

Origin of the Restoration Movement

by J.J. Haley

The Restoration Movement is a realization movement that aims to actualize the ideals of New Testament Christianity in the life of modern centuries.

Scripture: John 17:20, Acts 2:42, Romans 15:5, 1 Corinthians 1:10, Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 4:11, Philippians 2:2, Colossians 1:18, 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 Peter 2:9

Topics: "Church Restoration", "Wesleyan Revival"

Description

J.J. Haley preaches about the significance of the Wesleyan revival and the Restoration movement, drawing parallels between the evolution of the Christian religion and the phases of creation, interpretation, construction, and reformation. He emphasizes the unique role of John Wesley in uniting the functions of creator, interpreter, and organizer in the Wesleyan revival. Haley highlights the importance of rediscovering the Holy Scriptures and the central role of Christ in the church's reformation and restoration. He calls for a return to the apostolic ideals of unity, fraternity, spirituality, and catholicity in the New Testament church.

Transcript

Luna Park, Saturday Morning, October 16.

The chief significance of this celebration, which is destined to become historic and monumental, is its relation to the origin of one of the great religious movements of modern times. From a geographical and territorial point of view, we have located ourselves near the spot where the original impulse was given to the restoration cause. The literary declaration and interpretation of the initial period, the beginning hour of the movement, finds a conspicuous place in the program of these exercises. The originating personality, who gave the place, the event, and the literature, their deepest vitality, and most telling significance, is felt and known and honored, to-day, as he could not have been one hundred years ago. Beginning at Jerusalem in our religion is beginning at Pittsburg in our Reformation.

The four periods through which the evolution of the Christian religion has passed have been the creative, the interpretative, the constructive, the reformative; creation, interpretation, construction, reformation. Reform and restorative movements pass through similar phases. St. Augustine was the creative personality of Calvinism, John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards were its great interpreters, John Knox and the Westminster divines were the organizing geniuses of the Calvinistic Reformation.

The Wesleyan revival is unique and incomparable in the history of the church, inasmuch as all three of these functions were united and combined in one man, in the genius and personality of John Wesley himself. Mr. Wesley was the creator, interpreter and organizer of the reformation that goes by his name, the most phenomenally successful in the annals of the world's revivals. Its most serious limitation lies in the fact that he failed to recognize the doctrine and danger of degeneration, and hence to make provision for reformation, or such devotion to New Testament ideals as to make reformation impossible and unnecessary.

We have now the key in hand to unlock the mystery of our own beginning. Thomas Campbell, author of the "Declaration and Address," and founder of the Christian Association of Washington, was the creative personality of our restoration movement. Alexander Campbell his son, and Walter Scott, the matchless prophet and preacher of the evangel, were his first great interpreters. We are now, and have been for forty years, in the throes of the constructive and organizing era of our reformatory experience.

In the absence of conspicuous personal leadership in this branch of the service--our organizing genius is yet J. J. HALEY. to appear--most of our troubles have arisen, and are likely to continue to arise, as in other reforming movements. As Thomas Campbell must be regarded as the Moses of our Restoration, the "Declaration and Address" was the Deuteronomy of our prophetic reformation. As certainly as the fifth book of Moses contains the basic principles and the whole body of teaching and ideals of the prophets that inspired and entered into the structure of the Deuteronomic reformation in the time of Josiah, this matchless document whose origin we celebrate to-day embraces every truth we have taught, every principle we have advocated, every ideal we have striven to realize in the whole hundred years of our existence.

Father Campbell was the originative spirit of this nineteenth-century renewal of apostolic grace and power. His illustrious son was the advocate, the expounder, the defender, the illuminator, the adapter and the vindicator of the teaching of his father expressed in the constitution of the [333] Christian Association, the sermon on the mount of our New Testament, if you will allow me to change the figure from a discourse of Moses in the Old Testament to a sermon of Christ in the New.

The relation of the Sermon on the Mount to the kingdom of God is the relation of the "Declaration and Address" to our Reformation. The effort that has been made to trace the Christian unity conception and emphasis to Thomas Campbell, and the primitive Christianity idea, as the basis of union, to Alexander Campbell, and to make the two stand over against each other as variant reforming types, has not been a success. The fact is that the two conceptions, as common integers of New Testament Christianity, were emphatically and profusely taught by the elder Campbell in the historic document we honor to-day.

