



The
Restoration
Movement

Speaking as the Oracles of God

L. A. STAUFFER

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By L. A. Stauffer

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Chapter 1

Historical Background

Introduction

Jesus promised and built His church in the first century (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22–23), which is the body of obedient believers over which He alone rules as head. Before the close of the New Testament, the Spirit warned that an apostasy would occur (Acts 20:29–30; 1 Timothy 4:1–3), where brethren would speak perverse things, draw away disciples after them, and depart from the faith. That apostasy, including the rise of Catholicism and Protestant denominationalism, provides the historical background that both demanded and provoked the Restoration Movement.

A brief look at that background is the subject of our first lesson.

Catholicism: An Apostate Perversion of Christianity

Bishop/Pope

The apostasy showed its first signs in the distinction made early in the second century between bishops and presbyters. Over a period of centuries bishops gave rise to metropolitans in capital cities of Roman provinces, then to patriarchs in the chief cities of the empire, and finally a universal bishop, the pope of Rome. All of this was accomplished by 606 A.D.

Clergy/Sacraments

During those same centuries, bishops and presbyters were exalted to the status of a special priesthood by which access to grace was possible only by their administration of what came to be called sacraments. The sacraments were systematized and set in place by the time of Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225?–1274).

Mass/Mystery

Alongside the organizational apostasy developed a mystical view of the Lord's Supper in which the elements of bread and fruit of the vine were viewed as containing the actual body and blood of Jesus. This perversion began as early as Justin Martyr (150 A.D.) and was fully defined in the doctrine of transubstantiation at the Council of Trent (1540s A.D.).

Baptism/Sprinkling

Mainly in cases of sickness or other demands of convenience the original practice of immersion for baptism was shortened to pouring water on a candidate and finally to the present practice of sprinkling. This began in cases of emergency as early as the third century.

Penance/Indulgences

Out of all this perversion the straw that broke the camel's back, along with priestly immorality and corruption, and provoked the Reformation Movement was the sale of indulgences in connection with the sacrament of penance. This amounted to the sale of relief from purgatorial suffering and, in some cases, the actual forgiveness of sins.

Protestantism: A Proliferation of Denominational Division

Luther; Zwingli/Calvin; Henry VIII; Conrad Grebel

Fundamentally, four wings of the reformation of Catholicism developed over the early decades of the 1500s.

Lutheran

Out of the original work of Martin Luther in Germany came the various sects of the Lutheran church and the Moravian brethren.

Reformed

Out of the work of Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin in Switzerland developed the various "Reformed" churches and the variety of Presbyterians.

Anglican

Out of the revolt of Henry VIII against the authority of the pope arose the Church of England or what is sometimes called the Anglican church. From the movement also came the Protestant Episcopal church, Methodist church, Wesleyan churches, Nazarene, Quakers, Puritans, and Congregationalists which later aligned themselves with the Reformed churches.

Anabaptist

Conrad Grebel questioned infant baptism and started the Anabaptist (baptism again) movement which spawned the Mennonites, Amish, and various Baptist churches.

Principles, Flaws, and Results

The chief ideas or principles of the Reformation Movement were:

1. The authority of the Scriptures
2. The priesthood of all believers
3. Salvation by faith alone

By these principles they fought the authority of the pope, the corruption and role of the priesthood, and the earning of salvation by the works of penance. The fatal flaw of reformation theology was the concept of salvation by “faith only.” This rendered unimportant and unnecessary any aspect of Christianity but trust in Christ for salvation by grace.

The result of “faith only” salvation guaranteed the proliferation of religious denominationalism into a thousand divisive bodies. Those quickly arose where political freedom supported their rights to separateness, especially in the new world, the Americas.

Restoration: A Search for the Ancient Order

Men bent on restoration saw the divisions of denominationalism as contrary to Jesus’ prayer for unity in John 17:20–21. They also believed denominationalism contradicted the teachings of the apostles in 1 Corinthians 1:10–13 and Ephesians 4:1–6. Those championing the Restoration Movement pursued as a plan for unity the restoring of the ancient order and practices of the primitive church. This unity, they argued, calls, first, for the elimination of all human creeds and traditions of men. Their effort gave birth to the plea and motto: “Let us speak where the Scriptures speak and be silent where the Scriptures are silent” (Thomas Campbell).

Some of the men who moved in this direction that we will study in some detail included: John Glas, Robert Sandeman, Robert and James Haldane, Elias Smith, Abner Jones, Barton W. Stone, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, and Walter Scott.

Luke 8:11 and Matthew 13:19 speak of the word of God as the seed of the kingdom. Since every seed produces after its own kind it was believed if the word of God, the seed, was sown into good and honest hearts, the kingdom or church of the first century could be reproduced in the 19th, 20th or any other century.

