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UNDENOMINATIONAL INFORMATION
RALLY TRACT—Series 1.

*Are you familiar with what the Bible
says about the origin and organization
of the New Testament Church?*

Read this with an open Bible

The Origin and Organization of the New Testament Church

by

L. D. ANDERSON, Minister
Fort Worth

"THE ORIGIN, FOUNDATION AND ORGANIZATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH"

L. D. Anderson, Ft. Worth, Texas

The Church is of divine, not human, origin. Deity bears responsibility both for the concept and the construction. Through Isaiah came this promise: "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone of sure foundation." (Isa. 28:16.) Jesus affirmed a personal activity, saying, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18b.) Deity planned it, produced it, promises to preserve it.

Paul identifies the "Precious corner stone" of Isaiah with the Christ of the Gospels, writing, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:11.) Similarly he wrote to the Ephesians: "Ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone." (Eph. 2:19, 20.)

That there is a divinely designed and developed organization was affirmed by Paul when, in writing of the Church as the "Body of Christ," he said of the Lord,

“He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering unto the building up of the body of Christ.” (Eph. 4:11, 12.) Though not exhaustive this list is significant.

It is generally understood that apostles and prophets were given by the Lord to the Church at the first to insure its establishment and temporarily direct its life. They possessed special authority and power. Their work resulted in the effecting of an organization which ultimately resulted in their own elimination. The permanent officary of the Church of apostolic times consisted of three fairly distinct groups.

EVANGELISTS.—Preaching is fundamental to Christianity. It was a conspicuous part of the work of the apostles. However there was need of a special group charged with primary responsibility for this work. These were sometimes called evangelists and sometimes ministers. To Timothy Paul wrote: “Be thou sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill thy ministry.” (2 Tim. 4:5.) The title was applied to Philip. (Acts 21:8.) Its synonym, Minister, is applied to Timothy (1 Tim.

4:6), Tychicus (Col. 4:7), Apollos (1 Cor. 3:5), Epaphras (Col. 1:7), and John Mark (Acts 13:5). Such a ministry is recognized by all evangelical Christians.

ELDERS.—A variety of names designated these office bearers. They were called elders because men of mature years and experience were chosen. They were called bishops, overseers, pastors and teachers according as their work was contemplated. It is noteworthy that there was a plurality of elders, or bishops, in each church, instead of one over a plurality of churches. (Cf. Titus 1:5, Acts 20:17, 28.) Very exacting qualifications were required. (Cf. 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:5.) These men were charged with the spiritual oversight of the congregation. Hence the injunction to the Church: "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account." (Heb. 13:17.) Likewise Paul's counsel to elders: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the Church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28.)

DEACONS.—That each congregation set apart certain of their number under this title seems clear. It is implied, in

Paul's salutation to the Church at Philippi: "All the saints in Christ Jesus that are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons": (Phil. 1:1). In the application of the term to individuals, as, "Phoebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the Church that is at Cenchreae" (Rom. 16:1); and the listed qualifications of those, both male and female, who serve the Church in this capacity. (1 Tim. 3:8-13.) Many believe the first deacons were the seven chosen in Jerusalem under apostolic instruction. (Acts 6:1-6.)

The qualifications exacted and the fragmentary records of service indicate that their duties involved temporal matters, though by no means precluding participation in spiritual.

It is confidently believed that these three groups, possessing the stipulated qualifications, fully consecrated in co-operative effort, offer possibilities of adjustment sufficient to supply all needs of a growing church in a changing world. Conformity to the apostolic pattern cannot be displeasing to the Lord.

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