



Seeking Undenominational Christianity

Tom Rucker – Hardin Valley Church



John 17:20-23

²⁰ “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ **that they may all be one**, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, **so that the world may believe that you have sent me**. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, **that they may be one** even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become **perfectly one**, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.



Seeking Undenominational Christianity

The Churches of Christ



Discussion

- What was the attitude toward race relations in Churches of Christ until the late 1960's?
 - Why?
 - What can we learn from this part of our history?



Identity Crisis - Who Are We? – 1967-Present

- Polarization – Concerned and Progressive
 - Concerned
 - Ira Rice – *Axe at the Root* (1967); *Contending for the Faith* (1970)
 - Right Church attitude (“Conservative”) –
 - “We are the **only** Christians”; or “we are the **best.**”



**Congratulations! Study Finds You
Chose The Only 100% Correct Branch
Of Christianity**

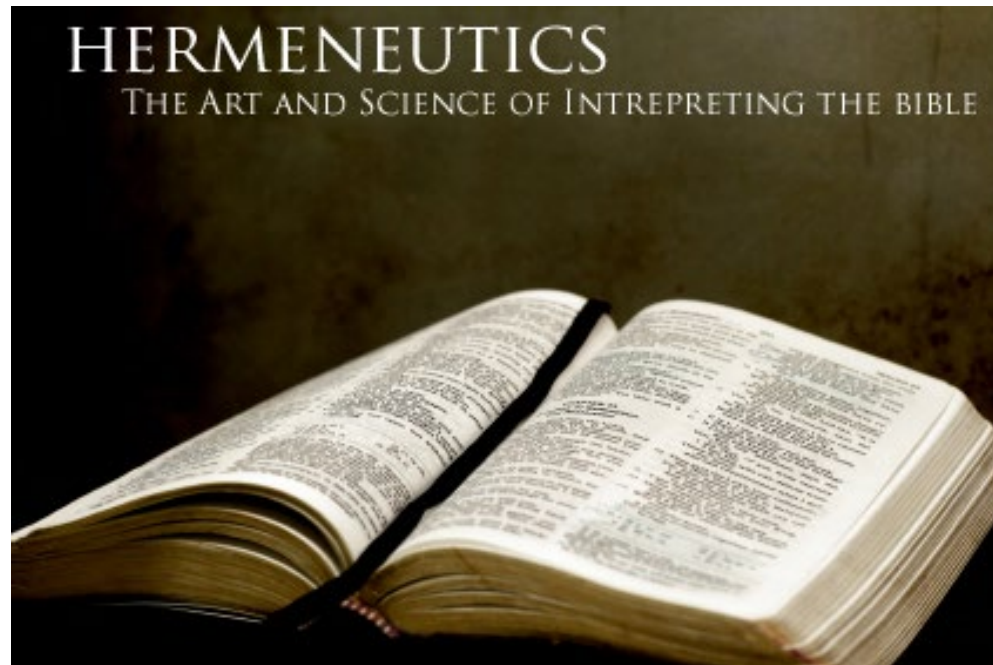
Identity Crisis - Who Are We? – 1967-Present

- Polarization - Concerned and Progressive
 - Progressive (still theologically Conservative)
 - Mission Journal (1967); ACU- Tom Olbricht et. el.
 - “Forum for theological reflection on issues such as race, gender, war and peace-making, the place of the church in urban society, the nature and implications of Restorationism and critical Biblical and historical scholarship.”
 - Wineskins Magazine (1992); Philip Morrison, Mike Cope, Rubel Shelly
 - “Forum for church renewal” and “fresh awareness of the Holy Spirit”
 - Emphasis on drawing people to Jesus rather than to the “Church of Christ”
 - Kingdom of God attitude (less sectarian)



