

LESSON TEN: THE MATURE AMERICAN RESTORATION MOVEMENT

A. AS OF THE MID-19TH CENTURY, WHAT WAS THE POSITION OF THE RESTORATIONISTS ON

1. **The most important problems (not necessarily the same as item 3 below)**
 - a. What did they see as the two or three major problems among people who called themselves Christians?
 - b. During the early part of the movement, what was their proposed solution to these problems?
 - c. Did the solution they sought to implement change as the movement matured?
1. **Civil and social conditions which enabled and constrained their approach and actions**
 - a. In what settings was their message most effective?
 - b. Could they have done the same things, with effective results, in Europe, or along the Atlantic seaboard?
 - c. What socio-economic groups responded most readily to their message?
2. **Comparing what they saw in the religious world around them to the apostolic order (contrast item 1 above)**
 - a. What did they see as the most glaring differences?
 - b. How did they confront those differences in their polemics and their evangelical appeal?
 - c. How did they confront those differences in the way they organized themselves?
3. **Depravity, free will and personal choice**
 - a. How important an issue was this one?
 - b. Did they arrive at a solution easily, or was it a struggle which took some time to resolve?
 - c. What concepts from the Enlightenment and the American experience figured into their answer?
5. **Methods and conditions of admission to the Christian community**
 - a. According to the leaders of the movement, what is it that makes a person a Christian?
 - b. What steps did they decide must be followed to obtain entrance into the kingdom?
 - c. Did they think that there is an “invisible church” which is distinct from the “visible church”?
 - d. What did they decide should be the relationship of restorationists to the denominations?
 - e. Did they think that a person who was baptized as an adult “into a denomination” should be “re-baptized”?
6. **Church and civil government**
 - a. According to the Restoration leaders, what role should or may civil government play in helping the church?
 - b. What role did they think the church should or may play in helping civil government?
 - c. What major event in American history challenged their view of the relationship of church and government?
7. **Relative importance of church organization and structure compared to individual work and sanctification**
 - a. In their view, is the church people, or is it a structural institution?
 - b. What did they decide is the “correct name” of the church?
 - c. How did they resolve the question, should restoration focus primarily on individual life or church structure?
8. **What means the church in a corporate sense may employ to perform the common work of its members**
 - a. Did they agree whether church work should be restricted to the efforts of individual congregations?
 - b. Did they agree whether a congregation, corporately, has responsibilities beyond those of its individual members?
 - c. Are there works God expects of His people which a single congregation is inadequate to perform?
9. **The proper approach for understanding God’s will for the body of Christ.**
 - a. What role did they allow the “established church” in determining the meaning of scripture?
 - b. What was their position on the applicability of:
 - (1) Specific commands given to individuals and churches in the New Testament?
 - (2) Examples of certain types of activities recorded in the New Testament?
 - (3) Reasoning about what is stated in order to infer the significance of what is not explicit or is implied?
 - (4) Commands or examples found in the Old Testament?
 - c. What importance, if any, did they attach to the use of the actual language used in the scriptures?
 - d. What was their position with regard to the usefulness of “creeds and councils”?
 - e. What did they consider to be the chief benefit to be derived from their approach?

B. WHAT DID THEY MEAN BY

1. **“Speak where the Bible speaks.”**
2. **“Be silent where the Bible is silent.”**
3. **“In matters of faith, unity; in matters of judgment, liberty; in all matters, charity”**

C. THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW

1. The most important problems

- a. Can we see that they failed to address some problems they might have needed to confront?
- b. What problems that they faced in the 19th century do we face early in the 21st century?

2. Civil and social conditions which enabled and constrained their approach and actions

- a. In what settings is our message most effective?
- b. What socio-economic groups respond most readily to that message?

1. Comparing what they saw in the religious world around them to the apostolic order

- a. How different were they, really, from the other self-proclaimed “Christian” groups around them?
- b. How might they, without compromise, have modified their approach to make their message more effective?
- c. How might we modify our view of the religious world around us to make our witness more effective?

2. Depravity, free will and personal choice

- a. Do we consider this an important issue today; should we regard it as more important than we do?
- b. What is the modern challenge to the efficacy of human decision-making?

5. Methods and conditions of admission to the Christian community

- a. Were all the followers of this Restoration movement actually New Testament Christians?
- b. If some of them were not, what do we think kept them from being New Testament Christians?
- c. Is there an “invisible church” which is distinct from the “visible church”?

6. Church and civil government

- a. What do we generally hold to be a Christian’s civic responsibility?
- b. What do we generally believe that Christians have a right to expect of government?
- c. What kind of government, and what kind of leaders, do we generally expect Christians to support?
- d. What kind of effort do we expect Christians to expend in order to obtain that kind of civic leadership?

7. Relative importance of church organization and structure compared to individual work and sanctification

- a. Is the church people, or is it a structural institution?
- b. What names would we feel comfortable using to refer to the Annandale church?
- d. What makes us New Testament Christians: our lives, or membership in a correctly organized congregation?

8. What means the church in a corporate sense may employ to perform the common work of its members

- a. Does a congregation, corporately, have responsibilities beyond those of its individual members?
- b. Are there works God expects of His people which are better undertaken by a group than by individuals?

9. The proper approach for understanding God’s will for the body of Christ.

- a. How do we generally understand the statement, “We speak where the Bible speaks”?
- b. How do we generally understand the statement, “Where the Bible is silent, we are silent”?
- c. How do we generally attempt to use inferences and reasoned conclusions?
- d. How do we generally regard people who use the same approach but who reach different conclusions?

10. The “perfection” of restoration

- a. Is there still a need, even for us, to subject our practices to the scrutiny of scripture?
- b. Should “restoration” be primarily focused on church organization and worship, or on individual piety.