

RESTORATION HISTORY

From the world that produced the movement to the question it leaves us today

A five-lesson historical journey

Five forces made restoration thinkable

01

REFORMATION

Scripture reclaimed as authority

02

PLURALISM

Many churches, each appealing to the Bible

03

REVIVAL

Conversion and individual response emphasized

04

FRONTIER

New communities loosened inherited structures

05

UNITY

Division made Christian oneness urgent

The movement did not appear suddenly; it emerged where these pressures converged.

British dissenters pursued restoration before the American frontier

01

PATTERN

Recover apostolic Christianity directly from the New Testament

02

NO STATE CHURCH

Reject national covenants and established-church control

03

NO CREED TEST

Refuse inherited confessions as terms of Christian fellowship

04

LOCAL ORDER

Practice congregational autonomy with plural local elders

05

WEEKLY TABLE

Center church life on the Lord’s Supper and mutual exhortation

The British streams supplied a restoration vocabulary before it became an American frontier movement.

Three British streams converged on a New Testament church

GLASITES / SANDEMANIANS

John Glas · Robert Sandeman
Spiritual kingdom
Weekly Lord's Supper
Plural unpaid elders

SCOTCH BAPTISTS

Archibald McLean · Robert Carmichael
Believer's immersion
Congregational autonomy
"Church of Christ" identity

HALDANE MOVEMENT

Robert & James Haldane
Independent
Traveling evangelism
Weekly communion

COMMON DIRECTION

Bypass establishments · recover apostolic practice · organize local congregations

Their methods differed, but each stream made restoration a concrete program rather than a slogan.

The movement began with a question about unity

PRESBYTERIANS · BAPTISTS · METHODISTS · CONGREGATIONALISTS · EPISCOPALIANS

“Are we following Scripture itself—or systems and traditions that have grown around it?”

UNITY

John 17:20–23 · 1 Corinthians 1:10–13 · Ephesians 4:4–6

SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 3:16–17 · Acts 2:42

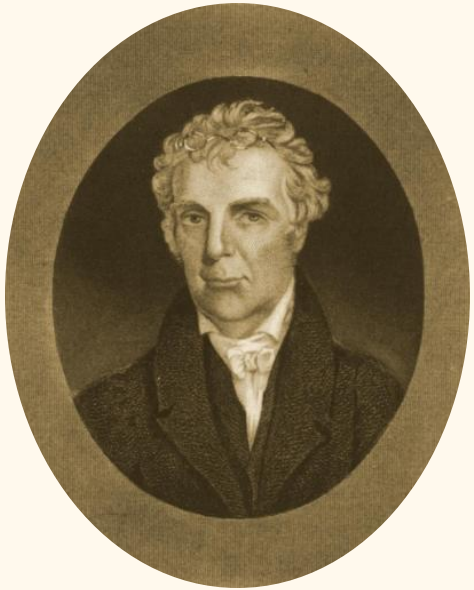


1801

Cane Ridge turned the frontier into a laboratory for change

The revival’s scale and energy helped Barton W. Stone move away from inherited denominational structures—and toward the conviction that Christ alone heads the church.

Stone and the Campbells supplied complementary answers



BARTON W. STONE

STONE

Freedom from denominational structures

Christ is the head of the church; unity matters more than inherited systems.

THOMAS CAMPBELL

A rule for Christian fellowship

Where the Bible speaks, Christians speak; human tests should not divide.

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL

A systematic appeal to Scripture

Restore New Testament Christianity in teaching, conversion, worship, and order.

Shared roots produced distinct British and American emphases

VIEW OF SCRIPTURE

British: apostolic blueprint
American: faith versus opinion
Both: Scripture governs

THE NATURE OF FAITH

British: faith as assent
American: assent plus response
Immersion marked commitment

KINSHIP

PURPOSE & SPIRIT

British: local purity
American: Christian union
Different instincts shaped growth

SHARED PRACTICE

Congregational autonomy
Believer's immersion
Weekly Lord's Supper

Restoration meant rebuilding Christian life from the New Testament

THE CHURCH

Christ as head
Local congregations
Elders and deacons

WORSHIP

Singing and prayer
Preaching and the Lord's Supper
Giving

RESTORE

THE GOSPEL

Death, burial, resurrection
Faith, repentance, baptism

IDENTITY

Not a denominational label
Simply: Christian

Canadian Restoration began through two routes that soon met

MARITIMES · 1810S

Alexander Crawford
John R. Stewart
Prince Edward Island
Nova Scotia assemblies

UPPER CANADA · 1820S–40S

Scottish immigrants
Scotch Baptist enclaves

AMERICAN INFLUX

Christian Connection
Disciples preachers
Revival evangelism
Missionary societies

DUAL ORIGINS

British immigrant congregations · American evangelistic networks

Parallel streams created a distinctly Canadian movement—and the tensions that came with it.

