

THE LOCAL CHURCH (SHALL I PARTICIPATE?)

What is our responsibility to our local church congregation? If everyone participated to the same extent I do, would we even have congregational activities? As guided by the inspired Apostles, individual Christians of the New Testament participated with their congregation in several ways, mainly to:

1. Assemble regularly for religious edification, worship, and encouragement (Acts 2:42-46; 11:25-26; 15:30-32; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:18,20,33-34; 14:26-40).
2. Pool their money and labor to provide for needy members and for those whose work was the preaching of the gospel (Acts 4:32-35; 6:1-7; 11:29-30; Rom. 15:25-27; 1 Cor. 9:14; 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:7-9; 11:7-8; Phil. 4:15-16; 1 Tim. 5:16).
3. Address civil disputes, doctrinal issues, and disciplinary needs of the members (Acts 15:1-6; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 6:1-5).
4. Select leaders and representatives to oversee and administer these functions (Acts 6:1-6; 11:29-30; 15:1-6,22-29,30-32; 1 Cor. 16:3).

Christians were instructed to "*stand fast in ONE spirit, with ONE mind, striving TOGETHER for the faith*" (Phil. 1:27). Using various analogies, the Bible indicates we are "*knit TOGETHER*" (Col. 2:19), "*framed TOGETHER*", and "*built TOGETHER*" (Eph. 2:19-22), as "*living stones*" in a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:5, NIV). We are "*joined and held TOGETHER...as each part does its work*" (Eph. 4:16, NIV).

Although Christianity is deeply personal to each individual, God apparently intended for each Christian to participate with other Christians as a united body called a church (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:2; etc.). May God bless you in your service to Him and the church.

MIKE PANNELL
Coleman, OK

APOLOGIA

QUESTION: How can we reconcile the different times mentioned regarding Jesus' resurrection? One gospel account says "*at the rising of the sun*" and another says "*when it was yet dark*".

ANSWER: Accounts of the resurrection of our Lord recorded in the four accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John present beautiful insight into God's providence. They also bring to us assurance that we, too, might be resurrected after death to a new existence in the presence of God and His Son. But some find a problem in what they see as differences in these records. As to the time of day mentioned in regard to Jesus' resurrection:

-Matthew 28:1 states, "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week."

-Mark 16:1-2 records, "And when the Sabbath was past...very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun."

-Luke 24:1 says, "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre."

-John 20:1 tells us, "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre."

How could each of these writers be correct when they appear to give differing accounts?

This same situation occurs daily in our own lives and we accept it as very common and understandable. Four of us, for an example, are taking a journey from the Southeast part of the United States for a visit to Merida in Mexico. Coming from different places in the Southeast, we plan to meet and take our flight from Atlanta.

One of us from Nashville (250 miles to the northwest) will find it necessary to depart Nashville "when it was yet dark" (as stated by John).

Another coming from Chattanooga (only 120 miles north) may depart from his home "early in the morning" (as said by Luke).

The third traveler coming from Wedowee (just 70 miles away) will find it convenient to leave his town only "as it began to dawn" (as noted by Matthew).

But our fourth companion, only 25 miles away at Newnan, finds that he may leave for Atlanta "at the rising of the sun" (as recorded by Mark).

Each of these four travelers may describe the situation from his own perspective determined from how far away he was required to come.

Each of the four gospel writers wrote from their own observations as to the time the women approached Jesus' tomb:

- "Early, when it was yet dark"* (John 20:1).
- "Very early in the morning"* (Luke 24:1).
- "As it began to dawn"* (Matthew 28:1).
- "At the rising of the sun"* (Mark 16:2).

They departed while it was yet dark, very early in the morning, and as they approached the tomb it began to dawn, allowing them to arrive at the rising of the sun.

How beautifully the Scriptures harmonize, presenting insight and understanding possibly only by the hand of a Divine Being - our own heavenly Father.

HARRY COBB
P.O. Box 75
Wedowee, AL 36278

THE EARLIEST KNOWN CHURCH OF OUR LORD IN ENGLAND

This article refers to congregations which predate those in America. It is taken from an extemporaneous speech made at the request and in the presence of visiting American brethren (Carley and Lisa Conner, Elmo Conner, and Harry Cobb) by our esteemed British brother in Christ, Albert E. Winstanley. This speech was made April 6, 1997 from the pulpit of the meetinghouse at Tottlebank, in northwest England. But this printed copy can in no way allow you to enjoy Brother Winstanley's beautiful Scottish tones and inflections. The seating arrangement in this well preserved building, like many in those earlier days, is with separated stalls usually occupied by families. Outside in the cemetery are many grave sites dating from the 1700's, including the unmarked grave of Brother Gabriel Camelford, who is mentioned in Brother Winstanley's address.

-HARRY COBB

Sometimes members of churches of Christ who have particular interest in what's called the Restoration Movement, assume that churches of Christ in modern times came into being through the activities of Alexander and Thomas Campbell, Barton W. Stone, and other great servants of the Lord of yesteryear. In fact, many churches of Christ came into existence because of the

activities of good and great men long before the time of Campbell and Stone.

We are today in the meetinghouse of the church in Tottlebank, some seven or eight miles outside the town of Ulverston. And the first church of Christ that we know about in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, was started here in the year 1669. The story of its beginning is fascinating, indeed.