Conclusion

When men of the Restoration Movement went back to the Bible and saw the error of “faith only,” they found that several matters beyond faith must characterize the people of God. They saw the importance of terms of entrance into the church, also the significance of the name, the organization, the work, and the worship of the church.

Discussion

1. What did Jesus promise to build? Where is this recorded? Who is the head of the church? How do you know? Men would arise and speak what? What would they do with disciples? They would depart or fall away from what?
2. What initial change ultimately led to the pope of Rome? Bishops and presbyters became a special what? What did they administer? What happened to the Lord’s Supper? What did baptism become? Why? What principally led to the Reformation?
3. Who were the four main men of the Reformation? What groups came out of Luther’s work? Zwingli/Calvin? Henry VIII? Conrad Grebel? What were the chief ideas of the Reformation? What was the fatal flaw? What resulted?

4. What Biblical idea does denominationalism violate? What did men of the Restoration pursue to bring about unity? What did they believe must be eliminated? What was their motto? What Biblical principle justifies restoration?

5. What did men of the Restoration consider important beyond “faith only?”

Chapter 2

Early British Movements

Introduction

Although the concept of restoring the primitive church was not unknown to the Reformation era (1500s), the American 19th century restoration had a sounder basis and made a more lasting impression. Its earliest roots are found among British preachers and theologians.

Before they came to America both Thomas and Alexander Campbell, significant American restorationists, had opportunity to hear and assess the ideas of these British preachers. These ideas were also brought by others to America where they touched the life of Walter Scott, an associate of the Campbells.

The men of Britain associated with the restoration idea were not as equally devoted to the unity of all religious bodies through this return to first-century Christianity. The idea of unity was not a significant point of emphasis with them.

This lesson looks at the principal men of Britain who were devoted to restoring the primitive church: John Glas, Robert Sandeman, Robert and James Haldane, and Greville Ewing.

John Glas and Robert Sandeman

John Glas

John Glas was born in 1695 and died in 1773. He was a Presbyterian minister in the church of Scotland until 1728, “when he adopted independent views and formed churches in most of the large towns in Scotland.”¹ “Glas withdrew from the church of Scotland primary because he had become convinced it was wrong in having a connection with the state and in having synods and other religious law-making bodies to fix standards of doctrine for the whole church and exercise discipline over it, whereas the New Testament church had none of these things.”²

1 *Journey in Faith*, Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker, p. 94.

2 *The Disciples of Christ: A History*, Winfred Earnest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, p. 47.

“His great concern was with the procedure by which the autonomous local congregation should order its affairs, conduct its public worship, establish its ministry, and discipline its members, all in strict accordance with the practice of the apostolic churches depicted in the New Testament”.³ Glas believed the Lord’s Supper ought to be observed more frequently than annually or monthly, “as the first disciples came together on the first day of the week for breaking bread”; they ought “to be followers of the first churches, being guided and directed by the Scriptures alone.” “They found in every one of them (primitive churches) there was a plurality of elders.”⁴

Robert Sandeman

Robert Sandeman was the son-in-law of John Glas. He was born in 1718 and died in 1771. He was a “theological thinker and writer of great power. His works were widely read and highly regarded by many.”⁵

“Robert Sandeman was a much more striking character than Glas, and the development of his thought offered an additional parallel to one point which was prominent in the position of Mr. Campbell and the Disciples of Christ. Sandeman argued that saving faith is simply an act of man’s mind by which he believes testimony concerning Jesus Christ.”⁶ This was a significant departure from Calvinism, a fundamental view of Alexander Campbell, and a point of much contention with the Baptists.

“He afterward went to America, founded a congregation at Danbury, Connecticut, in 1763, and remained there the rest of his life. This congregation affiliated with the Disciples shortly after 1840. There were probably never more than twenty to thirty churches of this order in Great Britain or America.”⁷ These groups were often known as “Glasites,” “Sandemanians” or “Old Scotch Independents.”

The chief importance of these men was their stress upon restoring the practice of the primitive church, an emphasis found in the Campbells’ writings and in other American movements. The idea of reproducing the New Testament church, including the weekly Lord’s Supper, a plurality of elders in each church, and faith based on testimony, was long circulated in Great Britain by these men and others before Thomas and Alexander Campbell were born in Scotland, moved to Ireland, and came to America.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

4 *Memoir of John Glas*, xii, quoted by Garrison/DeGroot, p. 47.

