

## **Question: Why are members of the church of Christ sometimes called “Campbellites”?**

In the early 1800's, a man by the name of Alexander Campbell was very active in calling people of all “faiths” back to the Bible and to “the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jd 3). He began preaching the gospel just as the apostles preached it after the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (Acts 2). Other men such as Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, “Raccoon” John Smith, Tolbert Fanning, Jacob Creath Jr., Benjamin Franklin (not the American statesman) and several other men were all trying to restore the simplicity of New Testament Christianity. Campbell just happened to be the most well known of the group leading what has come to be known as a “restoration movement” in our country.

Members of the church of Christ then, as now, rejected the wearing of any man's name, including Campbell's name. They simply believed, as the Bible teaches, that every accountable person can be a member of Christ's body, the church, without belonging to or joining a Catholic or Protestant denomination (Acts 2:47, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17, 18, 19).

While we are very thankful to those who led the way in restoring New Testament Christianity in America, and while some of us are very interested in studying their accomplishments, our allegiance is to Christ alone and with Him only do we wish to be identified. I do agree with the “restorers,” that we must “speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent.” I agree not because *they* said it, but because it is a principle taught in the New Testament (2 Jn 9). I also believe “that the Bible only makes Christians only.” The restorers used to say this when warning of the divisive nature of church creeds (2 Tim 2:15). I believe the restoration slogans not because they are catchy little phrases, but because they are ideas borne out in the Scripture.

Members of the church of Christ claim only to be “Christians.” The disciples of Jesus Christ “were first called Christians in Antioch” of Syria (Acts 11:26). This was the “new name” that God promised to give His people (Isa 62:2). For this reason the apostle Peter stated, “if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter” (1 Pet 4:16). The very *name* Christian bears the name of Christ. Peter said of Christ in his own defense before the Jewish rulers, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Ac 4:12). Paul later wrote that “God has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9-11). My friends, why wear any other name? It is not only unnecessary, it is wrong!

No one, not even a member of the church of Christ, should be so enamored with the “Restoration movement” of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that he loses sight of the Divine pattern laid down by the Holy Spirit in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. After all, as one man put it, “the church must be restored in every generation.” In each generation, those seeking to be servants of Christ must check their actions by the Divine standard of Truth -- the Scripture (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Finally, there is a tombstone in the cemetery near the old log church building in Cane Ridge, Kentucky with the following inscription: “William Rogers born in Campbell County Virginia July 7, 1784 removed with his father to Cane Ridge, Bourbon County, April 1798. United with the church of Christ at Cane Ridge in 1807. Died February 15, 1862 in the 78th year of his age. He was the friend of God.” Alexander Campbell did not come to this country as a Presbyterian until 1809. The ancient tombstone states that William Rogers was united with the church of Christ in 1807. Thus, Alexander Campbell did not begin the church of Christ, and members of the church of Christ are not “Campbellites,” but “Christians.”

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