



Seeking Undenominational Christianity

Tom Rucker – Hardin Valley Church





Seeking Undenominational Christianity

The Restoration Movement



Ephesians 4

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**.

Frontier American Religion and the Need for Unity

- A New View of Religious Freedom
 - No Religious group dominated all colonies.
 - Freedom from church or clerical authority.
 - Freedom from tradition. Read the Bible for themselves.
 - Freedom to begin new churches.
- A New View of Religious Authority
 - Freedom from recognized hierarchy, creeds, and educated clergy.
 - *Sola Scripture* evolved into every Christian had the right to interpret the Bible for himself or herself.
 - Powerful preachers and publishers became the authority.



Barton Stone and Christian Unity

- Barton W. Stone(1772-1844)
 - Born in Maryland and raised a nominal Episcopalian.
 - After his father died in 1779, he moved with his family to Virginia where he attended Baptist and Methodist churches.
 - He enrolled to become a lawyer in a “log college” in North Carolina run by Presbyterian minister, David Cardwell.
 - Influenced by Cardwell and revivalist James McGready, he felt called to preach.
 - Stone struggled with his conversion, his call to preach, and the traditional doctrines of Trinity and predestination before becoming ordained to preach.



Barton Stone and Christian Unity

- Barton W. Stone(1772-1844)
 - In 1796, he made a trek across Tennessee and Kentucky preaching and searching for God’s will for his life.
 - In 1798 he sought ordination from the Transylvania Presbytery at Cane Ridge, Kentucky who agreed to let him give his confession of adoption of the Westminster Confession of Faith by saying “I do as far as I see it consistent with the word of God.”
 - He was assigned to minister to the Presbyterian churches at Cane Ridge and Concord, Kentucky.



Barton Stone and Christian Unity

- The Cane Ridge Meeting House



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Barton Stone and Christian Unity

- The Cane Ridge Revival
 - In August 1801, Cane Ridge was the site of the largest and most famous camp meeting revival in American History.



Barton Stone and Christian Unity

- The Cane Ridge Revival
 - Crowds estimated from 10,000 to 30,000 heard Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian ministers preach repentance.



Barton Stone and Christian Unity

- The Cane Ridge Revival
 - Many listeners experienced “religious exercises.”
 - Some fell faint to the ground.
 - Some jerked back and forth and made a sound like a bark.
 - Others felt bodily agitation and tried to run away.
 - Some danced back and forth in place.
 - A few laughed a hearty, solemn laugh.



The Restoration Movement

Barton Stone and Christian Unity

- The Cane Ridge Revival
 - Barton Stone believed his whole life these were evidence of the Holy Spirit's working through the unusual time circumstances.
 - Although he believed the Spirit could work in dramatic ways to convict some people of their sin, he did not believe it to be universal or necessary to be mature.



The Restoration Movement



Barton Stone and Christian Unity

- The Effect of the Cane Ridge Revival
 - These experiences convinced Stone and others the importance of Christian unity. If the Spirit could come in response to Baptist, Methodist, **and** Presbyterian preaching, then the differences between these denominations must not be matters of the gospel.
 - The unity among Christians must be the goal of all who claim to follow Christ.
 - “Let Christian unity be our northern star.”
 - Seeing many freely respond to the gospel and the Spirit made them at home with limited but free will theology.



