

CHAPTER THIRTEEN, CONCLUSION

A. WHAT MAY WE SAY ABOUT THE RESTORATION ATTEMPTS WE HAVE STUDIED?

1. Trends which preceded the Campbell-Stone restoration movement

- a. Looking to the Bible as the only source of authority—essentially all reform movements started this way.
- b. Referring to the Bible alone to argue their positions—essentially all of them.
- c. Having as a goal the restoration of New Testament Christianity—a matter of interpretation, but many or most.
- d. Primarily concerned with *individual Christian life*—Luther and the Anabaptists.
- e. Primarily concerned with *church organization and worship*—Zwingli and the Puritans.
- f. Independence from influence by or from reliance on government—the Anabaptists and the American Puritans.
- g. The notion of continuing restoration—Martin Bucer and the Zwinglians.
- h. The idea that people should study the Bible for themselves and make their own decisions to accept the Gospel—the Humanists, the radical separatists, and American preachers, particularly on the frontier.
- i. A way of explicating scripture which questions the value of any systematic understanding, which resists the use of terms and ideas those terms describe not explicitly found in scripture—Zwingli.
- j. Rejection of denominations and desire to be a “Christian only”—Roger Williams.
- k. A view of the congregation as the proper focus of church work—John Cotton, the Puritans and the Baptists.
- l. The quest for, and self-identification as, “the one true church”—the Baptists.

2. Trends which were unique to the Campbell-Stone restoration movement

- a. Wearing the name “Christian” only.
- b. Insistence on immersion of believers for salvation and for admission to the church.
- c. Unity of believers, on the basis of a “minimum set of beliefs,” as the goal.

B. WHAT MAY WE SAY ABOUT RESTORATION AS A GOAL?

1. What was the nature of the first restoration efforts?

2. Did any restoration prior to the Campbell-Stone movement succeed?

3. Did the Campbell-Stone restoration, or any part of it, succeed?

4. What trends inhibited the success of the various restoration efforts?

- a. Failure to examine certain basic assumptions.
- b. Compromise of points of doctrine in an effort to widen the circle of fellowship.
- c. Abandonment of the uncomfortable shifting boundaries of progressive restoration for the stability of a creed.
- d. The political demands of civil government and society which were co-opted in order to assist the reformation.

C. ABOUT CREEDS, WRITTEN AND UN-WRITTEN, AND TRADITIONS

1. When the reformers created or allowed the creation of a creed, what was their purpose in doing so?

2. What are the types or classifications of creeds?

- a. Formal, written creeds, adopted by a super-congregational organization.
- b. The “confessions” which come out of a conference.
- c. Unwritten or unofficial practices and habits of thinking which are transmitted and enforced by the pressures of an ecclesiastical society and its leadership.

3. Traditions and creeds

- a. Is there anything wrong with doing things in a traditional way, or of accepting traditional ways of thinking?
- b. How can traditions function as unwritten creeds?
- c. *Today*, how might traditions and creeds, allowed to be used improperly, stand in the way of restoration?

D. SOME QUESTIONS, NOT MANY OF THEM INTENDED TO BE LEADING OR RHETORICAL IN NATURE

1. Concerning the nature of restoration itself

- a. What is the “theoretical” point at which we can afford to stop restoring the New Testament church?
- b. Should we focus our restoration efforts primarily upon forms of church organization and worship?
- c. Can and do we practice restoration even if we are not trying to change anything within our congregation?
- d. In this regard, how should we apply Voltaire’s observation, “the perfect is the enemy of the good”?

2. Concerning human nature and congregational unity

- a. Is calling people “back to the Bible,” *by itself*, enough to unite all who want to be “New Testament Christians”?
- b. Are there practical limits to the degree of common understanding that can be reached, even within a single congregation?
- c. Is some level of incomplete agreement, or tolerance, sufficient to allow a congregation to work effectively?

3. Concerning the nature of the church

- a. What kind of “pattern” did Jesus and the inspired writers leave for us to emulate?
- b. Given the restoration idea that church organization is important, is its importance *primary* or *derived*?

4. Concerning the nature of the revelation found in scripture

- a. To what extent is scripture a “science book of church revelation,” as Thomas Campbell conceived of it?
- b. Is each fact and each statement found in scripture equal in importance and in relevance to us?
- c. Is using statements in scripture to try to infer “higher” principles an unlawful addition to the word of God?

5. Concerning the nature of scriptural authority

- a. Is there one and only one method of establishing authority which is explicitly prescribed in scripture?
- b. Is the intent of scriptural authority to prescribe a single method for every activity of the church?
- c. Must a “restoration” approach entail making work and organization as definite and settled as possible?
- d. Is there anything wrong, or any risk, in trying to make church organization as definite and settled as possible?
- e. Does the fact that scripture does not proscribe an activity constitute permission?
- f. Does the fact that there is no explicit instruction on a subject imply that scripture gives us no guidance?
- g. If we are not explicitly told how to carry out a practice, is the practice then to be regarded as forbidden?
- h. If God wants us not to do something, or not to do it in a certain way, can we count on Him to tell us so, either by forbidding or by giving a specific instruction to do it differently?
- i. Is “establishing authority” the same thing as finding a law where one is not given explicitly, or not given at all?

6. Concerning the “work of the church”

- a. Does the church have responsibilities beyond the responsibilities of its individual members?
- b. How do the scriptures tell us what the work of the church is?
- c. How does scripture distinguish between “individual” and “collective” responsibility?

7. Concerning other “reformers” and “restorers”

- a. Is there any profit to us in considering the views of other reformers on the scriptures?
- b. What, if anything, can we learn from their successes?
- c. What, if anything, can we learn from their failures?

E. AND FINALLY

- 1. When those around us look at us and hear our message, what do they see and hear that we intend to distinguish us from others, especially in denominations, who look and sound similar?**
- 2. What is the core “message”—in word and in action—of the Restoration Movement today?**
- 3. What kind of restoration work are our children (and grand-children!) going to be doing?**
- 4. Which way does the Annandale church need to go (or to keep going) next?**