



Seeking Undenominational Christianity

Tom Rucker – Hardin Valley Church



Cane Ridge Trip Saturday July 1st



"The Last Will And Testament Of The Springfield Presbytery"

The Presbytery of Springfield, sitting at Cane-ridge, in the county of Bourbon, being, through a gracious Providence, in more than ordinary bodily health, growing in strength and size daily; and in perfect soundness and composure of mind; and knowing that it is appointed for all delegated bodies once to die; and considering that the life of every such body is very uncertain, do make and ordain this our last Will and Testament, in a manner and form following, viz:

Imprimis. We will, that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large; for there is but one Body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling.

Item. We will, that our name of distinction, with its Reverend title be forgotten, that there be but one Lord over God's heritage, and his name one.

Item. We will, that our power of making laws for the government of the church, and executing them by delegated authority, forever cease; that the people may have free course to the Bible, and adopt the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Item. We will, that candidates for the Gospel ministry henceforth study the Holy Scripture with fervent prayer, and obtain license from God to preach the simple Gospel, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven without mixture of philosophy, vain, remorse, deceit, traditions of men, or the rudiments of the world. And let none henceforth take this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

Item. We will, that the church of Christ resume her native right of internal government—try her candidates for the ministry, as to their soundness in the faith, acquaintance with experimental religion, gravity and aptness to teach; and admit no other proof of their authority but Christ speaking in them. We will, that the church of Christ look to the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest; and that she resume her primitive right trying those who say they are apostles and are not.

Item. We will, that each particular church, as a body, actuated by the same spirit, choose her own preacher, and support him by a free will offering, without a written call or subscription—admit members—remove offences; and never henceforth delegate her right of government to any man or set of men whatever.

Item. We will, that the people henceforth take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven; and as many as are offended with other books, which stand in competition with it, may cast them into the fire if they choose; for it is better to enter into life having one book, than having many to be cast into hell.

Item. We will, that preachers and people, cultivate a spirit of mutual forbearance; pray more and dispute less; and while they behold the signs of the times, look up, and confidently expect that redemption draweth nigh.

Item. We will, that our weak brethren, who may have been wishing to make the Presbytery of Springfield their king, and not what is now become of it, betake themselves to the Rock of Ages, and follow Jesus for the future.

Item. We will, that the Synod of Kentucky examine every member, who may be suspected of having departed from the Confession of Faith, and suspend every such suspected heretic immediately; in order that the oppressed may go free, and taste the sweets of gospel liberty.

Item. We will, that Je _____, the author of two letters lately published in Lexington, be encouraged in his zeal to destroy partyism. We will, moreover, that our past conduct be examined into by all who may have correct information; but let foreigners beware of speaking evil things which they know not.

Item. Finally, we will, that all our sister bodies read their Bibles carefully, that they may see their fate there determined, and prepare for death before it is too late.