Canada exposed a practical fault line in ministry

MUTUAL MINISTRY · JAMES BEATY SR.

Plural unpaid lay leaders protected congregational participation and resisted a return to clergy–laity hierarchy.

SUPPORTED EVANGELISTS · DAVID OLIPHANT JR.

Located preachers, missionary cooperation, and formal education could sustain evangelism across a growing frontier.

The practical question

Could mutual exhortation sustain frontier mission—or were supported leaders and institutions required?

The debate tested how restoration principles should operate under frontier conditions.

Unity fractured over how Scripture authorizes practice

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

If the New Testament commands singing but does not mention instruments, does silence exclude—or permit—them?

MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

Can Christians create larger organizations for biblical work, or is the congregation the only authorized unit?

The deeper issue

What counts as authority: direct command, approved example, necessary inference, or general principle?

The movement that opposed division now divided over how to interpret the same Scripture.

1906 marked a separation already decades in the making

1840s

Controversies grow

Instrumental music, missionary societies, and centralization become tests of authority.

1906

U.S. Religious Census

Churches of Christ are listed separately from the Disciples of Christ.

A marker, not a birthday

The census did not create Churches of Christ in a single year; it recorded a separation that had developed throughout the nineteenth century.

Prairie geography pulled the movement southward—and west

1888

Carman, Manitoba

Families from Meaford, Ontario establish an enduring Church of Christ along the Boyne River.

1945

Western Christian College

Founded at Radville, Saskatchewan, it develops ministry training for Western Canada.

Why the U.S. model prevailed

North–south routes and U.S. evangelistic networks favored autonomous, a cappella Churches of Christ.

One Restoration root grew into three modern streams



Shared origins do not erase real differences—but they change how the family story is told.

LESSON 5

Modern Churches of Christ carried the same tension into new settings

PEOPLE

David Lipscomb
James A. Harding
J. W. McGarvey
Marshall Keeble

INSTITUTIONS

Bible colleges
Publishing houses
Mission work
Radio and television

CULTURE

Race and civil rights
Women's roles
Higher education
Changing worship

WHAT ENDURES

Scripture is authoritative · Christ heads the church · There is one body · Christians seek unity · The gospel is proclaimed

The same movement that questioned institutions eventually built them—keeping restoration's central questions alive.



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THE BIG GOAL

Why Start a Restoration Movement?



Tired of Division

Different church rulebooks and party names split families apart.

Back to the Blueprint

If we follow only the New Testament, we can just be Christians.

Unity for Everyone

No extra human rules required to follow Jesus together.

A GOLDEN RULE FOR STUDY

“Where the Bible speaks, we speak. Where the Bible is silent, we are silent.”

If God asked for it, we do it. If He didn’t, we don’t force it on others.

THE TRIPARTITE PATTERN

The CENI Framework

PILLAR 01

Command

Explicit apostolic directives binding on all believers.

PILLAR 02

Example

Normative primitive practices approved by apostles.

PILLAR 03

Inference (Conclusion)

Unavoidable deductions derived from biblical statements.

A HELPFUL CAUTION

Keeping the Heart in the Word



The Legalism Trap

Treating the Bible like a cold tax manual instead of God's love story.

Arguing over tiny technicalities while losing love and grace.



The Jesus Standard

Every command points us back to Jesus' life and mercy.

True biblical obedience always produces love for neighbors.

SUMMARY

How We Can Read the Bible Together

PRINCIPLE 1

Read in Context

Notice who is speaking, who is listening, and why.

PRINCIPLE 2

Keep It Christ-Centered

The entire New Testament tells the story of Jesus saving us.

PRINCIPLE 3

Focus on Unity

In essentials unity, in opinions liberty, in all things love.

A MOTTO FOR TRUE PEACE

“In essentials, unity.
In non-essentials, liberty.
In all things, love.”

The heart of the Restoration plea: stand firm on the Gospel while giving each other grace in everyday opinions.

Are we restorers?

Not merely members of the “right” tradition—but people willing to compare belief, practice, and inherited custom with the Word of God.

01 **What did the Restoration Movement get right?**

02 **Where did the Restoration Movement struggle?**

03 **What does restoration mean for us today?**