

RESTORATION: CHRISTIAN OR CAMPBELLITE?

Willie A. Alvarenga

Restoration: Christian or Campbellite? P.O. BOX 210667 Bedford, TX 76095 (817) 268 3222; 681 4543

Willie.alvarenga@browntrailschoolofpreaching.com www.regresandoalabiblia.com / www.willie75.wordpress.com © 2010 Willie A. Alvarenga

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| 1. | Introduction | 4 |
|----|---------------------------------|-------|
| 2. | The accusation | 5-8 |
| 3. | We are Christians | 8-12 |
| 4. | Conclusion | 12 |
| 5. | Articles for your consideration | 13-18 |

RESTORATION: CHRISTIAN OR CAMPBELLITE?

By Willie Alvarenga

INTRODUCTION

Christian or Campbellite? Oh, what a question this is! Brethren and friends, any honest and diligent student of the Word would never answer "Campbellite" to this question. Why? The answer is simple: The Bible nowhere authorizes this title to be used in reference to those who follow Jesus Christ.

The Bible teaches that we are to speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11), we are also commanded to speak sound doctrine (Titus 2:1), and we are also told to hold on to the pattern of sound words (2 Timothy 1:13). Therefore, using correct reasoning, we could not use the title "Campbellites" to refer to Christians because the Word of God does not provide authority for this action. We are reminded by the words of the apostle Paul,

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17, NKJV).

If we want to be true to the authority of the Scriptures, we must continue to reject any artificial titles which give men the glory and not our Lord Jesus Christ. The title "Campbellite" denotes a follower of Thomas or Alexander Campbell, men who during the late 1800s called people back to the pure Christianity of the Bible. These men had great intentions and wanted to help people live a life free of manmade religions. Their plea was to call people back to the Bible. However, just because they did this, does not mean that we are their disciples, and be called "Campbellites". Sadly to say, many today are calling members of the church of

Christ "Campbellites". Notice the following statements from people who have no respect whatsoever for the authority of the Scriptures.

THE ACCUSATION: SOME PEOPLE REFER TO MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AS "CAMPBELLITES"

The following information was taken from Brother Curtis Cates' lecture back in 2006 at the Spiritual Sword Lectures:

The attempt to belittle the restoration plea is not just recent. C.R. Nichol fifty years ago wrote of a sectarian preacher who, in a debate with brother E.A. Elam (which debate brother Nichol heard at eleven years of age), called brother Elam and his brethren "Campbellites." Mr. Ogle charged,

These people whom Mr. Elam represents, with himself, make great claims to being the church Christ established, whereas the facts are that as a church they are some eighteen hundred years too young to be that church. Mr. Alexander Campbell is the ecclesiastical father of the church of which they are members, and it still has on its swaddling clothes. They have as their slogan the words of a Mr. Thomas Campbell, the father of their religious sect (Nichol, 768-769).

Notice the following information from a Baptist preacher:

In his 101 questions for Campbellites, pastor **A.A. Davis** of the First Baptist Church of Nowata, OK., asked the question: What are Campbellites? His answer was: These are known as "The Church of

¹ Cates, A. Curtis, "The Church of Christ Did Not Begin with the Restoration Movement" Spiritual Sword Lectures October 15-19, 2006 (Sain Publications: Pulaski, TN), p. 107

Christ," or "The Disciples of Christ," which believe that Water Baptism is essential to salvation in Jesus Christ.²

A Baptist publication called *Calvary Contender* (June 15, 1999) chastised the magazine Christianity Today for accepting an ad from Harding University of Searcy, AR. They argued that Harding is a "Campbellite" church of Christ school. They went on to say that the church of Christ is considered a cult in some regards because it allegedly teaches a "works salvation".

