

Purpose

- To learn about how The Disciples of Christ started
- To learn about the Campbells
- To learn about “Raccoon” Smith and Walter Scott
- To learn about Barton Stone

Materials

- Handouts
- Bibles

Background Information

Starting today we will learn the history of the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ and how it all began. Our church really had two beginnings. One led by Thomas and Alexander Campbell and the other by Barton Stone. We will study each and then find out how they merged and fit it all together.

THE CAMPBELLS

Thomas Campbell was a Presbyterian minister and schoolteacher in Ireland. The Presbyterian Church was kind of divided into five groups. Thomas Campbell was part of the Evangelical, New Light, Anti-Burgher, Secedar Presbyterians. (How would you like to tell that to people every time they asked you what church you go to.) That group was liberal and evangelical in comparison to the others that were very rigid in what they believed. In 1807 Thomas Campbell immigrated to America to establish a home so that his family could join him later. He brought with him his authority to be a minister in the Presbyterian Church, his Bible, and possibly a few books and personal belongings. For two years he was a circuit minister. This meant that he traveled around on horseback and gave communion to the people who lived in rural Pennsylvania. According to the rules of his church in Ireland he was only allowed to give the Lord’s Supper to those who were a part of the New Light, Anti-Burgher, Secedar Presbyterian church. For the entire two years he struggled with the fact that they were so “exclusive” (that meant no allowance was made for anyone that didn’t believe as they did).

In 1809 he was asked to leave his denomination because of his efforts to remove the fencing of the communion table. Fencing means that people had to meet the requirements of the church by quoting the Westminster Confession and other required statements from the church. The church felt that this would make them worthy to have communion. Thomas felt that man did not have the right to make the decision if

someone was worthy to take communion. He felt that profession of faith was the only requirement. Campbell's goal was to be "inclusive" of all who professed Christ as Lord and Savior and to create an atmosphere that was inclusive everyone. Later that same year Thomas wrote the Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington. One of the most famous statements of the document is "That the Church of Christ on earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one". Thomas Campbell believed that the "answer" was the restoration of the New Testament Church. All of this time he was here in America alone.

In 1808 Alexander Campbell, Thomas' 20 year old son, left Ireland with his mother and brothers and sisters. They were shipwrecked and forced to live in Scotland. Alexander took advantage of the delay and studied at Glasgow for nine months. There he met several scholars who were advocates of the return to New Testament Christianity. He was so impressed with this knowledge that he withdrew from the Secedar Presbyterian Church. His action paralleled his father's although they were thousand of miles apart. Neither knew of the decision that they other had made.

While a student at the University in Glasgow he attended church for the purpose of receiving the Lord's Supper. Because he had did not have his credentials with him that stated he was allowed to take communion, he had to be tested by the Elders in order to receive "the Token." He answered all their answers to their satisfaction and "deemed worthy" and was given the token. When the time came for him to receive communion he was upset because he felt that Christ should make the decision if he was "worthy" not the elders of the church. He left the table and did not take communion. He also made the decision that he would no longer be a member of Secedar Presbyterian Church.

Alexander arrived in America in 1809, he read the Declaration and Address that his father, Thomas, had written and he agreed with all he had said. At the same time Alexander made the decision to become a minister. His father did insist that he take six months of intense study.

Alexander researched the scriptures for three years and came to the conclusion that people baptized in New Testament times were responsible believers and were immersed. Those who founded the Disciples rejected infant baptism and adopted immersion baptism as the accepted form. This became a personal matter for Alexander upon the birth of his first child Jane. Also during the summer of 1812 Alexander Campbell along with his wife, mother, father and sister stepped into the waters of Buffalo Creek and were immersed in baptism. Matthias Luce, a Baptist minister baptized them. Since it was by immersion a Presbyterian minister would not have baptized them.

Alexander married Margaret Brown, the daughter of a well-to-do farmer, and settled in the area that is now West Virginia. In 1815 Margaret's father deeded the farm to them for one dollar. The farm consisted of 300 acres. He later donated the land for Bethany College. He was licensed as a minister of Brush Run Church on May 4, 1811. Alexander was a great debater he often said, "A weeks debating was worth a year's preaching". Alexander participated at some of the debates at Cane Ridge.

"RACCOON " JOHN SMITH and WALTER SCOTT

"Raccoon" John Smith as a New Testament" Baptist preacher turned Disciples preacher after hearing one of Alexander Campbell debates. He represented the

“Disciples” at Lexington where a handshake with Barton Stone, who was representing the “Christians”, joined the two movements. This happened on January 1, 1832.

Walter Scott was a Presbyterian minister. He met Alexander Campbell in 1827 and was selected as an evangelist. He was 8 years younger than Alexander and appeared to be a gifted evangelist. He preached “No Creed but Christ”. Walter Scott believed and preached that the plan of salvation was; 1-Faith (belief in Christ as Lord) 2-Repentance of Sin 3- Baptism 4-Remission of sins and 5-Gift of the Holy Spirit. This was known as the five-finger exercise. Walter was known as the “Walking Bible” because he committed so much of the Bible to memory. His simple plan of salvation won hundreds of converts.

BARTON STONE

In 1796 Barton Stone was installed as a supply preacher at Cane Ridge in Concord, Kentucky. In 1798 Barton Stone was ordained as a Presbyterian minister although he struggled with the creed. Since agreement with the “Creed” was required, he agreed in so far as it was “consistent with the word of God”. In 1801 there was a revival at Cane Ridge. Approximately 35000 people from at least 3 denominations, Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian gathered. Ministers from all 3 denominations preached and people sang, prayed, and were converted regardless of denomination background. This revival was not approved by the Presbyterian Synod. Barton Stone and others were asked to withdraw from the Synod. They along with 3 other ministers formed the Springfield Presbytery in 1803. Soon they realized they had made a mistake to organize another sectarian governing body, and the same 5 ministers wrote the “Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery” in 1804. This statement expressed the desire for congregations to govern themselves. Barton Stone did not feel that Christians should be divided over man-made rules, but should be united because of their common faith in Jesus Christ and God. Barton Stone liked to say this same thing by saying “Let Christian unity be our Polar star”.

Barton Stone met Thomas and Alexander Campbell in 1824. They realized that their movements had much in common. In 1828 Barton Stone wrote in the Christian Messenger “If there is any difference between us, we do not know it”. In 1832 he presented the “Christians” at Lexington where a handshake with John Smith, who represented the Campbell’s “Disciples” joined the 2 movements. The uniting of these two movements formed the Brotherhood that we know as the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ. Thomas and Alexander liked to be called “Disciples”, but Barton Stone liked the term “Christians”. That is why today we are called the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ.

Our denomination believes that being a Christian is personal, but also social because we join together to help all of creation. Each of us is a disciple of Christ within his larger fellowship of the Christian Church.

Procedure

- Read Background Information first paragraph.
- Give over Lesson 65-1 for reference material.
Read background information on Campbells.
Check out Lesson 65-2 on the Token.
- Read Lesson 65-3.
Finish read background information. Lesson 65-4 and 65-5 for reference material. Look them over while looking at map.
- Review Handout Lesson 65-6..
- Handout 65-7 and 65-8 are to be used for reference material.