Springfield Presbytery } L.S.
June 28th, 1804

Robert Marshall,
John Dunlavy,
Richard M. Neman,

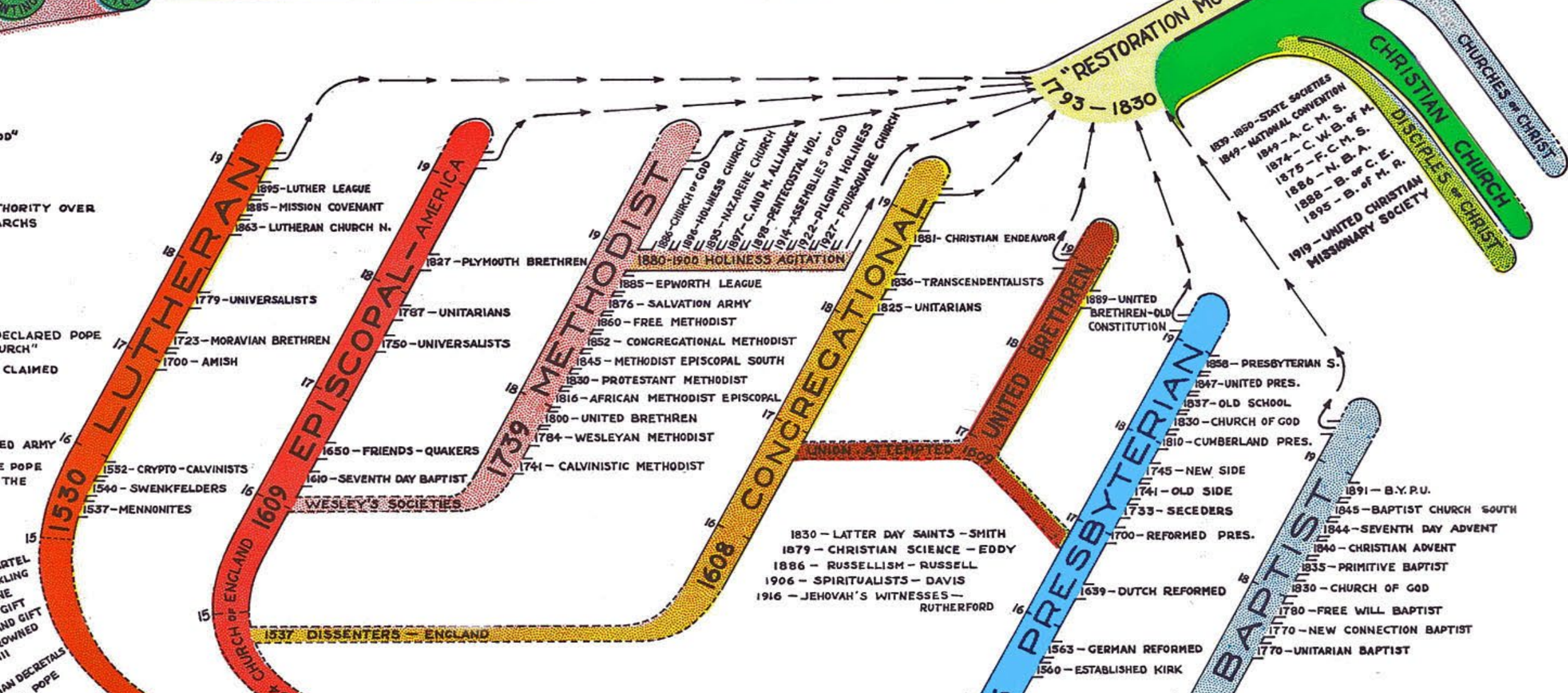
B. W. Stone
John Thompson,
David Purviance.

} Witnesses.

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**.

APOSTASY FROM IT AND RETURN TO IT - HISTORICALLY TRACED



IMMUNIT



Seeking Undenominational Christianity

The Churches of Christ



What to do with Differences?

- Some refused to split with their brothers over the issues and ill feelings caused after the war.
- T. B Larimore – Educator and Traveling Evangelist operating Mars Hill Academy (Bible College)
 - Never personally supported the Missionary Society or instrumental music in worship but refused to declare publicly on the issues because he believed the body of Christ should not divide over such matters.
 - He saw his duty to proclaim the good news of the N. T. and had nothing to do with questions over which “the wisest and best of men disagreed.”
 - Don’t make a test on fellowship anything not a salvation issue.

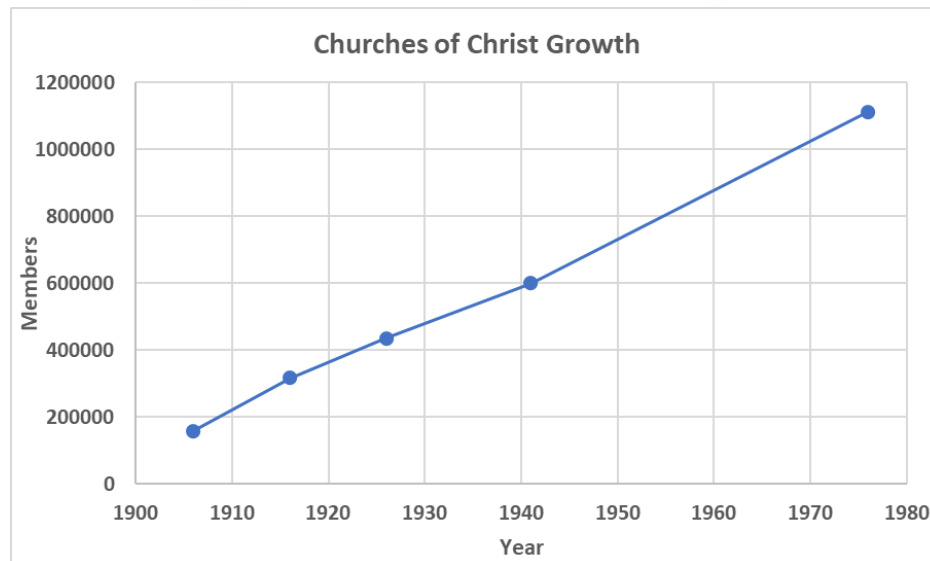


Discussion

- How can a group that began as a unity movement splinter?
- How could significant differences between the Stone and Campbell groups be overcome for unity in 1832 while seemingly less important issues cause division by 1906?
- If the doctrines at the heart of the gospel always center on Christ, how can issues that do not divide us?
- Can we fellowship with those who disagree with us on the issues discussed in this lesson? On other issues? What would that look like?

