**Park Plaza Church of Christ: “History of the Restoration”**

**Spring 2014 [March – May]**

**Teacher: Bob Young**

**“Restoration History”**

A fresh look at Restoration History that provides an orientation to help us understand the challenges and opportunities for Restoration in today’s world. What aspects of church history prepared the way for the Restoration? Why did the Restoration Movement catch on quickly on the frontier? What have been and are the challenges for continuing Restoration? Where do we go from here?

[Note: The first nine sessions will be videotaped and made available online with accompanying notes and Powerpoint presentations.]

**March 5**

Here we go…. (a survey of 15 centuries, up to about A.D. 1500)

**March 12**

Reformation survey

Groups in the Reformation, counter-Reformation

Politics; the Enlightenment

**March 26**

How the Reformation set the stage for and contributed to the Restoration

Early U.S. history ; Early Restoration longings and efforts

**April 2**

Barton W. Stone, Cane Ridge [pictures]

**April 9**

Barton W. Stone, Cane Ridge [pictures]

**April 16**

Thomas Campbell and the European Backgrounds of the Restoration

**April 23**

Alexander Campbell, Bethany [pictures]

**April 30**

Alexander Campbell, Bethany [pictures]

**May 7**

The Restoration continues; where do we go from here?

**May 14**

Wrestling with God—1 [movie, part 1]

**May 21**

Wrestling with God—2 [movie, part 2]

**May 28**

Where do we go from here? Conclusion [discussion only]

**March 5**

*Here we go….surveying 15 centuries—up to about A.D. 1500*

Where to begin?

Flow of history/culture. Development of thought patterns. To understand where we are today, must think about the development of thought—religious, philosophic, scientific.

**ROME**

Much of Roman thought around the time of Christ was shaped by Greek thinking. Greeks tried to build society upon the city-state, polis, values were established with reference to the polis/society. Socrates, faced with death or exile from that which gave life meaning.

Later, Greeks and Romans tried to build society on their gods, but the gods were not divine, but were merely amplified humanity. The Greeks, and the Romans after them, had no infinite God, and thus had so sufficient reference point for developing thinking and living. Legislating morals and family life failed, even with impressive legal reforms and welfare programs, because the human ‘gods’ were insufficient, so Rome fell.

In contrast, the Christians had absolute, universal values by which to live and judge the society. These values were the foundation for basic dignity and human value. The Christians were Rome’s enemies. Why? The Christians were not killed because they worshiped Jesus, but because they were rebels against the state. They were rebellious because they worshiped Jesus as God, and only worshiped the infinite-personal God. The Caesars could not tolerate such. Second, no authoritarian state can tolerate those who have an absolute by which to judge that state and its actions.

Even though Constantine ended the persecution when Christianity became a legal religion (313 A.D.), and then the official state religion of the Empire (381 A.D.), the majority of the citizens of the Empire continued their old ways. Social life was exalted above the intellectual, officially sponsored art was decadent, music also, and apathy prevailed.

All of this is to say that Rome did not fall because of external invasion, but because there was not a sufficient base for the society. The barbarians only seized the opportunity afforded by internal weakness.

**MIDDLE AGES**

The breakdown of Rome and the subsequent invasions were a time a social, political and intellectual turmoil. In contrast to leaders like Ambrose of Milan (339-397) and Augustine (354-430) who emphasized biblical teachings and Christianity, there was an increasing distortion away from biblical teaching. The importance of people was diminished and a developing concept of spirituality tended to set aside reality. The result was that the Christianity set forth in the New Testament was distorted and a humanistic element was added. This was most obvious in the fact that the authority of the church increasingly took precedence over the teaching of the Bible. New cultural elements provided alternatives to a culture that could be called Christian or biblical.

Thus, the Middle Ages (~500-~1400) were a time in which we can generally see the continuing response which was to mix the secular and the Christian. Despite the fact that the church provided hospitals and charitable institutions, the integration of the church and state presented a new problem. The state, strong or weak, has always posed a problem to the church (religion), especially in areas of morality. In the medieval period, the intermingling resulted in the fact that Christian baptism came to have not only spiritual significance, but also social and political significance because it denoted entrance into society. (Jews were non-persons in this sense.) If the church baptized or consecrated the state that only worsened the dilemma, because a government that appears to support the belief system of society can betray society with the greatest impunity. Further, the church had tremendous difficulty being salt to the society.

