

Churches of Christ

- Vitally important to understand history and tendencies with same objective analysis (critical distance) we've done on others
- I'm conflicted—don't care about restoration history or think of Christ's church as denomination



Churches of Christ—History

- Early 1800s—Two major strains of restoration thinking
- Barton Stone, a Presbyterian preacher, began questioning Calvinism, whether Presbyterian teachings really came from Bible
- Stone leaves Presbyterian church, joins Springfield Presbytery
- “Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery”
- Resulting group “Christian Church” or “Church of Christ”



Churches of Christ—History

- Thomas Campbell—Presbyterian preacher who emigrates to America with son Alexander
- Disagrees with Presbyterian church on doctrinal points, seeks to find unity based on certain essentials
- Son Alexander associated with Baptists for several years before breaking with them in direction of “Disciples of Christ”
- Campbell and Stone strains “merged” in 1832—handshake between Stone and Raccoon John Smith



Churches of Christ—History

- 1860—Some congregations begin introducing organs
- Division ensues on the instrument question—1906
- Social issues affect churches—war question, premillennialism
- Several issues spread throughout congregations—
instruments, classes and cups, institutional/orphans' homes
- Moves occur toward centralization—missionary societies, colleges



Churches of Christ—Overview

- Focus of restoration is on forms—worship, structure, creeds, elders
- Emphasis on autonomy—each church unique
- Rationalistic—emphasis on reason, sometimes to the exclusion of emotion
- This is especially different from typical evangelical reasoning about the Holy Spirit
- Generally amillennial
- Worship is formal, music is a cappella



Churches of Christ—Overview

- Strong emphasis on Bible study, Bible authority
- Fundamental tension between unity and restoration—
which wins out?
- Fundamental tension between liberty and authority—
which wins out?
- Can be divisive—congregations often split over both
doctrinal and personal matters



Churches of Christ—Cautions

- Closed-mindedness—assuming we're right because we're us
- Rationalism—thinking there is no place for emotion
- Calcifying—losing the restoration impulse
- Losing patience with one another, dividing/leaving too quickly or easily
- OK to not have all the answers—fact that we can't know everything doesn't mean we don't know anything



Churches of Christ—Cautions

- View emerging in “mainstream” circles—the “churches of Christ” denomination
- Sensitive to fact that this sounds like semantics, but concerned about denominational-type thinking



Churches of Christ—Cautions

- Only baptism in a “church of Christ building” or by a “church of Christ preacher” is valid
- Who is a Christian defined in sectarian terms instead of biblical
- “What the church of Christ thinks/believes”
- The church becomes more important than (or sum total of) my relationship with God