Growth of the Church of Christ “Denomination”

- 1906 census listed Churches of Christ as 158,658 members.
 - Disciples of Christ had 982,701 members (mainly in the North).
- 1916 census reported 317,937 members.
- 1926 census reported 435,714 members.
- By 1941 estimates grew to 6000,000.



Disciples of Christ

- 1920-1960 Split
 - The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
 - Theologically more liberal. Polity.
 - Educational Institutions: TCU, Transylvania University, Elon University, Bethany College, etc.
 - A major portion joined with the Evangelical and Reformed Churches in 1957 to form the United Church of Christ.
 - Independent Christian Churches
(Christian Churches/ Churches of Christ)
 - More conservative. Congregational.
 - Educational Institutions: Milligan University, Johnson University.

What is a Denomination?

Webster Definition

- *Denomination*: NAME, DESIGNATION
- A religious denomination is a subgroup within a religion that operates under a common name, tradition, and identity, beliefs and practices.
- Synonyms: Sect



What makes a Church a Denomination?

- A religious group is a denomination if it wears a distinctive name which “denominates” if and separates it from others seeking to follow Christ
- A religious group is denominational if it possess a sectarian attitude.
- It may or may not have a legislative or executive organization, an authoritative creed, or a basic doctrine that is extrabiblical.

Taken from “Redigging the Wells,” Monroe Hawley



What is a sectarian attitude?

Webster Definition

Sectarian: characteristic of a sect; limited in character of scope; narrow or bigoted.

Sectarian Attitude: excessive devotion to a particular sect, especially in religion.

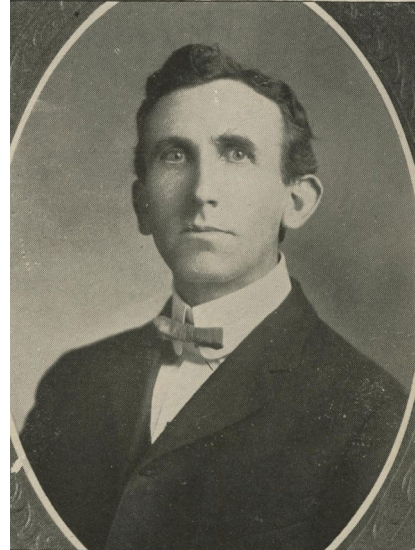
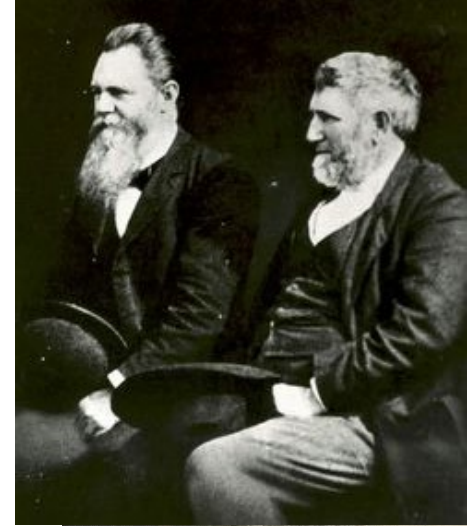
A Sectarian Spirit Begins in Churches of Christ

- Three Traditions Develop
 - The Texas Tradition
 - Led by the Austin McGary or *Firm Foundation* out of Austin, TX.
 - Pushed a sectarian agenda which demanded unity on many fronts as a prerequisite for fellowship.
 - The Missouri Tradition
 - Led by Daniel Sommer of the *Octographic Review* out of Indy.
 - Opposed Sectarianism of Texas and Institutionalism of the Tennesseans and pushed for separation from both.