More must be said, however, for even as the church provided a model for absolute power, it also developed as a threat to personal monarchies. The Conciliar Movement in the late-medieval church stood for the idea that the real authority of the church was not vested in one bishop (the pope), but in all of the bishops together. Thus the Council of Constance (1414-1418) deposed three rival popes, ending a scandalous epoch in church history, declaring that the council’s authority came directly from Christ and that all men, including the pope, were subject to its authority in questions of faith and church reform. The movement did not last and the principle of monarchy would triumph within the Roman church.

Paradoxically, the frequent conflict between the state and the church contributed to the evolution of a political theory that emphasized governmental limitation and responsibility.

The final piece of the puzzle in this whirlwind tour is to consider what was happening in Christian thought and the influences of classical thought. The syncretism of thought made it easy for Greek and Roman thought forms to creep into the cracks of faith. Faith was coming to depend less and less on the Bible and more and more on the authority of the church. Aquinas (1225-1274 A.D.) opened the door to placing revelation and human reason on an equal footing, reasserting Aristotelian concepts (Aristotle, 384-322 B.C.).

Under Charlemagne, the church became a cultural force, coextensive with state power. The Middle Ages were born with an awakened cultural and intellectual life and increased piety. But the church moved away from the biblical teachings with distortions of biblical doctrine. Soon European thought would be divided into two lines, both of which have come down to influence our time: the humanistic elements of the Renaissance, and the Bible foundations of the Reformation.

**RENAISSANCE**

As we come to the Renaissance (rebirth), we must not think everything prior was completed dark, and we must not think everything in the rich period of the Renaissance functioned for the good and advancement of humanity.

The last half of the eleventh century (1050-1100 A.D.) and into the twelfth century, there was economic expansion (Crusades), Oriental trade, textiles, political freedom in town halls, the emergence of universities which offered education that was not purely clerical, written languages, etc. This was not a rebirth of humanity, but the rebirth of an idea about humanity. While the Renaissance is often dates 14th, 15th, 16th centuries, I am suggesting its philosophical antecedents begin much earlier, which brings us back to Aquinas (1225-1274 A.D.), especially his view of mankind. Aquinas believed the will was fallen but not the intellect. This meant people could rely on their human reasoning, drawing good and truth from whatever source, including non-Christian philosophers. The result was that philosophy was gradually separated from God’s revelation of truth, that is, from the Bible, and philosophy came to be an independent, autonomous discipline.

A better understanding of the importance of this development can be seen in a quick review of the two distinct world views that were advanced by Plato and Aristotle three to four centuries before Christ. Plato emphasized the absolutes, or ideals, almost the abstract. (Remember the allegory of the cave.) Aristotle focused on the real, the particulars, individual things, individual persons. Aquinas brought this focus on individual things into the philosophy of the late Middle Ages and opened the door for humanistic elements of the Renaissance.

Time forbids a detailed look, but we have to understand this contrast, for it determines where one begins in the search for meaning in life. (Faith seeking understanding, understanding seeking faith.) The contrast has been described as the higher and lower.

* The higher includes God, grace, unseen things, the unity of the universals.
* The lower focuses on the created, nature, the visible, the diversity of individuals.

Where shall one begin? Beginning with the individual, one has no way to arrive at universals or absolutes. The result was that the humanism of the Renaissance moved steadily toward modern humanism—value system rooted in the belief that man is his own measure, autonomous, totally independent.

It is hard to characterize all of this as bad—in 1340 Petrarch climbed Mont Ventoux, just to climb it. Architecture changed dramatically, the arts developed, but man was at the center. Orchestration was developed. Michelangelo’s David is a good example of the change. This is not the David of the Old Testament, but man becoming great, tearing himself out of the rock, victorious. Da Vinci was perhaps the first modern mathematician. The ultimate impact was complete faith in man, man capable of solving everything. This was the ultimate outcome of the victory of Aristotelian thought over Platonic thought in the West.

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**March 12**

*Reformation survey*

*Groups in the Reformation, counter-Reformation*

*How the Reformation altered political structures*

*The Enlightenment*

*[How the Reformation set the stage for and contributed to the Restoration]*

**SUMMARY**

Last week’s whirlwind tour of the first 1500 years of Christian history surfaced a number of potential trouble spots that we need to keep an eye on.

