

Is This The Church Of Campbell?

In last week's bulletin I addressed some comments made to be by Robert Bufkin of Jonesboro, AR. In this bulletin, I wanted to address one final remark from Mr. Bufkin. He wrote, "PRAYING FOR YOUR EYES TO BE OPENED..so you will turn from darkness to light and from satan to Jesus Christ of the Bible... not the Jesus of Cambellism [sic] ... the man Cambell [sic] started. Your church was never heard of in history until Cambell [sic] came along.."

This is a pretty serious charge. Mr. Bufkin is saying that we at the Loop 287 Church of Christ are following the "doctrines and commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9), and the record needs to be set straight. In Jesus' encounter with the chief priests and elders about His teaching in and cleansing of the temple, the discussion began with them asking Jesus where He received His authority. Jesus responded by asking them where was the authority for the baptism of John (Matthew 21:23-25). This question, whether it was from heaven or men, can and should be asked of everything else in the realm of Bible teaching. For this charge made against me, it should be asked concerning the understanding of the origin of the church: was it from heaven or from men?

Although the term "Campbellite" is seldom used anymore, the idea still exists, as evidenced by Mr. Bufkin, that the church of Christ was founded about 200 years ago during the Restoration Movement by Alexander Campbell, who was scripturally baptized June 13, 1812. People have argued that this makes the "church of Christ" a modern-day denomination just like all other Protestant denominations. You will definitely meet people who will make this argument to you, but because this charge has been made against me, I want to give you five reasons why I am not a "Campbellite," and during the course of the article we will observe if what we do religiously is from heaven or men.

First, I am not a disciple of Alexander Campbell. Though Alexander Campbell wrote voluminously during his lifetime, I have read very little of his writings. I have read as extensively from the works of Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and others, as I have read from those of Mr. Campbell. I am not a "Campbellite" for the simple reason that I am not a follower of Mr. Campbell. I am a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23).

Second, I was not baptized in the name of Alexander Campbell. "Name" implies authority. The "Great Commission" requires that penitent believers be baptized *"in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy*

Ghost" (Matthew 28:19), which is more than just a verbal formula to use when someone is immersed in water. The apostles baptized penitent believers in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 10:48). Jesus has all authority in the kingdom of heaven, therefore we should be baptized in His name (Matthew 28:18). What would you think if I were to baptize in the name of Luther, Calvin, or Alexander Campbell? You would say at once that it would not be baptism, it would be a mockery. Then why not wear the name in which you were baptized (1 Corinthians 1:13-15)?

Third, Alexander Campbell did not die for my sins. Campbell was not crucified for me (1 Corinthians 1:13-15). The first fact of the gospel is that Christ died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3). Therefore, we should wear His name and no other. Peter stated that there is salvation in the name of Christ only (Acts 4:12). Who were Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Campbell, etc.? They were men and none of them had infallible judgments as far as the scriptures were concerned. In fact, there were doctrines in which Alexander Campbell was in error, such as the belief that Jesus would physically reign on the earth for 1,000 years, which is also known as Premillennialism.

Fourth, I do not follow the writings of Alexander Campbell. Jesus wanted unity among His followers (John 17:20-21). The apostles taught about this unity (1 Corinthians 1:10; 1 Peter 4:11; Galatians 1:8-9; Ephesians 4:3-6). Mr. Campbell advocated no new doctrine when he preached Christian unity on the basis of the apostle's doctrine. Jesus taught that the doctrines and commandments of men should be rejected (Matthew 15:8-9; Mark 7:7-8). The apostles taught the same doctrine (Colossians 2:8, 20-23; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13; Titus 1:13-14). Jesus taught that faith, repentance, confession, and baptism are conditions of salvation and membership in His church (John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32; John 3:5). These terms of pardon were also taught by the apostles (Hebrews 11:6; Acts 17:30; 2:38; Romans 10:10; 1 Peter 3:21). I accept Christ as my creed and the New Testament as my book of discipline. I wear only the name of Christ. But these do not make me a "Campbellite" for the first century churches and their members did the same (Acts 16:31; John 20:30-31; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Acts 2:42; 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). How can I be in error or a "Campbellite" if I do what they did?

Fifth, there is no institution called the "Campbellite Church." Most people believe that Alexander Campbell was the founder of the "church of Christ." That is emphatically not true. As in New Testament times, there are local congregations known as "*churches of Christ*" (Romans 16:16). A quick perusal of the New Testament also reveals that the church was called the "*church of God*" (1 Corinthians 1:2) and the "*church of the*

firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23). The New Testament teaches that all who are Christians are in Christ (Galatians 3:27; 6:15; Romans 8:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17); and those who are in Christ are in the church of Christ, which is His body (Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:23; 4:4). Mr. Campbell did not establish any church; on the contrary, he and his associates advocated a restoration of the New Testament ideal with respect to the local church -- each congregation as an independent unit under the authority of the New Testament, known as a church of Christ and its members known as Christians. Just because I happen to agree with that approach to the Bible does not make me Campbell's disciple anymore than my agreement with a point Mr. Bufkin teaches makes me his disciple! What would he think of me being called a "Bufkinite" following "Bufkinism"? I would imagine he would find it abhorrent! I belong to the church of Jesus Christ, of which He is the head and the foundation, and His last will and testament is the only acceptable source of doctrine.

Whatever the time, place, or distance; whatever the nation, speakers, or audience -- whenever the pure gospel of Christ was preached as it was in Jerusalem, Samaria, and Corinth, and obeyed as it was in these three instances, the same gospel brought forth and brings forth the same church as it did in the New Testament. The focus is not on the man, the nationality, the place, or on the culture; the focus is on the power of the word of God when preached, believed, and obeyed in purity to establish the church in purity.

If someone raises the point that the church of Christ originated in the Restoration Movement, you can respectfully disagree. They originated then and originate now in the same way churches of Christ originated in the New Testament times. They were and are established when the gospel is preached and it is obeyed, whether that obedience occurred in A.D. 30, 1800, 1900, 2000, 2010, or any other date; or occurred in Jerusalem, Corinth, Virginia, Texas, Germany, Asia or elsewhere -- until now or any day to come until the Lord returns. This was the emphasis of the Restoration Movement -- spreading the seed of the word of God so that it could take root and produce exactly what was found in the first century, not the 19th century!

Kyle Campbell