase; neither are we holding this property for any other group of people, save the Church of Christ.

The church believes in the **original organization and teaching of the church as in 1830**. We believe in the building of the Temple and the gathering of the people before the great day of the Lord shall come upon us.

We believe there are many within the membership of the different groups of the Restoration Movement that have been deceived in the teaching of the doctrines of men, who would welcome the truth if it were possible to reach them; to such we offer an open door to come "ask for the old paths, wherein is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." Jer. 6:16.

The Difference

Quite often the question is asked: What is the difference between the Church of Christ, and the other divisions of the Restoration?

First, there is a difference in the belief of the different divisions as touching such subjects as: Baptism for the Dead, Sealing for Eternity, Exaltation of Man, and a few others, which the Church of Christ long ago took a stand against as published in the Truth Teller.

Besides this, there is much difference in organization. We believe in the organization as set forth in a revelation given to Joseph Smith in March, 1829 as it was originally published. "And thus if the people of this organization harden not their hearts, I will work a reformation among them, and I will put down all

lyings, and deceivings, and priestcrafts, and envyings, and strifes, and idolatries, and sorceries, and all manner of iniquities, **and I will establish my church, like unto the church which was taught by my disciples in the days of old.**"

This revelation is found in the Book of Commandments, chapter 4, in its original form; this revelation is also found in the Reorganized Doctrine and Covenants, but the paragraph just quoted is left out. The reason is very evident when we consider the change that had taken place by the time the Doctrine and Covenants was published.

Now the Church of Christ believes in just this kind of an organization; Eph. 4th chapter, verses 11, 12, 13, wherein the highest officer in the Apostolic church was that of the Apostle. This, perhaps, is the greatest difference, since out of this has grown the many difficulties that so definitely separate the various groups.

The Church of Christ does not accept the office of a First Presidency. Its introduction into the church came in a very interesting manner. As it is told by reliable historians of this event, it would seem that some of the ministry felt the need of one to preside over the priesthood, and so Joseph Smith was chosen as this one to preside over the priesthood, but it was only a comparatively short time before he was acclaimed President of the whole church.

Now came the difficulty, since many revelations had been already published which were in conflict with such an arrangement; this was when the many changes in the revelations **had to be made**, as was done not only in the wording, but also in the **date** as to when these revelations were received; the Utah church has long acknowledged these changes, as can be seen by reading the footnotes under the respective revelations where such changes occur.

The unscriptural office of President in the church is not accepted as a part of the original organization of the church by the Church of Christ; neither

is the office of High Priest.

We believe that the introduction of these offices in the church are the direct cause of much of the troubles and trials of the church. As the years have passed, more and more power has been vested in the office of Presidency. The presidency of the Utah Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has long had Supreme Control, while the movement in the Reorganized Church in 1925, wherein the president asked and did receive Supreme Directional Control, shows the danger in such an office.

Thus it will be seen: The difference is not in the teaching of the Gospel, but rather in the question of **Church government.**