Notice what the Wikipedia Encyclopedia has to say concerning the title "Campbellite":

Campbellite refers to any of the religious groups historically descended from the Restoration Movement, a religious reform movement in the early 19th century in the United States. The major groups are: The churches of Christ, the Christian church (Disciples of Christ), the Independent Christian churches/churches of Christ, the churches of Christ non-institutional.⁴

Brother Wayne Jackson, in his article entitled, "Alexander Campbell and Christ's church" wrote the following,

Robert Owen, the English "Free-thinker" who came to America to establish a movement of "social reform," was, according to A.B. Barret, the first man to employ the epithet, "Campbellite" (The

² http://www.biblebelievers.com/Davis1.html http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/822-alexander-campbell-and-christs-church

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Campbellite

Shattered Chain, 32). Those who so enjoy utilizing this misnomer are indebted to infidelity for it.⁵

Not many years ago, students from the Brown Trail School of Preaching, were involved in a door- knocking campaign. As they were visiting the community where they were evangelizing, someone came to the door and accused them of being Campbellites.

Also, a graduate from the Brown Trail School of Preaching had a discussion with a preacher about the title "Campbellite". This preacher argued that we need to be called "Campbellites" due to the fact that Alexander Campbell had so much influence upon the churches of Christ and was the one who started the church. Brethren, this is the kind of mentality that prevails in the minds of many people, even preachers of today. We need to go back to the Bible and call things by Bible names. We need to go back to the Bible and get our facts straight.

The list continues on and on about how some people believe that we, members of the body of Christ, are called "Campbellites" and not Christians only. One thing that I would like to make clear is the fact that just because some publication, magazine, encyclopedia or man says that we are "Campbellites" does not make it so. Just because I say that a cow has five legs does not make it so. Anyone who accuses members of the body of Christ of being "Campbellites" need to go back to the Bible and learn what God calls those who follow Christ.

WHY DO PEOPLE REFER TO US AS "CAMPBELLITES"?

Let me share with you some reasons why I believe people call us by the name of "Campbellites"

⁵ http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/822-alexander-campbell-and-christs-church

- 1. They have no respect for the authority of the Scriptures (Colossians 3:17; 2 Timothy 1:13; 1 Peter 4:11).
- 2. They have decided to accept what others say about this matter and not what the Bible teaches (Jeremiah 6:16).
- 3. Some of our members are quoting more what Alexander Campbell said than what the Bible teaches (1 Peter 4:11; Titus 2:1).
- 4. Some people just cannot accept that we are Christians only. They refuse to accept the evidence that is before them.
- 5. Some people just want to ridicule members of the body of Christ (Acts 2:13).
- 6. Others simply do not have knowledge of what the Scriptures teach about who a Christian is.

I am sure we can list more reasons why some people call us "Campbellites"; nevertheless, I believe these reflect what people have in their minds. It is my prayer that they will consider the evidence that is found within the pages of the New Testament.

In the rest of this lesson I would like to offer several reasons why we are not "Campbellites" but Christians only. I hope that this information would clarify any doubts that people may have in their minds. One thing I can tell you for sure is that if a person is honest to the evidence, such person will accept it; but, if they are not, then, they will refuse to reason correctly about the evidence under consideration.

WE ARE CHRISTIANS: REASONS WHY WE ARE CHRISTIANS AND NOT "CAMPBELLITES"

It is my prayer that all of those who will read this information will accept it with an open heart. I trust that you will have an honest attitude concerning the

evidence that is about to be presented. I ask that you please consider this information with an open Bible.

We are Christians not "Campbellites" because we follow Jesus Christ and not Alexander or Thomas Campbell

Yes friends, we are followers of Jesus Christ and not Alexander or Thomas Campbell. The name "Christian" comes from the Greek word *CRISTIANOS*. This word denotes one who follows Christ, not Alexander or Thomas Campbell. Just because Alexander or Thomas Campbell taught some things that we believe are right does not mean that we are their disciples. Everything we believe and teach, we do, not because Alexander Campbell taught it, but because God said it in His Word. Everything that Alexander Campbell taught from the Bible was there even before he was born.

Every faithful Christian will follow the doctrine of Christ and the apostles, and not the doctrines of men, which are condemned in the Scriptures (Matthew 15:7-9; 2 John 9-11). Every faithful member of the body of Christ will follow His teaching and not the human creeds which abound in our days.

We follow Jesus Christ and not Alexander Campbell because He is the only way to salvation (Acts 4:12; John 10:9; 14:6). The apostle Peter made it very clear that we are to follow Christ because He is the only one that can save us. Neither Alexander Campbell nor other man can give us the salvation that we need.