* The possibility of an absolute, objective value system not based on the ability to think, observe, or experience
* The relationship between church and state
* The separation or integration of the spiritual (including the Bible) and the secular (including humanistic elements)
* The nature of the authority of the Bible (must it be mediated through the church or through human thought and analysis)
* The alliance or conflict between philosophy and theology
* The church was slow to study itself and develop an ecclesiology
* The capacity or incapacity of humankind, and the related question of whether or to what extent human being participate or cooperate in salvation.

**REFORMATION**

The Renaissance focused the problem of what gives life meaning and unifies life, specifically what universals provide morality and truth. At the same time, another great movement was emerging in the north of Europe. The Reformation was a reaction against the distortions of humanism in the Renaissance. Both deal with the same problems, but give opposite answers.

Aquinas thought the will was fallen, but the mind was not. This resulted in people thinking they could think out all of the answers. The Reformation suggested an incapable man, totally dependent on God. This resulted eventually in doctrines such as predestination, spiritual enlightenment, pre-millennialism (as opposed to post-millennialism), and others. We must wrestle with and understand this dilemma. Can human beings understand the Bible without divine enlightenment?

Wycliffe (1320-1384) emphasized the Bible as supreme authority. Huss (1369-1415) sought to return to the teachings of the Bible and stressed the Bible as the final authority and salvation through Christ and his work. He built on Wycliffe’s views of the priesthood of all believers. Huss’s influence lives on in the Bohemian Brethren, and the Moravian Church.

Luther confronted the abuses of the church with his Ninety-five Theses (1517). One must see what is happening in Europe: in the south, the High Renaissance is working out a humanistic idea of man at the center, autonomous, especially visible in the authority of the church. In the north, the Reformation is suggesting another alternative. We must spend a little time here and try to resolve a problem before it surfaces two to three centuries later in the U.S.

In summary, the Reformers turned not to man as beginning from himself, but to the Christianity of the Bible and the early church. They saw some of the distortions that had entered. They refused to accept the autonomy (and at times the capacity) of human reason. The Bible is authority; the question is how we will access its truth.

Remember the times—the church had supreme authority, equal to or over the Bible, with a strong element of human work added, and a synthesis of biblical teaching and pagan thought. What will be an adequate corrective? The Reformation with its various branches (Luther, Calvin-Zwingli-Knox, Anglicans, Radical-Anabaptists-Spiritualists) eventually led to the Catholic counter-reformation (1549). The various branches of the Reformation, even with their differences, in one sense represented a unity, a single system.

The Bible tells us true things about God, true things about people. Each person has dignity in God’s image, each is equal in the priesthood of believers; each is equal in guilt before God. Thus the summary: only the Bible, only faith (grace).

**POLITICS**

The return to the Bible gradually brought political freedom. The biblical teachings, in national religions at first, gave society the opportunity for freedom without chaos. Freedom was based on the absolutes of the Bible. Moral law is based on Scripture. Freedom of religious worship and freedom of conscience existed in the citizen’s relationship to the state. Law is not just civil and criminal conduct, but is related to the entire structure of a society, including its government. As a result, the ordinary citizen has a freedom from arbitrary governmental power which would restrict conscience.

This is a government of law rather than arbitrary decisions of men, because the Bible is the final authority as a base. This was the impact of Samuel Rutherford’s book , Lex Rex (1600-1661, book published in 1644). John Witherspoon (1723-1794) brought this work and its influence to bear on the U.S. Constitution. A second mediator of Rutherford’s influence was John Locke (1632-1704), who secularized the Presbyterian tradition, but drew heavily from Rutherford. Locke stressed inalienable rights, government by consent, separation of powers, and right of revolution. Locke was an empiricist (*Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 1690), and his empiricism really left no place for natural rights. Locke’s problem was that he lacked Rutherford’s biblical base. (I mention Locke briefly here because of his later impact on Alexander Campbell.)

The true basis for a society and government is Scripture. Therefore, the 51% vote is never a good indication of right or wrong because the absolutes of the Bible are available to judge a society. The “little man” can arise and say that the majority is wrong. This was reflected in part in the systems of checks and balances in government.