I have been amazed at the comprehensiveness and all-inclusiveness of this composition. It is the most admirable summary of apostolic Christianity, in the literature of the church, this side of the New Testament. Even from the point of view of modern criticism, which has claimed so many discoveries, we are chagrined to find that Father Campbell has stolen all of our good ideas. The unification of Christendom on the basis of the apostolic faith in Jesus Christ, the restoration of the church with its divine equipment for human service, the "union of all who love in the service of all who suffer," the purification and elevation of morals to make way for the building of character after the likeness of Christ, opposition to a false mysticism in conversion, and all abusive and corrupting instruments, such as human creeds and an ignorant ministry--these and all other essential and vital things that pertain to the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, are distinctly and explicitly taught, so that we have preached nothing in the last

hundred years, and will preach nothing in the oncoming centuries, not advanced, or at least suggested, in this magna charta of our restoration movement.

I am not, of course, saying these things in ignorance of the fact that many of the root principles of the Restoration can be traced to European soil. Both of the Campbells were of European birth and education, and there was much in religious training, in ecclesiastical and social environment to suggest the need of reformation, and a cue to their own future work. When Thomas Campbell set sail for the United States in 1807, a revolt against Calvinism and hair-brained mysticism had gained a foothold in Scotland and the north of Ireland. More than one harbinger had arisen in the wilderness of sectarianism to build again the tabernacle of the Lord that had fallen down. John Glass and his son-in-law Sandeman, the Haldane brothers, and Greville Ewing of Glasgow, were striking powerful blows at Calvinistic theology, the corrupt condition of religious society, and the divided state of the church. Successive and more or less sporadic attempts at reformation since Luther had culminated in a new effort at the beginning of the nineteenth century to get back to Christ and the apostles. These efforts, however, were tentative and partial and short-lived for lack of genius and personality in leadership. They were quite successful in their diagnosis of the situation, which called aloud for the restoration of the ancient order of things, and the remedies suggested were adequate to "subtend the analogies" of the case; the moment was imminent, but the man did not appear. He had emigrated to the United States. The field of a great restoration movement had been transferred from Scotland to North America, from the Old World to the New.

People not acquainted with the subject are surprised to find in the books of Glass and Sandeman, the Haldanes and Dr. Kirk, ideas, arguments, doctrines, interpretations of Scripture, and even phrases that our Reformation has made familiar to the world. These men did not fail to grasp the truth, and realize the difference between what they saw and what Christ intended; but they lacked the power and opportunity to incarnate these principles in a personality strong enough in creative and adaptive genius to make the movement go in the face of Old World traditions and prejudices. It was on this side of the Atlantic that the man and the movement came together. [334]

When the Campbells set foot on American soil they found the situation even worse, the circumstances of contending sects calling more loudly for reform than in the Old World. They found more religious antagonism, a fiercer sectarianism, a more intense fanaticism, a wilder mysticism, a narrower, harder and less tractable denominationalism, than they had left behind them. Theological antagonism, the clashing of iron creeds, and the spirit of religious intolerance filled the air. If the people were not hateful, they were certainly hating one another. Thomas Campbell tells of a Seceder divine who was so intensely human that he exhorted his congregation: "I beseech you, my brethren, to hate all other denominations, especially the Catholics." An age of increasing sects, multiplying creeds, contending parties and warring zealots had reached the stage where reaction must begin to rally the forces of reformation. The time had come to knock down the Dagon of theology in the temples of sectarianism, and to call back a divided church from the wilderness of strife and bitterness, to the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Three things had happened to bring about this Babel confusion of tongues, this ecclesiastical reign of terror. (1) The Bible had been lost in the church. (2) Christ had been lost in the Bible. (3) The church had wandered in the wilderness and had been lost in the world. The first thing a corrupt church does is to lose its Bible, and the Bible is never lost in but one place, and that is in the temple. The first thing a restored church does is to find the book and put it in the place where it belongs. The greatest spiritual reformation in Israel synchronized with the discovery of the Book of Deuteronomy in the temple, where it had been lost during the corrupt reign of corrupt Manasseh. John the harbinger launched his revolution by a discovery of the

book of the law and the prophets in the same old place of hiding, the Temple in Jerusalem. In the Reformation of the sixteenth century, Martin Luther found the Holy Scriptures buried in a dead language, and a standard Bible chained to the lectern of a holy Catholic church. The book had to be liberated from its temple prison, and a translation of it made into the common vernacular, before reformation truth could find a place in the consciousness of the people.

