

At some point in your life someone is going to call you (those in the church of Christ) a “Campbellite”. While I believe that this is true of those in the “Christian Church,” I do not believe it to be true of some churches of Christ.

I say “some” because not all churches of Christ follow the Bible only!

We talked a month ago of the origin
of the New Testament church in the
United States.

In 1803, Barton W. Stone and those
in the Springfield Presbytery
certainly determined to do what the
Scriptures said, especially in regard
to throwing off the laws of man.

Both Alexander and his father, Thomas Campbell, were Secession Presbyterians, came to this country in 1809 and 1807, respectively.

At the birth of his daughter in 1812, Alexander began to examine the Scriptures to see whether he should baptize his daughter and whether the church should find people “not worthy” to receive holy communion.

Upon thinking about the requirements of this slogan, the Campbells began to examine every religious doctrine that they had been taught.

The need for infant baptism lay in the Catholic and Presbyterian idea of original sin and the necessity that Adam's sin be wiped away in baptism.

In the Campbell's study, they were undoubtedly influenced by James and Robert Haldane, Scottish Presbyterians who practiced baptism by immersion, weekly communion, and congregational polity (autonomous government). The Haldanes established 85 churches in Scotland and Ireland, beginning in 1797.

The Scriptures disagree with infant baptism and the idea of original sin as in the Scriptures, the subject of baptism must be a repentant believer (Acts 2.38), and a man's sins are his and his alone. (Ezek 18.20)

Acts 8:36 And as they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 37 [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] 38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him.

An infant is never baptized in the Scriptures and in the two cases where households were baptized, one household is said to have believed – Acts 16.31 and in the other the household ministered to the saints – 1Cor 16.15. Both acts impossible for an infant.

Campbell concluded that although his daughter did not need to be baptized, he did!

Why?

He found that baptism saves from sin
1Pet 3.20-21, puts one into a covenant
relationship with God Col 2.11-12 and
makes one a child of God Gal 3.27

1Pe 3:20-21 to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, (21) and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Col 2:11-13 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; (12) having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. (13) When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

Gal 3:25-27 Now that this faith
has come, we are no longer
under a guardian. (26) So in
Christ Jesus you are all children
of God through faith, (27) for all
of you who were baptized into
Christ have clothed yourselves
with Christ.

As Campbell examined the idea of original sin, he found the Scriptures continually call for each man to be judged on the things he has done 2Co 5.10 not on what others had done Rev 20.12.

2 Cor 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

The Campbells found a Baptist Minister, Matthias Luce, to immerse them, and Alexander allied himself with the Baptist church until 1826 when he wrote, “I labor to see sectarianism abolished and all Christians of every name united upon the one foundation upon which the apostolic church was founded. To bring Baptists and Pedobaptists to this is my supreme end.”

He and his father came up with the slogan, “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.”

Like Barton Stone, Campbell called on all men to unite on the New Testament as their guide and the church of the New Testament as the only one authorized by God's word. Neither Campbell or Stone wanted to form a church to be called by their name or by some practice they instituted.

Luke 6:46 "And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,'
and do not do what I say?

Upon what would the Lord's church be founded?

1 Cor 3:11 For no man can lay a foundation other
than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Not on the teachings of either Campbell or Stone,
but on the Word of God!

The willingness to depart from God's word is seen in men who form themselves into denominations. All denominations are based, not on the Scriptures, but on some man's view of a particular subject; perhaps touched upon in the Scriptures, more often not.

“Why did Campbell leave the Baptists after seventeen years of ministry among them? ... Campbells’ stark Biblical literalism led to disagreements over many aspects of church life and ministerial order. Campbell opposed, for instance, the use of instrumental music in worship and refused to call ministers by officious-sounding titles such as ‘Reverend’ or ‘Doctor’.”

Eph 5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Mat 23:8-10 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. (9) And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. (10) Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.

Campbell (and we) had to decide whether he would “speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent” or not.

Just so, we have to decide whether we will follow the same motto and whether it is indeed Biblical in foundation.

The idea of baptismal regeneration is completely rejected by the Baptists and yet the Scriptures declare it.

1 Pet 3:21 And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you - not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience - through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Acts 22:16 And now what are you waiting for?
Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away,
calling on his name.' (NIV)

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized,
every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for
the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive
the gift of the Holy Spirit. (NIV)

Reading these verses, one would find it difficult to deny that baptism now saves you, washes your sins away and is for the forgiveness of sins.

The “stark literalism” found in these passages declares the doctrines of men to be just that. One cannot reject baptism and appeal to God for a “good conscience.”

The most serious problem in any departure from God's word combines a possible lack of knowledge and but assuredly a lack of humility in caring for self more than Jesus Christ and His word.

2 Tim 2:15 Be diligent to present
yourself approved to God as a
workman who does not need to
be ashamed, handling accurately
the word of truth.

Finding the time to study God's word is the most pressing problem facing believers today. I have always found that since I became an adult, the only time I study is when I want to know the answer to a question. Campbell was no different, looking at infant baptism as his children arrived.

What holds you back in your study?

Is it the lack of perceived application of God's word to your life or your lack of humility in your unwillingness to appear to have been wrong up to this point?

Do you need rest from the burden of sin?
Why not do what Jesus says and stop there?

Matt 11:28 "Come to Me, all who are weary
and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29
"Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me,
for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you
shall find rest for your souls. 30 "For My
yoke is easy, and My load is light."