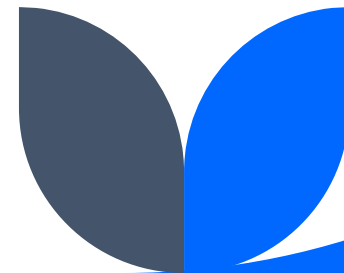
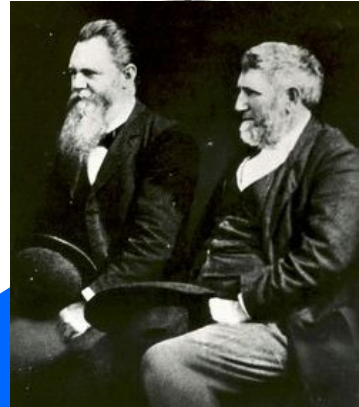
A Sectarian Spirit Begins in Churches of Christ

- Three Traditions Develop
 - The Tennessee Tradition (Or NBS Tradition)
 - Led by David Lipscomb of the *Gospel Advocate* and James A. Harding of *The Way* (both the NBS).
 - Tried to discuss the issues in a matter of fact even tone without attacking others.
 - Promoted avoidance of Sectarianism.
 - Article by J. N. Armstrong in *The Way* titled “United Yet Divided” in 1902 is an appeal to think about and practice unity in diversity. Commitments to unity transcend their disagreements.



A Sectarian Spirit Begins in Churches of Christ

- Issues Debated
 - Rebaptism of those who had been immersed but without the understanding of remission of sins versus “right had of fellowship.
 - Institutionalism – Christian Schools, Orphanages
 - “Laying on of hands” in appointment of elders, deacons, and evangelists.
 - Introduction of innovations: hymnbooks, projectors, church buildings, Sunday Schools.

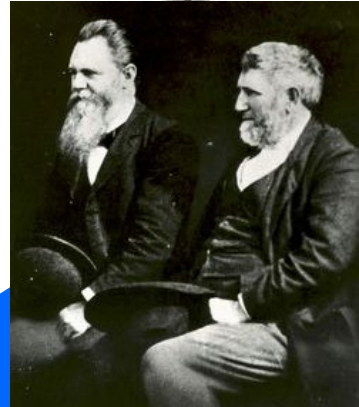
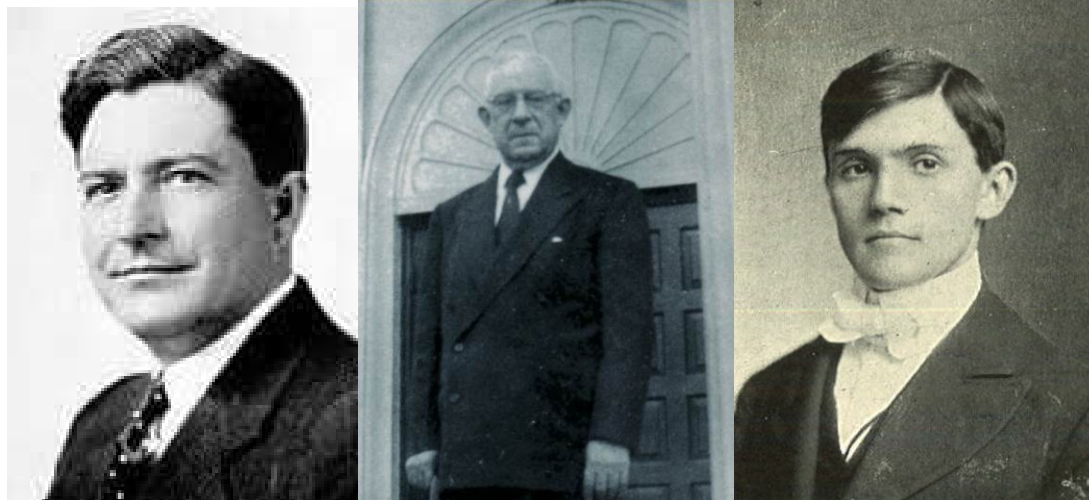


A Sectarian Spirit Begins in Churches of Christ

- Issues Debated (Cont.)
 - One cup/alcohol in communion.
 - Involvement in civil government
 - Premillennialism

- Other debaters:

- Foy Wallace
- G. C. Brewer
- R. H. Boll



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?
- What are some dangers of developing our beliefs and theology through debates?
 - Where debates helpful or harmful?



Thank you

Tom Rucker

Hardin Valley Church of Christ

ruckert@frontiernet.net