



# Seeking Undenominational Christianity

Tom Rucker – Hardin Valley Church



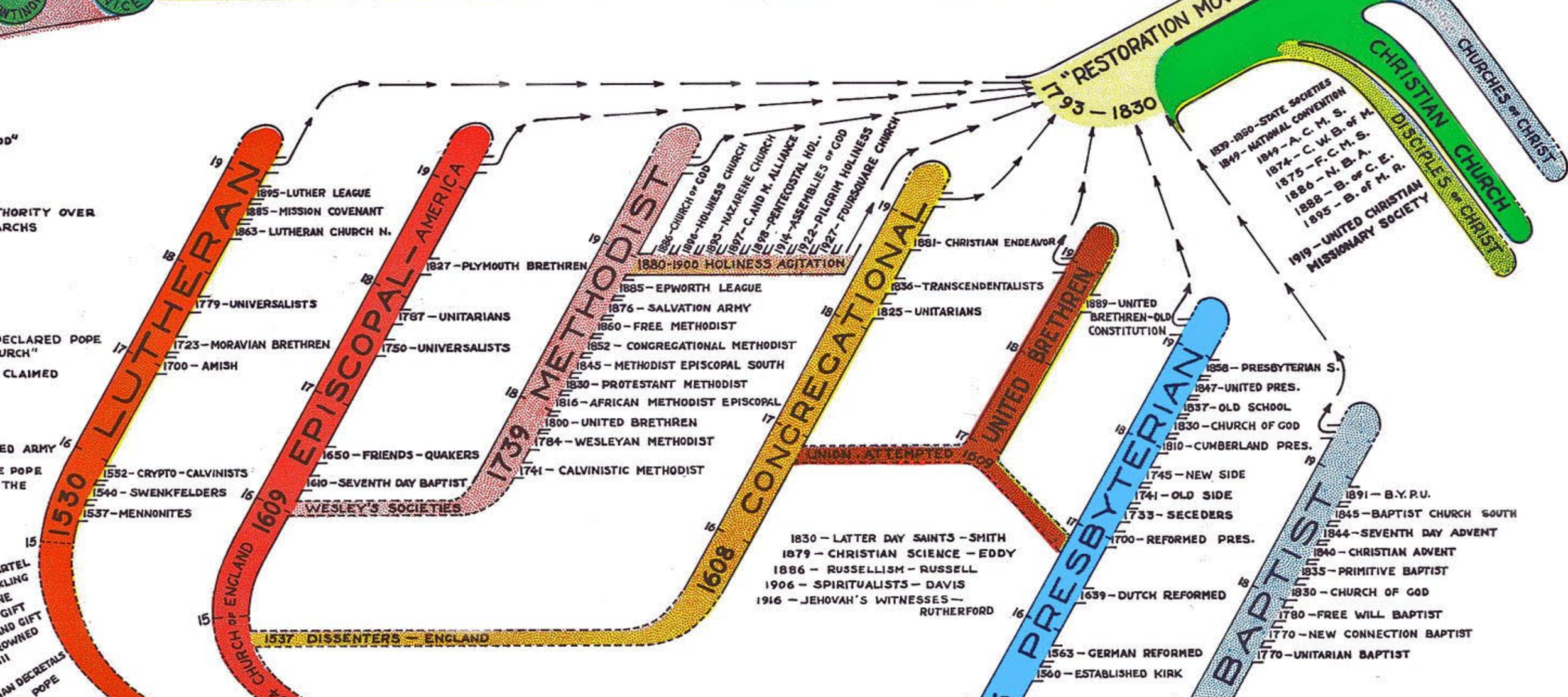


# Seeking Undenominational Christianity

The Restoration Movement



# APOSTASY FROM IT AND RETURN TO IT - HISTORICALLY TRACED



T.M.C.M.T.