**ENLIGHTENMENT**

One more item must be mentioned—that is the Enlightenment. Voltaire, French philosopher (1694-1778) is often called the “father of the Enlightenment.” The French Revolution resulted in the authoritarian rule of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), in contrast to the bloodless revolution in England in 1688 after which William III of Orange and March were the monarchs, but Parliament was an equal partner with the crown. The destruction in such revolutions came not from the outside; it was in reality a product of the system. As in the later Russian Revolution, the humanist base has only two options—anarchy or repression. The experience in Europe, at least in those parts of Europe most influenced by the Reformation, involved quite a different dynamic.

On a biblical basis, there are absolutes; certain things are right or wrong. Justice is an absolute good, not just an expedient. Christians can oppose abnormalities without opposing God.

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**March 26**

*How the Reformation set the stage for and contributed to the Restoration*

*Early U.S. history; early Restoration longings and efforts*

By way of review, we have shown that the situation in Europe after 100 years of Reformation was an uneasy balance between biblical teaching and human endeavor and capacity. Secular influences were exalting human capacities. The Roman church was reflecting much of the same influence in the teaching that the church stands over Scripture (rather than under Scripture). Thus the Bible says whatever the church says its means. On the other hand, the Reformation was exalting Scripture and God, but some would say at the expense of human worth and capacity.

The early American context provides a background for the development of what eventually came to be known as the American Restoration Movement (ARM) or the Stone-Campbell movement. Several factors must be considered. First, England was the bridge from the Old World to the New World; the 13 colonies were English colonies. Second, as a result, the predominant religions were Protestant—Congregational, Presbyterian, Baptist, Anglican, and Quaker. Third, remember that the churches were merely transplanted. The southern colonies had Quaker and Anglican churches, New England was largely congregational, the middle colonies were mostly Baptist and Presbyterian. There were other religious groups—Maryland with a strong Roman Catholic influence, influences from the Continent (Europe) via the Dutch and French Reformed; and the Mennonites, Dunkers, and Moravians, German Lutherans and German Reformed.

The American context contributed to the development of new religious realities in several ways. First, the increasing importance of the laity. Church members were landowners, churches were largely locally autonomous. There was vigorous opposition to establishing organizational structures above the local congregation. There was also a noticeable loss of ministerial authority. As a result, local churches were empowered. Second, the breakdown of the parish system. For 1000 years in Europe, it had been assumed that every member of the society was a member of the church. In America, rather than national churches, several different churches were established in the same region or colony. This led to “gathered churches” and the necessity that churches win support and gain recruits by voluntary means. People were no longer automatically members and subject to church discipline. This led to revivals, mission societies, Sunday schools, visitation programs, publishing tracts, and eventually periodical advertising. Third, and most important, the focus on preaching. This changed context opened the possibility of significant reform. Add the sense of expectancy that characterized the new beginning and one begins to understand the new situation in the colonies.

**THE GREAT AWAKENING**

The Great Awakening (most properly, the First Great Awakening) refers to a series of religious revivals among Protestants in the American colonies, especially in New England, from about 1725 until the Revolutionary War. The result was the growth of locally autonomous churches practicing a decentralized, emotional version of Christianity that still typifies much of the evangelical movement today. Under the leadership of men such as the British preacher, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards, the Great Awakening led also to a realignment of social, political, and religious identities. Challenges to authority, both religious and governmental, led to the rejection of the British identity reinforced by the Anglican church and hastened the American Revolution.

At first the Great Awakening had the effect of dividing congregations, setting ministers against one another, and dividing the denominations. But eventually the surging evangelical religion emboldened the Protestant churches to undertake the task of Christianizing a continent (also in the British Isles), and to join forces against the vast non-Christian world. Revival became the most widely accepted means of introducing people to the Christian life. Revivals were welcomed, and even promoted, since a large part of the population stood outside the churches. The time was ripe for preaching that would prick the conscience, convict people of sin, lead to repentance, and experience the new life in Christ. However, revivalism led to a conflict with Calvinism. It also led to a change in emphasis as mere assent to orthodox beliefs as the foundation of the Christian life replaced entry to the Christian life through a “new birth.” The blending of doctrine and morality led to a conflict between emphasizing “head” and “heart.”

