

“Raccoon” John Smith

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During the American Restoration Movement, there were a number of prominent preachers that made an impact in restoring the New Testament church. Of those preachers, there were perhaps none as colorful and quirky as a man named “Raccoon” John Smith. He earned the name “Raccoon” when he explained who he was in a sermon by saying that he grew up “among the coons”.

John Smith was best known for his humorous way of converting people's way of thinking. He once drug a Methodist preacher down to the water to be baptized against his will to show him that baptizing babies against their will was an invalid baptism. There are numerous stories like these that make up John Smith's colorful preaching career.

However, one of the highlights of his preaching career was in the meeting between Alexander Campbell's restoration movement and Barton Stone's restoration movement. At this meeting John Smith is attributed as the force that united these two movements into one group under the same plea: unity under the Divine Standard of Scripture. Here are the famous words of “Raccoon” John Smith on that day:

“Let us then, my brethren, be no longer Campbellites or Stoneites, New Lights or Old Lights, or any other kind of lights, but let us all come to the only Book in the world that can give us all the light we need.”

This plea for unity under God's inspired scriptures was one of the highlights of the American Restoration Movement. This same plea for unity under God's words is what the religious world needs today. When you look around the religious world there are Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Catholics, etc. that are all separated because they all follow different teachings. But Biblical unity cannot be achieved as long as we all follow different beliefs! We must get back to the Bible alone as our only statement of faith. We must do as John Smith said and be no longer separated under different beliefs, but be united under God's word. What our world needs is more “Raccoon” John Smiths to preach the simple truths of the Bible in pursuit of unity, love, and restoration of the Biblical pattern.