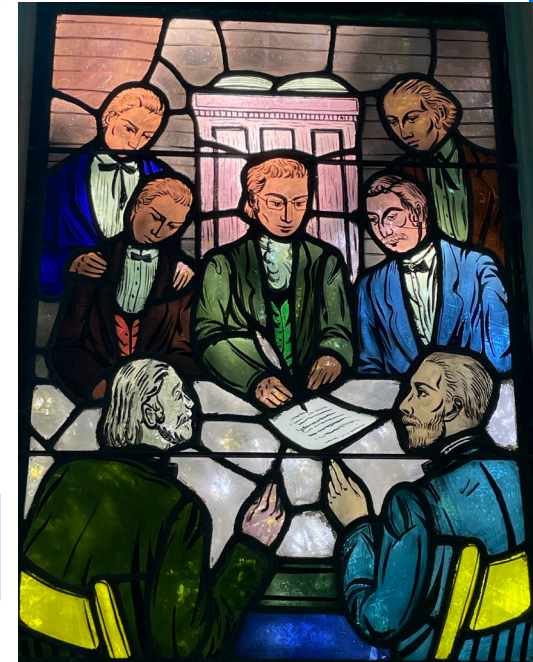
Barton Stone and Christian Unity

- The Last Will and Testament
 - The Presbyterian Synod of Kentucky questioned Stone and five others about the revival, their open stance toward others, and their doubts about Calvinism.
 - They broke away and formed their own association, the Springfield Presbytery.
 - Within a year they decided the association worked against biblical unity and disbanded.
 - In 1804, they gave their reasons in *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*.



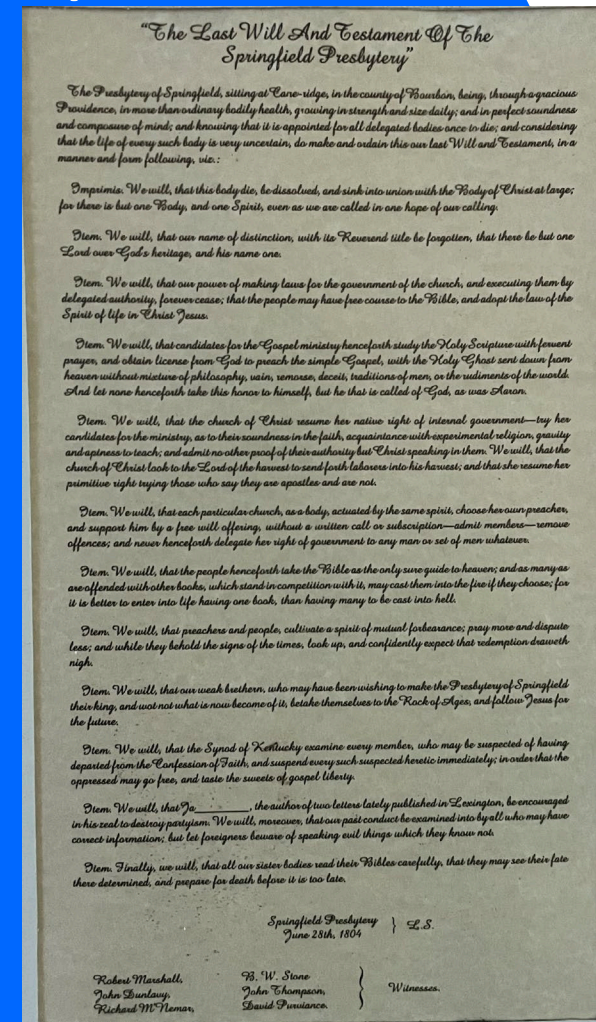
Barton Stone and Christian Unity

- Summary of The Last Will and Testament - We Will:
 - This body die and have Union with the Body of Christ at large.
 - Our name be forgotten and there be one Lord and His name one.
 - Our power of making laws cease and people have free course to Bible.
 - Candidates for Gospel Ministry henceforth study and be called and get their license from God to preach.
 - The church of Christ assume self government
 - Each particular church choose her own preacher.
 - People take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven.
 - Preachers and people take a spirit of forbearance.
 - People follow Jesus for the future.
 - Sister bodies read the Bible and prepare for their death before it is too late.



Discussion

- Which of the items in the *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* do you think are important?
- How have they affected what we do today?



Barton Stone and Christian Unity

- Growth of the Stone Movement
 - At the suggestion of Rice Haggard, a former associate of James O'Kelly, Stone and his followers soon called themselves **Christians** and established congregations they called **Churches of Christ** or **Christian Churches**.
 - The question of baptism arose by 1807; and eventually the Stone Churches practiced believer's immersion but did not make it a test of fellowship. Stone feared making it a test of fellowship would exclude more Christians than a creed.
 - Stone received opposition on two theological views: He did not accept the ideas of substitutional atonement and the Trinity.

Discussion

- By choosing a name to call themselves and their churches, did these Christians intend to start a new denomination?
- Was choosing a name a good thing?
- Did it lead to Christian unity?
- Did it lead to conformity in the group?
- What brings conformity of a group?
- What affect does choosing an exclusive name have relative to seeking undenominational Christianity?

