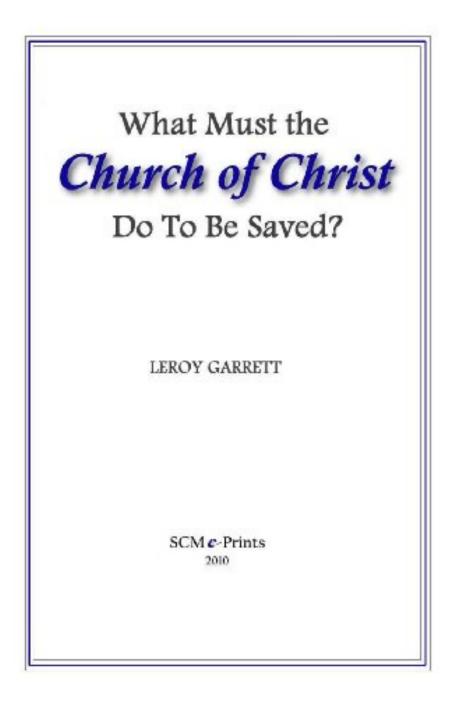


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About the Author

Dr. Leroy Garrett is a graduate of Abilene Christian University, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Harvard University where he earned the Ph.D. He is a retired professor of philosophy, history, and religion and has taught at several colleges, including Bethany College, Texas Woman's University, and Dallas Christian College. For thirty-four years he edited the monthly journal, Restoration Review, following six years as editor of Bible Talk. He is the author of The Stone-Campbell Movement, the story of the American Restoration Movement, published by College Press, and an autobiographical work, A Lover's Quarrel, published by A.C.U. Press. He has lectured at colleges and churches of all three traditions of the Stone-Campbell restoration movement and served on executive committees of both the World Convention of Churches of Christ and the European Evangelistic Society. In 1993, Pepperdine University presented him with the Distinguished Christian Service Award in recognition of his work in "encouraging the reformation and renewal of the church" and his long years as an "enthusiastic promoter of unity and openness in the Stone-Campbell Movement." He continues to publish occasional essays under the title Soldier On! These may be found at LeroyGarrett.org, along with most of his other writings.

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While not questioning in the least the genuineness of the faith or personal salvation of members of Churches of Christ, the author raises questions as to what these churches must do as a denomination, if that term be allowed, to be "saved" as a viable witness to the Christian faith in today's world. What must it do to save its own people from boredom, mediocrity, and irrelevance? What must it do to escape from its legalistic, sectarian, and isolationist past and become a meaningful part of the larger Christian world? What must it do to be true to the Bible and to its own heritage in the Stone-Campbell unity movement and become truly ecumenical, truly catholic, truly holy, and truly apostolic?

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Also now available from the Kindle Store by Leroy Garrett, "A Lover's Quarrel: My Pilgrimage of Freedom in Churches of Christ," published Dec. 27, 2011, by ACU Press (search for ASIN number: B006QQ0AWK).

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An interesting question with an uneven answer

By E. Baxter

I have been a Christian and member of the church of Christ for many years. I've lived in many areas of the United States, attended many congregations of the chuch of Christ, and widely visited many others. I've seen many things the church does right, and areas where the church struggles. Brother Garret's book asks us to look at uncomfortable truths about ourselves. I quickly devoured the book and found myself heartily agreeing with about half and strongly disagreeing with about half. I felt the book started off strong with topics such as admitting we've been wrong sometimes and repenting of sometimes our divisive actions. Certainly Christians of any ilk are not gifted with perfect knowledge and should strive to be together in Christian unity, to act or think differently would be hypocritical. I appreciated the chapters about recovering our heritage and history revitalized through the Stone-Campbell movement and resurrecting the spirit of J.W. McGarvey (a personal favorite). The criticisms here are often, but not always, well landed and should serve as great conversation starters for self-examination. My wife and I have already been talking about various aspects this book brings up in long, detailed discussions that are very interesting and helpful.