5 Garrison/DeGroot, *Disciples...*, p. 48.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 48.

7 McAllister/Tucker, *Journey...*, p. 94.

“The outstanding difference was the total absence of the unity motive in Sandeman and its primacy with Campbell. The Sandeman churches were completely preoccupied with the duty of restoring practices of the primitive church. They had no interest in unity, and not enough evangelistic zeal to keep themselves alive.”⁸

Robert and James Haldane

The Haldane brothers were wealthy members of the Church of Scotland. Robert lived from 1764 to 1842 and James was born in 1768 and died in 1851. They were “disgusted by the formalism and sterility of the established church”⁹ and “spent their money freely in promoting an evangelistic revival in Scotland and in building tabernacles in Edinburgh and Glasgow.”¹⁰ The Haldanes invited Rowland Hill, a famous evangelist of the time, to hold meetings in Scotland. They also built a tabernacle in Edinburgh to serve as the center for this work.

This is significant because of the connection that Rowland Hill had at Rich Hill, the home of Thomas Campbell. More on this later. Hill never left the church of England, of which he was a deacon, but the Haldanes “could not find scope in their activities with the old church. . . . In 1799 they withdrew from the Church of Scotland and organized an independent church in Edinburgh.” James Haldane, at age 31, became the church’s minister and continued in the capacity for 51 years.

“On the recommendation of Mr. Greville Ewing, a former Church of Scotland minister who was in charge of the Haldane’s seminary in Glasgow, they adopted congregational independence as being the order of the New Testament churches and introduced the weekly observances of the Lord’s Supper for the same reason.” The name Ewing must be remembered for his relationship to Alexander Campbell at the University of Glasgow in 1808.

After the beginning of the 19th century the Haldanes “moved rapidly toward a fuller expression of the conviction that any reformation of the church required exact conformity to the apostolic teaching and practice.” In 1805 J. A. Haldane published a volume the full title of which exhibits this conviction fully developed: *A View of the Social Worship and Ordinances Observed by the First Christians, drawn from the Scriptures Alone; Being an Attempt to Enforce Their Divine Obligation; and to Represent the Guilty and Evil Consequences of*

8 Garrison/DeGroot, *Disciples...*, p. 50.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

10 McAllister/Tucker, *Journey...*, p. 95.

Neglecting Them. Note the emphasis on the first century practice and the authority of the Scriptures.

“This book deals especially with church organization and offices, ordinances, discipline, and the elements which enter into public worship.” The first couple of chapters show the direction and emphasis of Haldane’s search. Chapter one: “There is reason to presume that the New Testament furnishes instruction concerning every part of the worship and conduct of Christian societies, as well as concerning the faith and practices of individuals.” Chapter two: “All Christians are bound to observe the universal and approved practices of the first churches recorded in the scriptures.”¹¹

They, at first, defended sprinkling by example of circumcision and the ‘everlasting covenant,’ but, “in 1807 the Haldanes became convinced that the scriptural form of baptism was immersion and abandoned the practice of baptizing infants.”¹² “Several other Haldanean churches were established in Scotland and a few in America. It is impossible to say how many because they did not call themselves by that name.”¹³

The importance and relationship of these men to our study are seen in their ideas of “restoration” and “scriptural authority” and their contact with the Campbells and Walter Scott.

Conclusion

Out of the work of these men came the idea of restoration, congregational independence, weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper, authority of the scriptures alone, baptism by immersion, plurality of elders in each congregation, and faith by the evidence of testimony. All these gain emphasis in various American movements toward restoration.

The influence of these men who came to America is not fully known, but what is known is that both Thomas and Alexander Campbell had access to many of these ideas before they came from Ireland to America. Also, that Walter Scott had contact with an “Old Scotch Independent” church in New York and worshiped with a “Haldanean” group in Pittsburgh. More on this when we study these men in detail.

11 This and the above quotes on this page are from Garrison/DeGroot, *Disciples...*, p. 51–52.

12 McAllister/Tucker, p. 96.

13 Garrison/DeGroot, p. 52.

Discussion

1. Where does the American restoration find its roots? What three American men were influenced by British preachers? What idea of the American restoration did British theologians not emphasize?
2. What are the dates of John Glas? What church was he associated with? Why did he leave the church of Scotland? What was his greatest concern? List several basic views he held.
3. How was Sandeman related to Glas? What were his dates? How does faith come according to him? When did he come to America? What did he do in 1763? What was the chief importance of Glas and Sandeman's work? List several pre-Campbell ideas. What did Sandeman and Glas think of Presbyterian baptism?
4. What were the dates of each brother? What disgusted them the most? What famous evangelist did they support? When did these two men leave the church of Scotland? Who ran their seminary? Who had a connection with Ewing? What idea is emphasized in the first two chapters of J. A. Haldane's book? What did they learn about baptism in 1807?