

THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

Handout for Lesson 17 of *Thought Provoking Questions*

THE FIVE-FOLD ATTACK

1. The “Church of Christ” is a man-made organization that was born of the Restoration movement. It is naive and arrogant to think otherwise.

Wrong! It is Biblical to think otherwise! The church of Christ is the kingdom made without hands in Daniel 2. It is the eternal kingdom established in Acts 2. Jesus did not ask us to build a church – he promised in Matthew 16 to build one Himself.

2. We should focus on only the “core gospel.” The church is just a secondary issue, and, along with many other similar secondary issues, is not a part of the gospel.

Wrong! We should focus on the entirety of God’s word. Also, the gospel and the church are inseparable. We are added to the church when we are saved, and the message of the gospel was first proclaimed on the very same day that the church was established. Read Ephesians 5 and then ask yourself whether Paul saw the church as a secondary issue.

3. Restoration is a continuing process, and thus we can never say that the church has been restored.

Wrong! Although restoration should continue whenever and wherever departures from the Biblical pattern have occurred, restoration is completed when that Biblical pattern is restored. The Lord’s church has been restored – past tense!

4. As Christians we are all constantly growing, and thus we can never say that the church has been restored.

Wrong! Christians in the first century were growing spiritually while in the New Testament church – and thus we can also continue to grow spiritually as part of the restored New Testament church.

5. To understand “our church” and “our religious heritage” we need to study all of the writings and sayings of the Restoration Leaders, who were the “pioneers” of “our movement.” Those writings are the “source documents” of “our movement.”

Wrong! The Bible is the source docu-

ment for the church – and it is the *Lord’s* church rather than “*our* church.” The restoration leaders were not infallible, and their writings were not inspired. We are not bound in any way by what they wrote or said.

CODE WORDS FOR THE ATTACK

- » “Our Religious Heritage”
- » “Our Tradition”
- » “Restoration Hermeneutics”
- » “Pioneers of Our Heritage”
- » “Our Church”
- » “Historylessness”
- » “Our Movement”
- » “The Un-Churched”
- » “Restoration Movement Churches”
- » “The Stone-Campbell Movement”

THE RING LEADERS

Sadly, the Center for Restoration Studies at Abilene Christian University is the primary source for most of these attacks on the church. Virtually all of the key players are or have been associated with that group. I will just let them speak for themselves:

Leonard Allen & Richard Hughes:

“First, there is the simple and observable fact that, throughout Churches of Christ, many people are questioning and sometimes rejecting the traditional doctrinal system that for several generations gave Churches of Christ their distinctive identity. Acts and the Epistles as architectural ‘blueprint,’ as a rigid ‘pattern,’ as a collection of case law – these images and the interpretive method they support are steadily declining.”

“For well over 150 years Churches of Christ have been calling for restoration of New Testament Christianity. It has been a powerful ideal. It has shaped our identity as a movement.”

“By sectarian, we mean the belief that the church has been fully restored by our forebearers, that the American Churches of Christ are fully identical to the primitive churches in every significant respect, and that there is now nothing left to do but defend the gains of the past. Surely this spir-

it has characterized many in our movement.”

Carroll D. Osburn:

“There is no point in time at which one can say that the church was restored and that now all we have to do is preach it.”

“There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who differ on whether more than one cup in communion is acceptable, whether the communion bread is to be pinched or snapped, whether one can eat in the church building, whether funds can be used from the church treasury to support orphan homes, whether the Lord’s Supper must be taken every Sunday, or whether instrumental music is used in worship. There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who believe that Christ is the son of God, but who differ on eschatological theories such as premillennialism, ecclesiological matters such as congregational organization, or soteriological matters such as whether baptism is ‘for’ or ‘because of’ the remission of sins.”

Royce Money:

“Often I have read this passage [Matthew 16:13-18], and every time I find myself wondering what Jesus had in mind when he said ‘church.’ When Jesus promised to build his church on the confession of his Lordship, I wonder what he envisioned for his people, when he referred to ‘my church.’”

“If you believe that the restoration of New Testament Christianity is an accomplished fact – that we have the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, the last thing you want is people going around trying to think and examine and search and question.”

Douglas A. Foster:

“With their own leaders and slogans and a new zeal for standing for what they saw as the true basis of the original [Stone/Campbell] movement, the Churches of Christ took shape in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s.”

Many additional quotations and citations for all of the quotations are available at the web address given at the bottom of this handout.