These factors led to theological change. In New England, a group of ministers who had been trained as students at Harvard College proposed that reason (head) and emotions (heart) operated together in spiritual development. The Great Awakening among the Presbyterians was led by the Tennants, in the Connecticut Valley primarily among the Congregationalists by Jonathan Edwards. Eventually the movement consolidated with the arrival of George Whitefield. Edwards was especially Calvinistic, and he believed the notion of any human ability undercut a dependence on divine grace. In 1734 he preached a series of five sermons on justification by faith alone. Whitefield arrived in 1740 and preached throughout the colonies. American religious life was being further shaped. Previously, when sermons were delivered to congregations it was at the invitation of the local minister, but Whitefield knew no such restrictions. He preached extemporaneously wherever he could. This resulted in the further loss of ministerial authority.

The evangelicalism and new spiritual life of the Great Awakening has sometimes been interpreted as a revolt against Calvinism, but it was not that at the beginning. The evangelical religion that took shape sought through preaching to bring about “rebirth” and obedience to God’s law, and proved durable and appealing over the course of time. The Great Awakening was a great unifying force that gave to “four-fifth” of the Christians in America “a common understanding of the Christian life and the Christian faith” (Trinterud, *Forming an American Tradition*, 197). Distinctions were renounced and detested by many, including John Wesley who spoke of “real Christians” and affirmed that none should desire to be distinguished from others who were real Christians.

The concept of denominationalism was first elaborated by the Dissenting Brethren of the Westminster Assembly of Divines (1643). This concept was to be of decisive future importance in shaping American religious life. Denominationalism was the opposite of sectarianism. A sect regards itself alone as the true church. Denomination was adopted as a neutral and inclusive term. It implied that the group referred to is but one member of the larger group (the church). This will be of supreme importance is trying to understand the intentions of the early Restorationists.

Finally, I feel compelled to speak briefly to a curious misunderstanding that developed concerning the First Amendment. A New York Times editorial (April 23, 1960) opened the way: “We start with the premise shared by every American who believes in the constitutional principles on which our country is founded, that religion has no proper place in American politics.” When the First Amendment was adopted, no one thought that “separation of church and state” implied separation of religion and politics. God-given rights were debated and various preached. The Founding Fathers understood that ecclesiastical institutions should not be “established” or supported by the state or subject to state control. But the free exercise of religion was strictly forbidden. No individual should be penalized for belief or unbelief.

**CIVIC RELIGION**

To understand the development of the new nation, it is helpful to distinguish “civil religion” and “church religion.” Civic religion was the religion of the republic, was pubic, and available to all through natural reason. Church religion was not technically privatized, but was more personal and focused on individuals and their salvation rather than the nation and its divine mission.

**SECOND GREAT AWAKENING**

After the Revolutionary War, it took most Protestant churches until about 1800 to regroup. As was to be expected in the light of past experience, an initial reaction was a renewed emphasis on the tried and proven revival preaching. This in turn, provoked a great wave of revivals, commonly known as the Second Great Awakening, which swept across the country for almost two generations. This is in reality where the story of the Restoration begins, but it begins against the background of all that has gone before.

The second wave was obvious among the Baptists and Methodists, and had continued to some degree from the first wave. In the 1790s, there were scattered revivals among the Congregationalists in New England. In Virginia, students at Hampden-Sydney and Washington colleges (1787) resulted in 30-40 men going into the Presbyterian ministry. James M’Gready joined these as they fanned out into the Carolinas, Kentucky, and Tennessee, where we will later speak of the Brush Run revival in 1801. In 1802 there was revival at Yale when President Timothy Dwight preached and one-third of the students professed conversion. Dwight preached, in response to the freethinking that was developing, that the only alternative to godliness was anarchy and despotism.

With the renewed revival preaching, the theological change had come full circle. Under Edwards, the Spirit was outpoured as a by-product of faithful preaching, and people “waited” without thinking of any duty on their part. In the second wave of revivals, more and more preachers sought to provoke revival by convincing hearers of the need to make a decision and do what is right. Revival was no longer an end in itself; revival was the means to over ends.

On the heels of these revivals, the Presbyterians were hit with three secessions: in 1801-1803, Stone and the “Christian movement” of Kentucky; in 1805, the establishment of the Cumberland Presbyterian church, and in 1805, the establishing of the Shaker community in Kentucky.

It is against the backdrop of these multiple factors that the beginnings of the American Restoration Movement must be understood, and that will be our goal as we turn our attention to the two most well-known leaders of that Movement—Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell.