

The Search for Truth:
A History of the Restoration Movement
“The Last Major Division”
February 25, 2018

INTRODUCTION:

According to the *Stone-Campbell Encyclopedia*, the Restoration Movement is an effort that seeks to correct faults or deficiencies by appealing to the primitive church as a normative model (“Restoration, Historical Models,” pages 635-638, by Richard T. Hughes). I began our class on November 12, 2017 with that definition.

Now, why are we interested in what we are defining as the Restoration Movement?

1. This is our history. We actually started over three months ago with John Wycliff, who died in 1384. That is well over 600 years ago, in Great Britain. Today, we are not appealing to a primitive *church* as our norm. Rather, we are appealing to the primitive *Gospel* as our norm, the “simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3). We are not holding up the church of Christ in Corinth, for example, as our norm. We are holding up the *message* that Paul preached to the church of Christ at Corinth as our norm. What *Paul* told them to do and how they were to correct their false practices and false doctrines - *that* is our “norm” for which we appeal.

2. The men with whom we have spent a large amount of time - from Alexander Campbell to Marshall Keeble - were not the *first* to appeal to the biblical pattern and call on men to return to that pattern. In fact, in our first lesson, we saw what currents in thought led to and created the “cognitive environment” in which the Restoration Movement incubated. And those currents began hundreds of years ago on a different continent than our own.

3. The last two hundred years have produced controversies that have led men and women to re-search the Scriptures to find what that *primitive Gospel* was - what it *allowed* and what it did *not allow*. These controversies have served to define who we are today and how we look at the religious world around us. We are not *defined* by the controversies but the controversies have helped us search the Scriptures to see how modern Christianity is supposed to look and behave *if* it is respecting the authority of Jesus Christ.

There have been several mottos that have been associated with the Restoration Movement: “Christians only, but not the only Christians.” “In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; in all things, love.” And, “We speak where the Bible speaks, and we are silent where the Bible is silent.”

It was the latter motto and its relationship to the silence of the Scriptures that helped contribute to the division between the churches of Christ and the Christian Church over the missionary society and instrumental music. Those supporting the missionary society argued that the Scriptures are silent about *how* to do mission work and, therefore, the churches have the freedom to establish one or more societies beyond the local congregation to do mission work. Opponents of the missionary societies argued that the Bible is *not* silent when it comes to mission work, at least relative to a society, because the church of Christ *is* God’s missionary society, with each congregation autonomous and each under its own leadership or eldership.

In that study, we pointed out that the missionary society began forcing churches to take sides: pro and con. Eventually, the society would grow to assume control of schools and, eventually, churches so that the society became a hierarchy and local churches lost their autonomy and the Disciples of Christ denomination was born. That was one of the concerns that brethren expressed when the society was first proposed.

In this study today, we will return to the question of the silence of the Scriptures because how we handle the silence of the Scriptures is going to divide the church of Christ again in the 50s and 60s. But this time, from a different perspective. First, let's get through World War 2...

WORLD WAR 2:

The view of churches of Christ and those involved in the "restoration movement" changed from being strongly pacifist during the Civil War to being passive assistants to the war effort during WW I. But when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, it did not take much persuading for many Christian men to shed their pacifist clothing and decide they could do much good from within the military itself. By the end of the war in September of 1945, there were 30 chaplains in the military associated with churches of Christ.

Under the guidance of Benton Cordell Goodpasture as editor, the *Gospel Advocate* still tried to maintain a pacifist position but it is probably safe to say that it was a minority view among churches of Christ following Pearl Harbor. Foy Wallace, especially in his book *The Christian and the Government*, did much to help the brotherhood see that a Christian could serve in the military, as well as on the police force, and still be faithful to Christ. I believe brother Wallace is correct when he pointed out in *The Christian and the Government* that if we apply the strictures from the Sermon on the Mount ("turn the other cheek") to evil doers, especially on the level of nations, then we have given evil men the license to do as they please. Thankfully, the *Gospel Advocate* and others have realized that being a conscientious objector or serving in combat is a matter of personal opinion and should not sever the bonds of fellowship.

We cannot overemphasize what military personnel did for the cause of Christ while they were, and are, serving in uniform. In many places, the only worship that is conducted, the only evangelizing that is done, is done by men wearing the uniform. There are places, like Saudi Arabia, where missionaries simply are not allowed to enter, but if men and women serving in uniform can worship on their bases, and even invite the locals to study and worship with them, then they can accomplish good for the Lord that cannot be done by anyone else.

The church's mission work, especially in Europe, would change drastically following World War 2. Many, many of our GI's would return from war and, using financial assistance from Uncle Sam, would enroll in Bible colleges like DLC, Harding, Pepperdine, Abilene, FHC, get trained to teach the Bible and then return to Europe, to Germany, Italy, Austria, Japan, and other places and carry the Gospel to them. From that perspective, the war did a tremendous amount of good: It helped open the eyes of the brotherhood to what needed to be done in foreign countries; it helped open the eyes of individuals, both men and women, to what needed to be done in the countries where they had just been combatting the forces of evil; and it helped prepare the hearts and lives of Germans, Italians, Japanese, and others to the pure, simple, beautiful message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Following World War 2, we saw the greatest increase in missionaries and mission families that the Restoration Movement had seen, up to that point. Eventually, our Christian colleges, as I mentioned last week, finally realized they needed to start teaching missions theory and missions practice to Bible majors and mission majors if they were going to prepare the brotherhood for serving overseas. From many different perspectives, then, World War 2 did a great amount of good for spreading the gospel of Christ.

NON-INSTITUTIONALISM:

The philosophy of the “noninstitutional movement” found its greatest strength beginning in the decade of the 60s. The movement, within the effort to return to a biblical pattern for Christianity, “hinged on whether local churches should contribute funds to the growing network of institutions formally and informally associated with Churches of Christ, including colleges, schools, and benevolent institutions” (*Stone-Campbell Encyclopedia*, “Noninstitutional Movement,” pages 567-569, by David Edwin Harrell, Jr; 567). Yet, it was in the 1950s when the movement began dividing with the “mainstream” congregations.

A campaign hosted by Abilene Christian College in 1947 was one key impetus to the rise of the noninstitutional movement. The school launched a drive to raise three million dollars and they made efforts to secure support from churches themselves (Hailey, 250). That particular controversy was intense but did not last long. Earlier, in 1933, in an echo of Daniel Sommers, a C. R. Nichol had already written that financing benevolent institutions out of the church treasury was equivalent to the missionary society (Hailey, 251).

Another impetus for the movement came in the 1940s when G. C. Brewer and Otis Gatewood of the Broadway church of Christ in Lubbock, TX, began promoting the concept of “sponsoring congregations.” This concept allowed one, generally larger, church to receive funds from many, smaller congregations and funnel those funds to a missionary.

Around the same time, the “Herald of Truth” radio program was also initiated, under the same umbrella of a “sponsoring congregation” concept. This was the first “serious effort of ‘Non-Progressive’ Churches of Christ to mount a viable alternative to the Missionary Societies of the ‘Progressive’ churches. It was the beginning of the ‘Sponsoring Church Cooperative,’ and was a very logical extension and development of the ongoing controversy over church support of colleges and orphan homes” (253).

The nationwide radio program known as “Herald of Truth” had its origins in the work of two preachers in Iowa: James Walter Nichols and James D. Willeford. Their vision was for the program to go nationwide; at that point, it broadcast in Iowa and Wisconsin. In 1951, the Highland church of Christ in Abilene assumed oversight of the program and Nichols presented the first Herald of Truth radio program, titled “The Churches of Christ Salute You,” broadcast over ABC Radio Network on February 10, 1952. At its peak, 578 stations carried the broadcast. Herald of Truth was the first program sponsored by the churches of Christ to be heard nationwide on radio and TV and became a model for mass media evangelism.

Through the years, about 5,000 different congregations and over 150,000 individuals have supported the program (“Herald of Truth,” Tim Sensing, *Stone-Campbell Encyclopedia*, pages 383-384). Because of its massive growth and size, and perhaps due to overly-aggressive promoters of the effort, Herald of Truth became a lightning rod for those opposed to the “sponsoring church” concept. In 1954, it expanded to include TV; by 1968, it was broadcast on NBC from one coast to the other. It was also aired on the Armed Forces Radio and Television System. Sensing reports that 10% of the churches of Christ in Mexico can trace their existence back to the Herald of Truth broadcasts.

In 1949, a paper was established, the *Gospel Guardian*, which was a weekly “single-issue publication” (*Encyclopedia*, 568), edited by Fanning Yater Tant with Roy Cogdill serving as publisher. Its single issue was organizations, outside of the local congregation, supported by local churches. The opponents of these organizations, pejoratively referred to as “antis,” held debates in defense of their position. Two of the most well-known debates were the *Harper-Tant* debate and the *Cogdill-Woods* debate.

Fanning Yater Tant was the afore-mentioned editor of the *Gospel Guardian*. E. R. Harper was the minister of the Fifth and Highland church of Christ in Abilene, TX and speaker for the Herald of Truth radio program. These two debated twice, in 1954 and 1955.

Tant's co-worker with the *Gospel Guardian* and its publisher, Roy Cogdill, debated Guy N. Woods, also twice. The first was in 1957, in Birmingham, AL while the second was in Newberry, TN in 1961. The prior debate in printed form is considered the "landmark" debate on the issue (*Encyclopedia*, 568); the "definitive debate" in the words of James Stephen Wolfgang (225).

Roy E. Cogdill ("Roy E. Cogdill," *Stone-Campbell Encyclopedia*, 225-226, James Stephen Wolfgang) was born in Oklahoma in 1907 and educated at Abilene Christian College. He served as a department editor for *Firm Foundation* and an agent for subscriptions for the *Gospel Advocate*. He earned his law degree from Jefferson Law School in Dallas in 1937 and practiced law until he decided to be a full-time preacher in 1943. Prior to that, in 1938, he published a book, *The New Testament Church*. He preached in MO, TX and Canada. He established a publishing company which published Foy Wallace, Jr.'s two books *God's Prophetic Word* and *Bulwarks of the Faith* as well as Wallace's magazine, *Bible Banner*. He became one of the leading spokesmen for the noninstitutional movement and passed away in May, 1985.

Guy Napoleon Woods was born in 1908 and educated at Freed-Hardeman College under N. B. Hardeman. He preached in TN, KY, and TX. In 1945, he gave himself to full-time evangelistic work, debates, and writing, mostly through the *Gospel Advocate* in which he wrote 943 articles. He also penned twelve books, three of which were commentaries, as well as three volumes of sermons and two volumes of *Questions and Answers*, from his time conducting the Open Forum at Freed-Hardeman College. He conducted 150 debates and was a leading debater on the institutional issue ("Guy Napoleon Woods," *Stone-Campbell Encyclopedia*, pages 781-782, David H. Warren).

Orphan homes - In Cogdill's first affirmative, he suggests that if the "orphan home" were the local congregation, he would not object.¹ The issue, in Cogdill's mind, is: "which organization shall provide for, direct, control such work as the church is obligated to do in caring for the needy?"² The church does have the obligation to care for the destitute. But, "[t]he law of God does not authorize but one organic structure through which the church accomplishes its work. That is the local church, the congregation."³ Cogdill really does not deviate from the proposition.

Woods answers that argument, however, by pointing out that God appointed three institutions to work within their respective areas: civil government, the home, and the church.⁴ If a home is broken, and the church ("Christian brethren") replace that home, then the church is simply doing what the Scriptures authorize the church to do, based on James 1:27.⁵ Such a home would not be doing the work of the church but the work of a home which had previously

¹ *Debate*, 17.

² *Debate*, 19.

³ *Debate*, 25.

⁴ *Debate*, 30.

⁵ *Debate*, 37.

been broken up. He also answers the “parallel argument,” that is, whether orphan homes are truly parallel with the church. When the missionary society does its work, it is taking the place of the church.⁶

Sponsoring church idea - When it comes to the sponsoring church idea, Woods begins his affirmative argument by pointing to the great commission as it is recorded in Mark 16:15, 16. Taking the gospel to the whole country, much less the whole world, is inconceivable without cooperation among churches. Then, Woods argues that there is no single example, but rather a number of examples, of churches cooperating. If one way or method is explicitly commanded, Woods argues, then that is an exclusive method. But no such exclusion is found relative to cooperation.⁷

Individuals cooperated (2 Tim 4:9). An individual cooperated with several individuals (Rom 16:1-2; 1 Cor 16:15). There is also cooperation between disciples and others (Acts 11:27-30). Additionally, there are churches cooperating with needy saints, those in Macedonia and Achaia cooperating with saints in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8 & 9). Finally, there is cooperation between churches (Acts 15:1-32).

Cogdill tried to answer Woods’s arguments by focusing on two points. First, the churches that were *assisted* in the NT were assisted *only* when they were in need. He refused to accept the principle that the need to preach the Gospel was comparable, if not superior to, the need for food and clothing. Secondly, when it came to Acts 15, where the church in Jerusalem sent a letter to Gentile churches directing them on the way to have unity, Cogdill replied that that did not help Woods’s case. But Woods responded by saying Acts 15 deals with sharing a divine communication and if Cogdill’s position is correct, then one church could not send a *NT* to another church!

