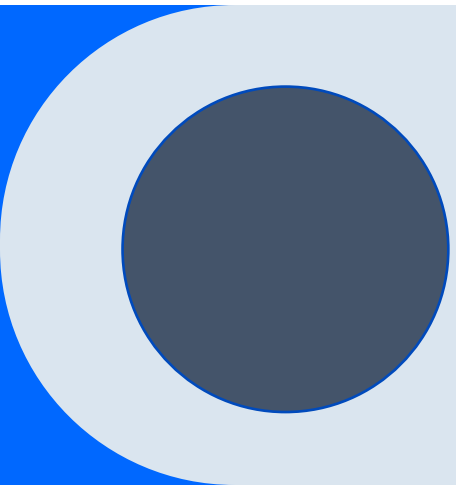




Seeking Undenominational Christianity

Tom Rucker – Hardin Valley Church



Ephesian 4:1-5

¹ I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all **humility** and **gentleness**, with **patience**, **bearing with one another in love**, ³ eager to maintain the **unity of the Spirit** in the bond of **peace**. ⁴ There is **one body** and **one Spirit**—just as you were called to the **one hope** that belongs to your call— ⁵ **one Lord, one faith, one baptism**, ⁶ **one God** and Father of all, who is over **all** and through **all** and in **all**.



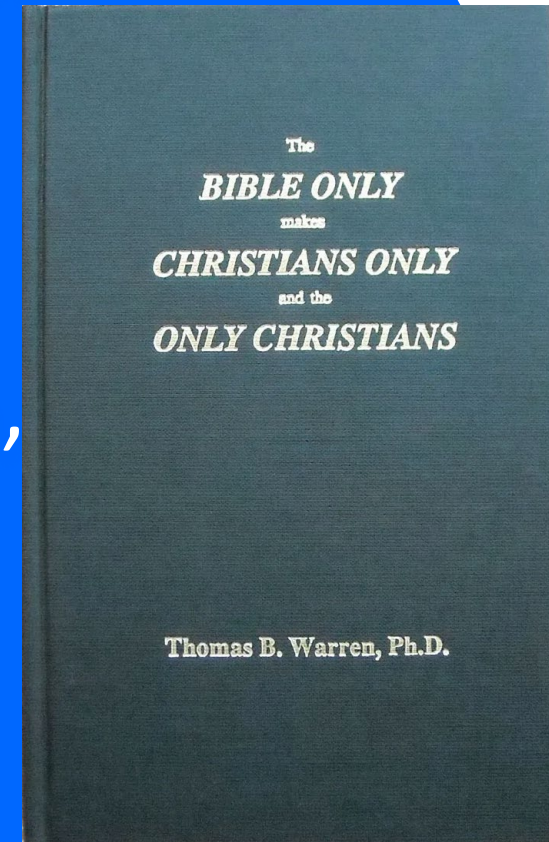
Seeking Undenominational Christianity

The Churches of Christ



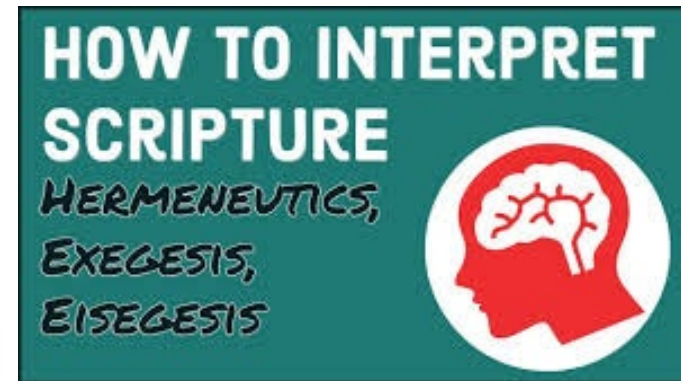
Discussion

- What factors led many to believe that members of the Churches of Christ were the only Christians?
 - Is it true?
 - Do many today still believe this?
- This view affected how we viewed our history: Not as an attempt to reform an existing church, but that the church had disappeared and was reborn in the time of the Campbells.
 - Is that true?
 - Do many today still view it this way?



