**Alexander Campbell and the Church of Christ**

(Wayne Jackson)

Members of the Lord’s church are sometimes erroneously referred to as “Campbellites.” What exactly is behind such appellation? It is a tiresome thing to have to respond, again and again, to the same misguided (and frequently dishonest) charges. But one is compelled, from time to time, to do so.

First, Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) never started a church (or claimed such), even though reference works frequently refer to him as “founder” of the “Christian Churches” and “Churches of Christ.” It is a tragedy that the man who labored the bulk of his adult life with a view to encouraging others to abandon sectarianism should himself be accused of being the head and founder of the “Campbellite” church. The reformer utterly repudiated the designation. In 1826 Campbell wrote: “Some religious editors in Kentucky call those who are desirous of seeing the ancient order of things restored, ‘the Restorationers,’ ‘the Campbellites’…This may go well with some; but all who fear God and keep his commands will pity and deplore the weakness and folly of those who either think to convince or to persuade by such means” (The Christian Baptist, Vol. IV, pp. 88-89).

In 1828 Mr. Campbell responded to the question: “What is Campbellism?” in the following fashion: “It is a nickname of reproach invented and adopted by those whose views, feelings and desires are all sectarian – who cannot conceive of Christianity in any other light than an ISM” (Christian Baptist, Vol. V, p. 270).

It is a matter of historical record that there were churches of Christ – both in Europe and in America – before Alexander Campbell had a clear concept of what primitive Christianity was all about. Leslie G. Thomas has documented New Testament churches in Scotland, England, and Ireland, dating between 1778 and 1810 (The Restoration Handbook, p. 73). Historical accounts reveal that the Old Philadelphia congregation of the Lord’s people, which was near Morrison, Tennessee, was organized in the year 1810. Alexander Campbell was not baptized until 1812, and he continued to be affiliated with the Baptists until the 1820’s.

Churches of Christ do not owe their origin to Campbell or any other human leader. The fact that some, therefore, delight in using the term “Campbellite” to refer to those who choose to be called simply “Christians,” rather than wearing humanly-devised titles, is more of a commentary upon their characters than anything else. Why is it that so many religionists have such a difficult time being comfortable with the name “Christian,” and that alone (cf. Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16)? The use of human titles is sinful (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10ff).

William Rogers became a member of the church of Christ in 1807 – Alexander Campbell did not come to America until 1808! Many churches of Christ predate Alexander Campbell’s birth.

**Those Who Tremble At His Word**

(Kent Heaton)

Standing on the beach is such a beautiful experience. Gazing across the water stretching beyond the horizon with the sun dancing playfully along its waves can bring a sense of calm. The lapping of water upon the shore feels sweet on bare feet. The soft breeze reminds one of the grandeur of God’s creation and His awesome power. It does not suggest a time of fear when viewing the tides rolling in and out. From the pen of the prophet Jeremiah comes the stern warning of the Lord when He inquires: “‘*Hear this now, O foolish people, without understanding, who have eyes and see not, and who have ears and hear not: Do you not fear Me?’ says the LORD. ‘Will you not tremble at My presence, who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass beyond it? And though its waves toss to and fro, yet they cannot prevail; though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it’*” (Jeremiah 5:21-22).

While there is a feeling of calm repose enjoying the splendor of the oceans ebb the other side of reality is a reminder that the Creator has established laws that will not allow the waters to go beyond their habitation. There are many things man can look at of his creation and marvel at the ingenuity but how can man compare with the workings of the Almighty when he determines the boundaries of the waves? The Lord suggests to all men the need of fearing Him who is able to establish such things.

More than just a realization of the power of God through acts of nature man must also be in awe of another creation of God that is incomparable to the greatest works of man. “‘*For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist,’ says the LORD. ‘But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and* ***who trembles at My word****’*” (Isaiah 66:2). Few regard the word of God as a fearful book anymore. The pages of holy writ were held in honor and reverence by God fearing people who believed every word of its pages and sought to live under the grace of the message of God. The moral fiber of society has eroded the interest in the Bible to where it is seldom quoted, often neglected and impugned in character as a book out of touch.

The apostle Paul described the character of Jehovah in Romans 11:22 – “*Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off*.” The righteousness of God and the wrath of God is revealed in the word of God (Romans 1:16-18). The trembling of man’s heart is brought about by his recognition of how great Jehovah God is (the “*earth is My footstool*” Isaiah 66:1) and how dependent man is for everything (Psalm 96).

Trembling before the commands of the Lord is respecting the sacred message of the Book. “*And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people* ***stood up***” (Nehemiah 8:5). The purity of the message must be honored. From the pages of God’s word is grace, mercy and truth. Our eternal destiny is bound in the pages of God’s word. Jesus Christ said, “*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day*” (John 12:48).

Ezra pled with those who trembled at the commandments of the Lord to put away their unlawful wives (Ezra 10:3). “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction*” (Proverbs 1:7).