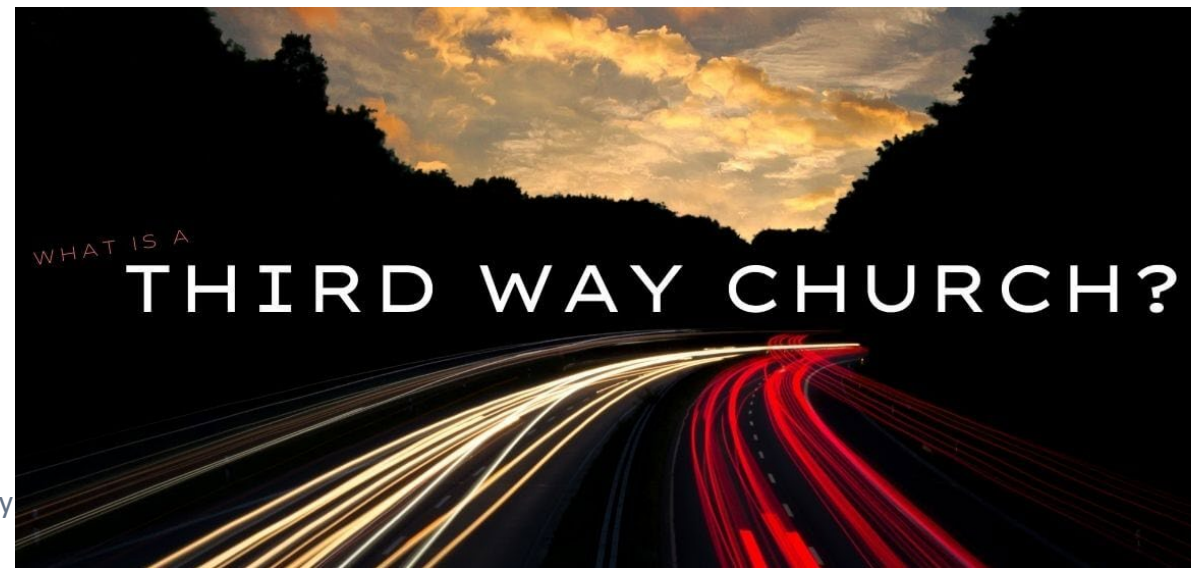
Identity Crisis - Who Are We? – 1967-Present

- Polarization - Concerned and Progressive
 - Progressive - A new hermeneutic for practices
 - Does this practice reflect the nature of God? (I Corth. 11:2-16)
 - Is it in line with the Biblical story of redemption? (I Tim. 2:12-15)
 - Does it build up the church? (I Corth. 14:26)
 - Does it promote or violate a clear principle of scripture? (I Corth. 14:34)



Identity Crisis - Who Are We? – 1967-Present

- Polarization – Broad Middle Ground
 - Through the 1980's and 1990's most churches were not at the extreme poles.
 - There was still a middle ground, although the mainstream was shifting slowing toward the progressive pole.
 - In the 21st Century, it is harder to identify the middle or even the extremes.
 - The uniformity of the 1940's and 1950's has largely disappeared.
 - Churches and individuals have wide differences of opinion on a wide variety of issues.
 - Church papers, colleges and well-known preacher have less influence.



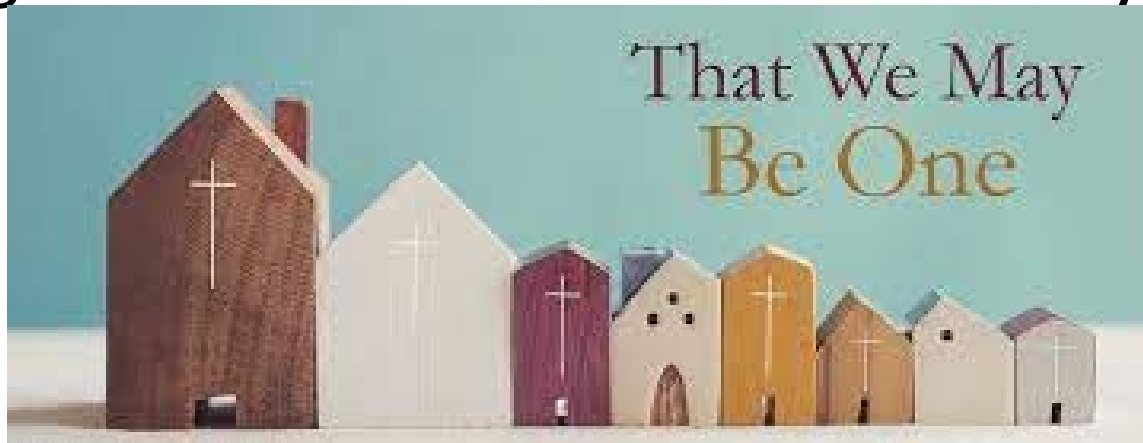
Spiritual Awakening?

- Spiritual Renewal in Churches of Christ
 - Increased emphasis on the Holy Spirit.
 - The younger generation show more interest in spiritual disciplines.
 - Concerned more with Christian living and helping the poor than with doctrinal disputes.
 - Pray more, dispute less.
 - Lipscomb starts Center for Spiritual Renewal
 - Creates opportunity for Stone's "Fire Union"
 - Deeper, reality union.



Attempts to Live Out the Unity Message

- Hopeful signs of unity and reconciliation with Christian Churches
 - One-In Christ conferences
 - Restorations Forums
 - Stone-Campbell Dialogue
 - World Convention of Churches of Christ
 - Renew.org - Gathering
 - Congregational level moves toward unity





Thank you

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