We are Christians not "Campbellites" because this is what the Bible calls us

When one studies the New Testament, especially the book of Acts, one will realize that the Bible describes those who follow Christ as Christians, and not "Campbellites". The name "Christian" is found 3 times in the New Testament. Notice the following passages of Scripture:

"And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. **And the disciples were first called Christians** in Antioch" (Acts 11:26, emp. added)

Notice the second passage that tells us how the followers of Christ were called,

"Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'You almost persuade me to become a Christian'" (Acts 26:28, emp. added)

The third passage to be considered was written by the apostle Peter and shows how the followers of Christ are described:

"Yet if anyone suffers **as a Christian**, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter" (1 Peter 4:16, emp. added)

As we can see, the Bible uses the name Christian to describe the followers of Christ. The Bible nowhere uses the names Baptist, Campbellites, Luterans or any other man-made names that we hear today. We are called Christians because this is what God says in His Word. It is our desire indeed to always follow what the Bible teaches, and not what men, in their false doctrines, teach.

We are Christians not "Campbellites" because Jesus Christ established the church of Christ, and not Alexander or Thomas Campbell

We are members of the church of Christ, that is, the body of Christ because Jesus Christ established the one true church about 2,000 years ago (Matthew 16:18). This divine institution was not established by Alexander or Thomas Campbell but Christ. Just because someone says that Alexander Campbell established the church of Christ does not make it right. These men were not in existence when the one true church was established on Pentecost day (Acts 2). Therefore, how can we be "Campbellites" if we are members of the body of Christ of which we read in the pages of the New Testament? It simply cannot be the case that we are "Campbellites". If they were the founders of the one true church, then we would have the right to be called "Campbellites" and not Christians. But, since this is not the case, then we are forced to come to the conclusion that we are Christians, followers and disciples of Jesus Christ.

'We are Christians not "Campbellites" because we have been baptized into Christ and not into Alexander or Thomas Campbell

In the first chapter of first Corinthians we read about the division that was prevailing in the church of Corinth. These Christians were saying that they were followers of Cephas, Paul, and Apollos. The apostle Paul clarifies to them the following points: 1. Christ was not divided, 2. Paul was not crucified for them, 3. they were not baptized into the name of Paul. Notice the last point. These Christians were not baptized into the name of Paul, but of Christ. The Bible teaches that when you obey the gospel, you are added or baptized into the body of Christ (Acts 2:47; Galatians 3:27; I Corinthians 12:13). The Bible nowhere teaches that those who obey the gospel are added or baptized to a man, but to Christ's body. The Bible nowhere speaks about Alexander or Thomas Campbell, but it does speak about Jesus Christ. Notice that Paul, Cephas, and Apollos were in existence when Paul wrote first Corinthians; however, the apostle Paul nowhere teaches that we are authorized to argue that we are added to their bodies, but the body of Christ. Therefore, we are Christians, not "Campbellites" because we have been added to the body of Christ through obedience to His gospel.

Sadly to say, many religious people of our day have not understood what Paul taught in first Corinthians chapter one. They use names such as "Baptist", "Lutherans", and even "Campbellites". These titles are not authorized in the pages of the New Testament, our pattern to follow. As members of the body of Christ, we must reject any man-made doctrines and titles that go contrary to what the Bible teaches.

CONCLUSION

As I close this lesson, it is my prayer that you will consider this information with an honest heart. May we accept what the Bible teaches in all respects and not what man says. The Bible is clear about who we are. We are Christians only, members of the one true church we read about in the pages of the New Testament. May we never forget this great truth! As faithful gospel preachers, let us proclaim the Word of God without any addition or subtraction. To God be the glory!

** All quotations are from the NKJV

Did Alexander Campbell Establish the Church of Christ?

by Bill J. Humble via The Preceptor, Vol. 1, No. 8, June 1952.

A Preceptor reader from Texas has submitted a list of questions which request a statement of what Alexander Campbell actually did. Since members of the church are often asked such questions as "The church of Christ began with Alexander Campbell, didn't it?" and "Wasn't Campbell the founder of your denomination?", it is of paramount importance that every member of the church understand exactly what Campbell did and what he did not do. The questions asked were:

Was Campbell a Baptist?