This was the time when Charles II was King of England. Before, if you remember from your history lessons, there was Charles I who was beheaded because of the Puritans under the governments of Oliver Cromwell. Well, this is the story that concerns Tottlebank. During the time of Cromwell this period was called the Commonwealth, and the Puritan Party was very much in the ascendancy. And many parsons or preachers in the Church of England were Puritan preachers. They were remarkable people. They really believed that this book was the word of God in the full sense. They preached and proclaimed and taught many of the principles that we as members of churches of Christ hold dear today. However, when Charles II ascended the throne after the end of Cromwell's Commonwealth, laws were brought in insisting on more strict adherence to the doctrines of the Church of England which had been very much influenced by the Catholic Church. And there was an oath of allegiance required of every Church of England parson in any Church of England in any part of the country. The oath of allegiance, a declaration of allegiance, was a solemn vow in the presence of God that the preacher concerned believed without question everything taught by the Church of England doctrine, and that he would preach, maintain, and uphold that. Now many of these Puritan parsons couldn't in good conscience do that, because they were simply preaching and teaching what they understood the word of God to teach. They were true to the Bible - Bible believing and Bible teaching men. About three hundred of these Puritan parsons refused to make this declaration, so they lost their livings. That meant no house to live in, no support, no recognition in the community, and they became outcasts. One of those men was a man called Gabriel Camelford. This particular preacher in this area became an itinerant preacher. He traveled all over the area preaching the gospel as we preach it today. When people came to believe the message, he assured himself that they repented of their sins, and on their confession of faith he baptized them into Christ. He preached all over this area called the Furness District and gathered quite a group of people around him who said they were Christians only, and as a community they were simply the church of Christ. With regard to their standard of

faith, they said that their standard of faith and teaching were simply the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament. They would not accept any denominational standard of faith, creed, or confession of faith or any denominational name. They were simply and solely Christians, they said, believing and teaching what the New Testament maintained.

One Lord's Day in 1669, Gabriel Camelford gathered his brothers and sisters around him and they met here in Tottlebank and they declared in a statement of faith, that they were the church of Christ believing simply in New Testament teaching and seeking to be Christians as they were in New Testament times. That was the first church of Christ in England, as I said earlier, long before the time of the Campbells, or Barton W. Stone, or those grand men of that particular era.

From that church in Tottlebank, six other congregations came into existence in this district called the Furness District of England. And one of those, the church in Kirkby, was started directly from this congregation. The other five were started subsequent to the Kirkby congregation. It was told me, indeed I read it in one history of the movement, that a number of families from Kirkby, in Furness, which must be perhaps eight miles away from here, used to walk to worship from Kirkby to Tottlebank those eight miles and back again every Sunday morning. And then would you believe it, they came back in the evening for evening service and did the trip again, a round trip. So, if you multiply eight by four, you may say the families walked thirty-two miles to worship God on the Lord's day from Kirkby to Tottlebank. Well, according to Mary Cox, who is relating what her father told her, some of the people who did that, after a while began to ask themselves, "Why should we walk eight miles there and eight miles back when there is a group of us anyway living in Kirkby? We might as well have a church of our own." And according to Mary Cox's father, one of the old brothers as they walked along said, "Look, we've been listening today to yon [two words unclear] yon beardless youth telling us what the word of God teaches, why don't we stay at home and teach one another in Kirkby?" And they did that and started the church in Kirkby. From the church in Kirkby, then, came the church in Ulverston, the church in Askam, the church in Dalton, the church in Barrow, and the church in Urswick - five more congregations. So, the church started in 1669 was responsible for six more congregations coming into being in this area. The history of the churches of Christ is much earlier than the Campbell-Stone Movement. And believe me, if it be true, and true it be, that the same seed planted in the right soil and given

the proper conditions will always bring forth the same results. Then, the seed of the word of God, planted in honest and good heart will always bring forth simply and solely a Christian - nothing more, nothing less. Nothing more or less is necessary - the Lord wants His people to be simply Christians. And you may be sure, if you could look into the whole of history since New Testament times that in many, many places there have been those who have believed the word of God, who have repented of their sins, who have given their life to the Lord Jesus Christ in the obedience of baptism, buried with Him through baptism into death, rising to newness of life, and have been simply and solely Christians. When a number have gathered together they have been simply a church or congregation of Christ. And I am persuaded that that has been true since Pentecost and it will continue to be true until the Lord Jesus Christ comes again. And you know as well as I, when He comes again He will come for His church, His people, because He is the head of the church and He is the Saviour of the body, that is the church. Praise be to God for the grace that made us members of the body, the church, the family, the kingdom, the flock for which our Lord Jesus Christ died. He purchased His church with His own life blood. Thanks be to God!

ALBERT E. WINSTANLEY
Tottlebank, England

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
July 1 - 3	Willow Oaks Russell Springs, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
July 5 - 14	Scotland Neck Scotland Neck, SC	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
July 8 - 10	Chapel Hill Pell City, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
July 8 - 10	Antioch Greenup, IL	Mike Daniel (Douglasville, GA)

July 10 - 15	Temple Hill Smithdale, MS	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
July 15 - 17	Antioch Douglasville, GA	Chad Prince (Oxford, AL)
July 17 - 22	Oak Grove Woodland, AL	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
July 18 - 22	Owens Road Prattville, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
July 22 - 24	Junction City Junction City, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
July 22 - 24	Dowell Hill Columbus, IN	Mike Daniel (Douglasville, GA)
July 24 - 29	Napoleon Woodland, AL	Hunter Bulger (Fort Deposit, AL)
July 29 - 31	Verona Verona, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)