



Raccoon John Smith: Frontier Kentucky's Most Famous Preacher (Religion in the South)

Elder Sparks

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The Disciples of Christ, one of the first Christian faiths to have originated in America, was established in 1832 in Lexington, Kentucky, by the union of two groups led by Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone. The modern churches resulting from the union are known collectively to religious scholars as part of the Stone-Campbell movement. If Stone and Campbell are considered the architects of the Disciples of Christ and America's first nondenominational movement, then Kentucky's Raccoon John Smith is their builder and mason. Raccoon John Smith: Frontier Kentucky's Most Famous Preacher is the biography of a man whose work among the early settlers of Kentucky carries an important legacy that continues in our own time. The son of a Revolutionary War soldier, Smith spent his childhood and adolescence in the untamed frontier country of Tennessee and southern Kentucky. A quick-witted, thoughtful, and humorous youth, Smith was shaped by the unlikely combination of his dangerous, feral surroundings and his Calvinist religious indoctrination. The dangers of frontier life made an even greater impression on John Smith as a young man, when several instances of personal tragedy forced him to question the philosophy of predeterminism that pervaded his religious upbringing. From these crises of faith, Smith emerged a changed man with a new vocation: to spread a Christian faith wherein salvation was available to all people. Thus began the long, ecclesiastical career of Raccoon John Smith and the germination of a religious revolution. Exhaustively researched, engagingly written, Raccoon John Smith is the first objective and painstakingly accurate treatment of the legendary frontier preacher. The intricacies behind the development of both Smith's personal religious beliefs and the founding of the Christian Church are treated with equal care. Raccoon John Smith is the story of a single man, but in carefully examining the events and people that influenced Elder Smith, this book also serves as a formative history for several Christian denominations, as well as an account of the wild, early years of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

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