At one period in Campbell's career he was affiliated with the Baptist denomination and even earlier he was a Presbyterian. After he and his father, Thomas Campbell, had both renounced the Presbyterian church, they began to study the question of baptism and were persuaded by their own investigations that immersion alone constituted Scriptural baptism. After they and several others had been immersed by Elder Luce of the Baptist Church (June 12, 1812), the Baptists of western Pennsylvania were jubilant at the "conversion" of these former Presbyterians and invited the Brush Run church, which the Campbells had organized, to join the Redstone Baptist Association.

After lengthy discussions the Campbells affiliated with the Redstone Association but only with a written understanding that they would be allowed to teach whatever they "learned from the Holy Scriptures, regardless of any human creed." Alexander Campbell remained a nominal Baptist for seventeen years (1813 - 1830), during which an ever increasing number of Baptists realized that he was "among them," but not "of them." Within three years following the admission of the Brush Run church to the Redstone Association, Campbell delivered an address before the annual meeting of that association, the famous "Sermon on the Law," in which he expressed sentiments which were hardly compatible with orthodox Baptist theology. When he debated Maccalla in 1823, Campbell maintained that baptism was essential to salvation: and though Campbell was

supposedly defending the Baptist cause, baptism for the remission of sins was unacceptable and heretical to Baptists as to Presbyterians.

During Campbell's seventeen years as a nominal Baptist his prestige and influence increased enormously in spite of his heterodox views. The process of separation was slow and often painful; but by 1830 the "Christians" or "Disciples" had been ousted from the Baptist denomination, and the Baptists counted their losses in the tens of thousands. Campbell was no longer a Baptist, even in name.

Did Alexander Campbell Establish the Church Of Christ?

The answer to this question is a most emphatic NO! Before one can be said to be the founder of any institution, it is essential that the institution in question never have existed prior to the period of its alleged founder. The church of Christ did exist long before the time of Alexander Campbell. Its establishment occurred in Jerusalem on that memorable Pentecost morning; its early history forms the theme of the Book of Acts; its needs for instruction were satisfied by the Epistles of the New Testament.

Campbell's enemies utilized every means at their command to criticize, ridicule, and undermine, his work. One of their favorite tactics was to accuse Campbell of being the founder of a new religious denomination; for they believed that if he could be branded a factionist, the founder of a new sect, his plea for religious unity would appear absurd to the religious community.

As often as Campbell encountered this charge that he had founded a new denomination, he carefully pointed to the true character of his work and disclaimed all pretenses at being the founder of a new sect. For example, when Campbell visited New Orleans, the Commercial Bulletin announced his visit to the city and referred to him as the "founder" of a religious denomination Campbell immediately addressed a letter to the editors of the paper; and after thanking them for the complementary notice of his visit, he continued:

"You have done me, gentlemen, too much honor in saying that I am the 'founder' of the denomination, quite numerous and respectable in many portions of the West, technically known as 'Christians,' but more commonly as 'Campbellites.'

"I have always repudiated all human heads and human names for the people of the Lord, and shall feel very thankful if you will correct the erroneous impression which your article may have made in thus representing me as the founder of a religious denomination." (Richardson, Memoirs of Campbell, II, 441)

Neither the facts of history nor the statement of Campbell himself give any support to the charge that he founded a new denomination. It follows, therefore, that when someone asks a Christian, "Didn't Alexander Campbell found your denomination?" he reveals either an ignorance of the basic facts involved or a malicious design. If it be a case of insufficient information, he can be persuaded that the church of Christ is not a denomination and that Campbell was not its founder. If the question proceeds from malicious intent, the questioner illustrates again the power of religious prejudice!

Did Alexander Campbell Restore the Original Church of Christ?

It would be incorrect to imply that Campbell alone succeeded in restoring the primitive church of Christ, but it is accurate to state that Campbell was one leader in a great movement whose goal was the restoration of the New Testament church. It will be observed that two things are implied when one uses the term "restoration."

- It is implied that the church of Christ did not originate with Campbell or even during the period of his life; rather it originated and flourished before Alexander Campbell lived.
- 2. Campbell believed in returning to the original standard, for this is the meaning of the term "restore." When one restores something which has existed earlier, he does not create or originate; he attempts to reproduce an earlier work.