## Psalm 133

- <sup>1</sup> Behold, how good and pleasant it is  
when brothers dwell in **unity!**
- <sup>2</sup> It is like the precious oil on the head,  
running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron,  
running down on the collar of his robes!
- <sup>3</sup> It is like the dew of Hermon,  
which falls on the mountains of Zion!  
For there the Lord has commanded the blessing,  
life forevermore.

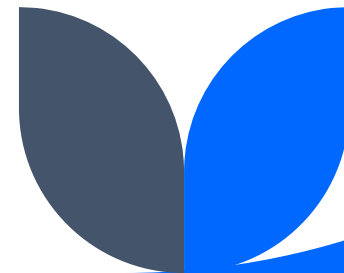
HOW GOOD AND PLEASANT  
IT IS WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE  
LIVE TOGETHER IN UNITY!

PSALM 133:1 NIV



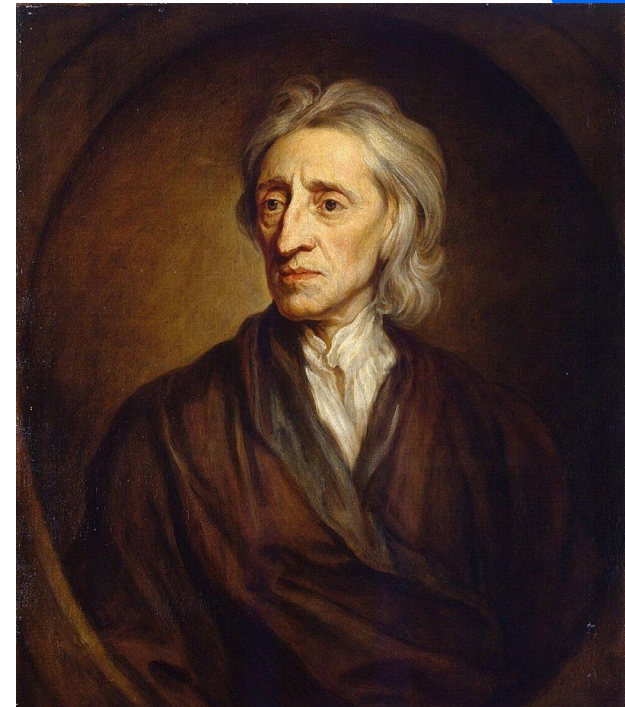
# Frontier American Religion and the Need for Unity

- 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.



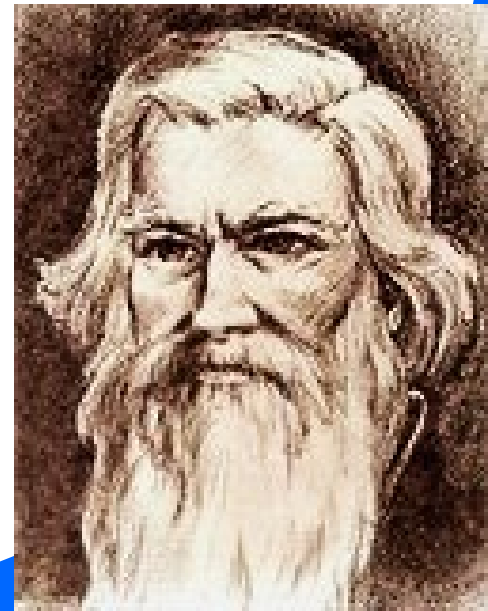
# Frontier American Religion and the Need for Unity

- John Locke (1632-1704)
  - Enlightenment Rationalism – Supernatural Christianity is completely reasonable.
  - Wrote on religious toleration.
- Western Frontier Communities
  - Small communities could not support multiple churches of different denominations.
  - Christians from different denominational backgrounds met together posing potential conflict of ideas and leadership.



