

Pepperdine University

From the Selected Works of Jerry Rushford

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Recent Publications in Restoration History

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JERRY RUSHFORD

Christianity has always affirmed an intimate connection between the activity of God and the course of human history. We are forever indebted to the past. It is the source of our very identity. In the present moment, which changes as we live it, the past is all we know. Without a knowledge of the progress of Christianity in history, we have no understanding of who we are or how we came to be.

By telling us what our forefathers did, church history inspires us in two directions: to respect their achievements, great in their day, and to strive to equal their resourcefulness and courage. The chronicles of church history are a marvelous drama of thought, feeling and action.

One encouraging development among churches of Christ is the mounting interest in the history and thought of the Restoration Movement. The enthusiastic reception given to Bill Humble's film strip series entitled "Back to the Bible" is just one example of the growing awareness of the importance of our heritage.

The reprinting of the fourteen volumes of Barton Stone's *Christian Messenger* (1826-1844) and the forty-one volumes of Alexander Campbell's *Millennial Harbinger* (1830-1870) has been one of the most significant publishing ventures of the twentieth century. The publication of these old periodicals has placed a wealth of resource material within the reach of all. Every church that takes seriously the building of a church library should consider purchasing these valuable sets.

Among other recent works that ought to be widely circulated in the church are *Thomas M. Allen: Pioneer Preacher of Kentucky and Missouri* by Alvin Jennings and *Standing For Their Faith: A History of Churches of Christ in Tennessee 1900-1950* by William Woodson. The biography of Allen originated as an M.A. thesis at Butler University. It is based on extensive research into hundreds of nineteenth century periodicals and contains maps and photos. Woodson's excellent book is a revision of his doctoral dissertation at New Orleans. It is a well-documented and scholarly survey of one of the key states in the Restoration Movement.

The city of Nashville, Tennessee was the focus for two books that appeared within months of each other. *A Call to Remember: Chapters in Nashville Restoration History* by Robert Hooper and *Like a Meteor Across the Horizon: The Jesse B. Ferguson Story* by Johnny Tucker are both recommended reading. Tucker includes a reprint of the 1854 edition of Tolbert Fanning's *History and True Position of the Church of Christ in Nashville*.

Two long-awaited books will come off the press this fall. Volume III of Earl West's *The Search for the Ancient Order* will continue his history of the Restoration Movement by chronicling the years 1900 to 1918. Volume I traced the movement from 1800 to 1865, and Volume II covered the years from 1865 to 1900. A fourth volume is projected that will bring the story down to 1945. *Crying in the Wilderness: A Biography of David Lipscomb* by Robert Hooper will also be released

this fall. This 420-page book is an expansion of a doctoral dissertation at Peabody. Hooper has worked on this project off and on over a period of sixteen years, and his book will probably become the definitive biography of Lipscomb.

In addition to these published works, several unpublished theses have made important contributions in this field. Three recent M. A. theses at Abilene Christian University have been especially helpful: *A History of the Church of Christ: 1900-1925* by Douglas LeCroy; *A History of the Church of Christ in Dallas County, Texas Prior to 1900* by Stephen Ridgell; and *Lockean Epistemology and the Indwelling Spirit in the Restoration Movement* by Patrick Brooks. All three of these studies are deserving of publication.

Two works that are still in progress deserve mention. Fred Bailey is completing a doctoral dissertation at the University of Tennessee on *The Role of Women in the Disciples of Christ in the Nineteenth Century*, and Mike Wilson is writing an M. A. thesis for the Harding Graduate School of Religion on *A History of the Church of Christ in Little Rock, Arkansas 1900-1925*.

The time is ripe to challenge our members to discern anew the richness of our heritage in the Restoration Movement. One of our greatest continuing needs is for local church historians. Every congregation should have a well written history of its church life. We need someone in every congregation who will locate and preserve books, periodicals, pamphlets, photographs, manuscripts, papers, diaries, scrapbooks, minutes, letters and other historical materials related to churches, church leaders and church work. Such materials are now widely scattered in attics and closets, but they need to be sought out and preserved.

We will do well to heed the words of the scrawled graffiti: "The reason why history repeats itself is because no one hears the first time." Wise is the congregation that preserves its spiritual heritage for those who will come later.

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COMMUNION BREAD

We keep on hand regularly a supply of fresh, pure, unleavened bread for communion purposes. Eleven wafers in the small carton and three of these cartons to the large carton—all carefully sealed so it will keep indefinitely. Every congregation should have on hand a good supply at all times. Prices: Large carton, each \$3.00, plus \$1.50 postage and handling.

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