In the 1960s, the movement had become so heated, pulpits and magazine articles were consumed with the issues, that a division in the brotherhood occurred. It was not as large a division as the prior division with the Christian Churches / Disciples of Christ but it was just as bitter. Those opposing church-sponsored institutions withdrew and started their own “sound” congregations, sometimes with two congregations in the same, small community, sometimes across the street from each other, if only a mile apart. By the 1970s, noninstitutional preachers were “obsessed” (*Encyclopedia*, 569) with their position. Tant writes it was the Herald of Truth radio program and its ensuing controversy that final ruptured the fellowship of churches of Christ (254). When Tant wrote his history, he estimated that of the 14,000 congregations of the church of Christ, about 2,000 of them stood in the camp of the “noninstitutional” view.

WHERE WE ARE NOW:

I want to simply present figures on where churches of Christ are today. There is actually a directory for churches of Christ around the world but we do not have a copy but if it is notoriously difficult to give demographics on churches of Christ in the US, it is even harder to do so with churches of Christ in different countries throughout the world. But, we’ll present the information on the c of C in the US, updated to around 2014 (the information comes from the 2015 edition):

By the way, Bill Maguffee loaned me a history of churches of Christ written by Leroy Garrett, published in 1994 and at the time of the writing of that book, there were only 76

⁶ *Debate*, 38.

⁷ *Debate*, 196.

churches of Christ that identified themselves as holding to the doctrine of premillennialism. As I pointed out, in the 2006 and 2015 directories, there are no longer any who so identify.

There are 12,300 churches of Christ in the United States. 2,918 identify themselves as “noninstitutional.” The largest number of noninstitutional churches of Christ are found in TX, AL, KY, and FL. Michigan has 7 churches of Christ with this viewpoint but none are over 50 members.

There are less than 1,000 congregations who refuse to have separate Bible classes and these are divided into two groups: whether you can use individual containers for the grape juice (426 congregations) and whether you have to use only one cup (553). The Non-class, multiple cup group are concentrated in TX, OK and AR while the non-class, one cup group are in TX, MO, OK, and CA. Michigan has four congregations that insist on using one cup but have Bible classes and they have an attendance of 14, 25, 35, and 45. We have one that believes in one cup and do not have Bible classes and they have 8 members.

The average size of a church of Christ in the US is 142 members. Wayne County has the 25th highest number of congregations with over 6,200 members. Michigan has 183 congregations with 26,933 members but 18 counties with no church of Christ in it, representing 3.53% of the state population without a local church of Christ. Counties with no churches of Christ (and the pop of the county):

Alcona	10,368	Alger	9,498	Leelanau	21,761
Baraga	8,683	Antrim	23,248	Manistee	24,362
Dickinson	25,868	Gratiot	41,880	Missaukee	15,095
Ionia	64,277	Schoolcraft	8,157	Ontonagon	6,098
Mackinac	11,021	Arenac	15,175		
Oceana	25,929	Iron	11,326		
Osceola	23,249	Keweenaw	2,181		

Incidentally, how about counties with churches whose attendance is less than 50 (28 counties)?

Alpena (12)	28,805	Menominee (18)	23,595	Crawford (35)	13,764
Clinton (50)	78,731	Sanilac (20)	41,323	Eaton (33)	108,858
Houghton (25)	36,375	Barry (25)	59,283	Huron (26)	31,752
Kalkaska (35)	17,240	Cass (45)	52,144	Iosco (50)	25,161
Lake (35)	11,378	Chippewa (48)	38,710	Montcalm (25)	63,215
Newaygo (30)	47,787	Ogemaw (44)	21,148	Presque Isle (28)	12,850
Branch (48)	43,041	Charlevoix (27)	26,113	Clare (29)	30,447
Gogebic (8)	15,178	Hillsdale (40)	45,985	Luce (10)	6,430
Mecosta (30)	43,426	Roscommon (50)	23,664	St. Joseph (39)	60,662
Shiawassee (30)	68,210				

We have 23 colleges that are degree-granting institutions and 33 schools of preaching.

Cogdill-Woods Debate, The: A Discussion on what Constitutes Scriptural Cooperation Between Churches of Christ. Marion, IN: Cogdill Foundation, 1976.

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