Marks of Identity – 1906-1945

- Three Part Hermeneutic and Debating
 - By the 1880s a new way of interpreting the Bible gained popularity that grew out of controversies over instrumental music, the missionary society, Sunday Schools, and communion cups.
 - The hermeneutic focused on what practices the Bible authorized.
 - Direct Command
 - Approved Example
 - Necessary Inference
 - Both sides of the communion cup issue used the same hermeneutic but disagreed on its application.
 - This hermeneutic fit well in debates.
 - Is it a complete hermeneutic?



Marks of Identity – 1906-1945

- More Uniformity in Churches of Christ
 - Through the influence of religious papers, colleges, traveling evangelists and published debates.
 - Despite autonomy of congregations, there developed an amazing amount of conformity in
 - Beliefs
 - Positions on issues
 - Worship styles
 - Religious papers enforced conformity by writing up “Unsound” ministers and congregations, marking them as false teachers.

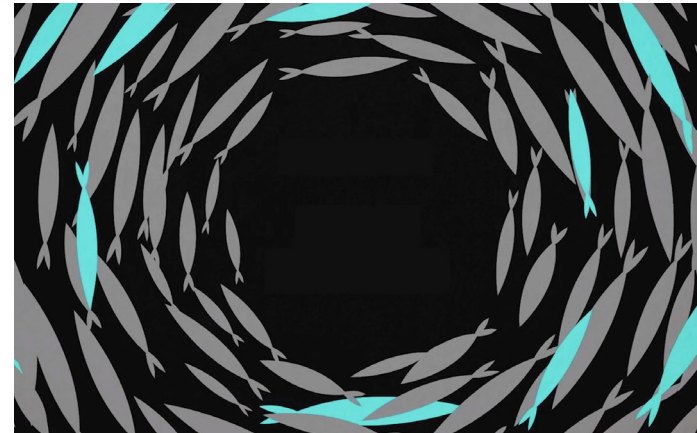


Summary of Gospel Meeting theology:

- *Why I am a Member of the Church of Christ*, Leroy Brownlow, 1945
 - Founded by/on/at the scriptural builder, foundation, place, time.
 - Only one church – His church (Church of Christ).
 - Scriptural name, organization, creed (Bible).
 - Bible rightly divided (O.T. not in effect).
 - Undenominational
 - Scriptural mission work (no society) and salvation path (not faith only).
 - Scriptural baptism (immersion for forgiveness of sins).
 - Teaches child of God can sin so as to be eternally lost.
 - Scriptural observance of the Lord's Supper (every Sunday).
 - Scriptural music in worship (acapella).
 - Salvation in Christ's church (Church of Christ).

Marks of Identity – 1906-1945

- The Non-sectarian Restoration Christianity Dream
 - Yet a sizeable minority of preachers and perhaps a majority of members kept alive the Restoration dream of Christian Unity through a non-sectarian spirit.



- When they said they were undenominational, they did not mean they were the only Christians, but that they wanted to point all Christians beyond denominationalism boundaries to the grace of God in Christ as revealed in the Bible.

Marks of Identity – 1946-1967

- Growth in Missions –
 - Germany, Japan, Korea, India, Africa, Caribbean, Philippines, etc.
- Boom in Education
 - Growth in existing schools – Lipscomb, Abilene Christian, Freed-Hardeman, Harding, Perpperdine
 - New Schools started - Alabama Christian (Faulkner), Florida Christian (Florida College), Oklahoma Christian/Columbia Christian, York, Lubbock Christian, Ohio Valley/Northwestern Christian, Michigan Christian (Rochester), Crowley's Ridge.
- Buildings, Programs, and Ministries
 - Madison, Herald of Truth, World's Fair



Controversy and Division – 1946-1967

- Institutional/Non-Institutional Controversy
 - NonInstitutionalism - exclusiveness and sectarianism
- Now other side of the tracks – Middleclass; acceptance.
 - Leading to wealth, more cultural mindedness, and a disconnect between doctrine and life.
- Many still sectarian in attitude, thinking they were the only Christians because they felt secure in their salvation because they belonged to the true church and were “right” on issues.





Thank you

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