"A restoration of the ancient order of things, it appears, is all that is contemplated by the wise disciples of the Lord; as it is agreed that this is all that is wanting to the perfection, happiness and glory of the Christian community ... Now, in attempting to accomplish this, it must be observed, that it belongs to every individual and to every congregation of individuals to discard from their faith and their practice everything that is not found written in the New Testament of the Lord and Savior, and to believe and practice whatever is there enjoined. This done, and everything is done which ought to be done" (Christian Baptist, March 7, 1825).

Is Alexander Campbell The Founder Of The Church

of Christ?

Taken from: Lay Lake Church of Christ Bulletin

Volume 5, Number 10

David A. Bass

From time to time members of the church of Christ are inaccurately referred to as

"Campbellites." The implication is that the church of Christ was founded (started) by

Alexander Campbell rather than being the Church of which we read of in the N. T. Most

who use it today are only "parroting" what they have heard others say. Because of this

misconception, I think it good to consider the question, "Did Alexander Campbell found

the church of Christ?" It can be clearly & conclusively shown from history & from

Scripture that Alexander Campbell was not the founder of the church of Christ.

Secular history shows that efforts to restore undenominational Christianity had begun

long before Alexander Campbell started his work. In the beginning of the 19th century

there arose a group of men desiring to return to the apostolic order of things. These men

saw what early 'reformers' (Martin Luther, John Calvin, etc.) did not see - the

importance of 'restoring' things as they were in the first century rather than 'reforming'

the apostate Catholic Church. These men expressed great dissatisfaction with protestant

denominationalism with its various creeds, names, doctrines & practices. They held that

man's eternal salvation depended upon his full acceptance of things as they were in New

Testament times rather than a choice between Catholicism & Protestantism.

It is very important to realize that several of these men lived before Alexander Campbell

by several years: For example: James O'Kelley (Methodist) who came to America 14

years before Alexander Campbell. In 1794 James O'Kelley & a group of his followers

decided to lay aside all

- 17 -

human creeds & return to the Bible (Alexander Campbell would have been 6 years old at that time, still living in Scotland). Barton W. Stone (Presbyterian) was in America long before the arrival of Campbell (Stone was preaching the restoration gospel 5 years before Alexander Campbell arrived in the states). Alexander's own father, Thomas Campbell (Presbyterian), was in America two years before his son preaching many of the Restoration principles. These men (& others that could be mentioned) were in America working to restore primitive Christianity long before Mr. Campbell began his work.

It can be proven historically that churches of Christ existed long before Alexander Campbell time. If we can show that the church of Christ existed prior to beginning of Mr. Campbell's time then we have proven that he did not start it. Notice some examples: The Rock Springs church (near Celina, TN) was started in 1804 – 5 years before Alexander Campbell came to America. In my files I have the picture of a tombstone in the Cane Ridge cemetery, near Paris, Kentucky. It reads: "William Rogers, Born in Campbell Co, VA., July 7, 1784, moved with his father to Cane Ridge Bourbon Co. Apr. 1798, United with the church of Christ at Cane Ridge in 1807, Died Feb. 15, 1862 in the 78th year of his age." I have another picture in my files of a state historical marker in Revere, Massachusetts, (suburb of Boston). It reads: "Church of Christ — 1710 Meetinghouse of the church of Christ in Rumney Marsh, erected in 1710. Thomas Cheever, the first settled minister, died December 27, 1749, aged 91 years."

This was 78 years before Alexander Campbell was even born! But we can go back even further & find congregations of the Lord's church in England in the 17th century. A Dr. Robinson (Overdale College, Birmingham, England) found an old record book dating 1669, containing the minutes of church business meetings for the Lord's church meeting in the Furness Distict of Lancashire (North West England). From these minutes we learn that they called themselves church of Christ, practiced baptism by immersion, took the Lord's Supper every Sunday, & had elders & deacons. At least 8 different congregations are mentioned in these minutes. So here we have a detailed record of the church of Christ existing over 100 years before the birth of Alexander Campbell. Very clearly, history does not substantiate the charge that Alexander Campbell started the church of Christ.