# Christians in the South

- James O'Kelly (1735-1826)
  - In **1793**, he and others broke from Asbury's leadership of the Methodist and the episcopal form of church government and began calling themselves **Republican Methodists**.
  - In **1794**, they began calling themselves "**Christians**" to the exclusion of other names and took the Bible as their only creed.
  - Eventually adopted six "Cardinal Principles of the Christian Church (on which all could agree):



# Christians in the South

- James O'Kelly (1735-1826) - Six Cardinal Principles
  1. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church.
  2. The name Christian should be used to the exclusion of all party and sectarian names.
  3. The Holy Bible, or Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is our only creed, and sufficient rule of faith and practice.
  4. Christian character, or vital piety, is the only test of church fellowship and membership.
  5. The right of private judgment and the liberty of conscience are the privilege and duty of all.
  6. The union of all followers of Christ that the world may believe.
- Produced ~ 10,000 members in VA and NC.



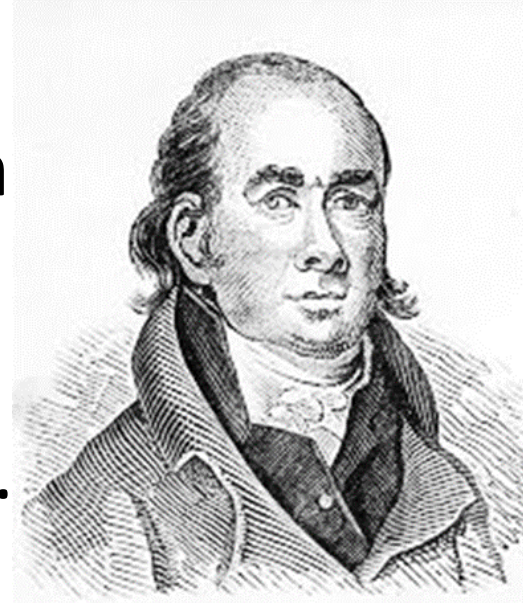
# Discussion

- Viewing O'Kelly's Six Cardinal Principles not a creed of faith but as Cardinal Principles of Christian Unity, are they a good summary of what it takes to have unity?
- What would you add or subtract from the list?



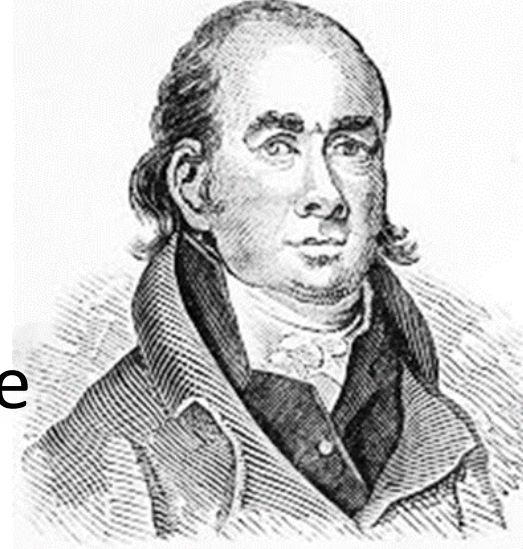
# The New England Christian Connection

- Abner Jones (1772-1841)
  - A physician and preacher in Vermont, with other free-will Baptists formed a congregation in 1801 in Vermont, taking the name **Christian**.
- Elias Smith (1769-1846)
  - A Baptist minister, formed a **Christian** congregation in 1802 in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.
  - A fiery proponent of religious freedom.
  - Published the “Harold of Christian Liberty” in 1808.



# The New England Christian Connection

- Jones and Smith met in 1803.
- By 1808 they had established 14 congregations of **Christians** in New England.
- Because of their insistence on acceptance of religious diversity, their movement eventually splintered.
  - Some became Unitarians.
  - Some joined the Adventist.
  - Some joined the O’Kelly Christians in the South and the Stone Movement to form the “Christian Connection.”
  - Those remaining joined the Congregationalist in 1931.



# Discussion

- What did the O'Kelly and the Smith/Jones Christian have in common?
- How were they different?
- What kind of unity did they have?
- What can we learn from them?

**CHRISTIAN  
CONNECTION**