The new religious freedom, that came in with Luther, had its limitations. The abuse of liberty brought in the era of sectarianism and denominationalism. Two hundred years of warring creeds and bellicose denominations, and history repeats itself: the Bible is again lost in a superincumbent mass of ignorance, superstition, pharisaism, and the fate of the Bible is always the fate of Christ and the church. Necessarily, therefore, the first characteristic of our restoration movement was the rediscovery of the Holy Scriptures. The assertion of the authority and intelligibility of the Divine Word, and its all-sufficiency as a rule of faith and practice, was the first step in the projection and realization of the needed reform. "Where the Scriptures speak we speak, where the Scriptures are silent we are silent." The life and power of every forward movement in the history of organized Christianity is a fresh and vital reinterpretation of the Bible, and a new application of its principles to the life and labors of the church. And this, of necessity, leads straight to the rediscovery of Christ, and his reinstallation on the throne of universal empire and lordship, followed by the restoration of the New Testament church, with its holy and gracious activities in the service of the world's redemption. Mr. Campbell was quick to see that any effective appeal to the conscience of Christendom must involve a fresh and living interpretation and application of Holy Scripture, a vital and loyal and fundamental recognition of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King, as Saviour and Lord of all, and an earnest, continuous effort toward the realization of the ideals of the apostolic church, before it was possible for the Saviour's intercessory prayer to be answered, "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." The plea was for the unity, fraternity, spirituality and catholicity of the New Testament church, fresh from the [335] hands of Christ, and guided by the Holy Spirit in the apostles. A careful analysis of the "Declaration and Address" will show that this plea for unity was simple, Scriptural and catholic, a strong appeal to the intelligence and conscience of the universal church.

(1) The catholic creed of Christendom, the central and cardinal proposition of Christianity, "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Saviour and Lord of men."

(2) The catholic rule of faith and practice, the word of God contained in the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

(3) The catholic ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

(4) The catholic name, "Christian."

(5) The catholic life, the ethics of the kingdom of God, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things." A creed, a rule, ordinances, a name, a life, which all accept and none reject who believe in Christ. If the churches ever get together, it will be on the basis of this universal New Testament Christianity. May I not be permitted to say that this plea is at once reasonable, feasible, beautiful, and in time must become universal?

The spiritual movement originated and consecrated in the manner I have endeavored to describe, and brought forth on this American continent in the last hundred years, is not a reformation of existing institutions, in the ordinary sense of the term; nor is it a restoration of primitive Christianity in the sense of literally restoring the historical apostolic church in the details of its life and organization. It is a realization movement, whose aim and purpose is to realize and actualize the ideals of New Testament Christianity in the life of these modern centuries. It was found not possible to reform existing religious institutions, nor to restore the primitive church by transferring it literally and bodily to the nineteenth century; but it was possible and eminently desirable to make an honest effort to realize the ideals of the apostolic faith that shine and make their appeal from every page of the inspired record. This feature differentiates the movement inaugurated by Thomas Campbell from all of the mere reformations in the history of the church. The old reformations would need to be repeated through successive generations till the end of time; but what we have chosen, sometimes, to call "the current reformation," if rightly understood, would always remain current and contemporaneous, because it embodies a principle that makes crystallization forever impossible, and growth forever necessary. So long as we strive to actualize the originals, to realize the ideals of the inspired Christianity of the New Testament, we safeguard our religion from stagnation, open the road to perpetual progress, and thus forestall the necessity of further efforts at reformation. This is the peculiar glory of our religious movement, and if, under God, we are faithful to the charge committed to our keeping, we shall contribute our share, and more, to the bringing in of the far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves, when "they shall not teach every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know him from the least to the greatest.

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