The second half of the book I still found very interesting and thought-provoking but the arguments here are markedly lacking compared to those earlier in the book. For instance, brother Garret asks us to cease being male-dominated. As with everything, each generation must re-examine Scripture to understand the truth revealed therein, and this is one area that is particularly controversial right now. However, instead of a call to re-examine this issue, brother Garret posits that we should simply cease any gender-role distinctions without offering much in the way of Scriptural discussion. No in-depth Scriptural study is gone through here to fully support the author's solid declaration, rather he gives a cursory sampling of his personal understanding of the issue and his desire to see the church of Christ be what he considers more relavant through cultural assimilation. This desire to fit into society's norms does not conform to Biblical teaching. I agree with brother Garret in that it's a discussion well worth having, but his emphatic conclusion to begin the chapter seems to be born from a desire to close debate instead of engender study.

I whole heartedly agree with brother Garret's expressed desires to attain assurance of our own salvation, obtain grace not legalism, and treat the good news as actual good news. However, he belives we should come to terms with our status as a denomination. To the extent this is true we should root it out and seek to be Christians only. This, I believe, is partially and unintentionally responsible for us becoming detached from our reformation history, but as the heros of that movement were constantly pointing out, we should seek to adhere to God's word, not the creeds and divisions of men.

The book concludes with some examples of congregations that brother Garret belives are "saving" themselves from the problems he's been outlining. The problem here is that these congregations are making many changes, not chiefly with concern for Biblical teaching, but in a drive for preceived cultural relevance. I believe this is a misguided path followed by many well-intentioned people. I understand the desire to draw people into the church by making it attractive to them, but if we look identical to the world Christians are called to be in but not of, then how will people find safe haven from that world? The church should seek to be relevant (this is a property of truth after all), but not at the price of diluted conformity, lest we risk inefficacy.

I very much appreciate brother Garret's efforts here. The topics brought up in this book need to discussed and debated constantly seeking to find and attain the truth in love. There is much liberty in Christ; certainly enough that we can disagree on particulars yet still be brothers and sisters clinging to our common faith in our common Savior.

22 of 25 people found the following review helpful.Why not join the Disciples of Christ?By RobertTo its credit the book was clearly written and penetrating in its analysis. Most of the criticisms were well stated and Church of Christ members would do well to pay attention, and not to simply diss the author.

The major problem is that he offers no solution. Sure, he gives 20 short chapters of suggestions, but they all essentially say, "Let's stop judging so much, and listen to others." Good advice, to be sure, but why write a whole book, albeit a short book, if that is all you have to say. Most of his suggestions have essentially been made hundreds of times over within the fellowship.

Garrett has nothing good to say about the Churches of Christ (that is, anything that distinguishes them from Disciples). His only agreement with them involves the tradition of Christian liberty ("in non-essentials, liberty"); but he constantly chides them for not applying this principle to themselves.

His "plan of salvation" is tantamount to becoming Disciples, and since that denomination is faring worse in membership than the Church of Christ, this hardly qualifies as "being saved".

Garrett's "solutions" range all over the map, from becoming like a liberal mainline Protestant, to espousing "Protestant Evangelical" theology, or what not. He is justifyably upset at the stubbornnes of some of the old-timers, but all he is doing is shouting, "just change something", be like this group or that, but there is no coherence to his arguments.

I am presently attending an independent Christian Church, and have mixed feelings about the Restoration Movement. But I still see value in the Church of Christ, a willingness to be counter cultural and a thread of serious Bible scholarship that is a healthy alternative to the "accept Christ into your heart" theology prevalent among Evangelicals. This is truly worth saving. Merely acting like Disciples of Christ wanabees is not the answer. Garrett can do better.

33 of 40 people found the following review helpful.

A very Biblical concept

By Amazon Customer

Contrary to what other have said, Leroy Garrett is very biblical and accurate in this book. Churches of Christ have for far too long had a distorted view of the church and of unity. I have been very encouraged by the book and believe that anyone with an open mind and a clear understanding of the Bible will agree. God calls us to unity--not division and exclusivism.

Read the book for yourself.

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