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Lectures in Honor of the Alexander Campbell Bicentennial

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LECTURES IN HONOR
OF THE ALEXANDER CAMPBELL
BICENTENNIAL, 1788—1988

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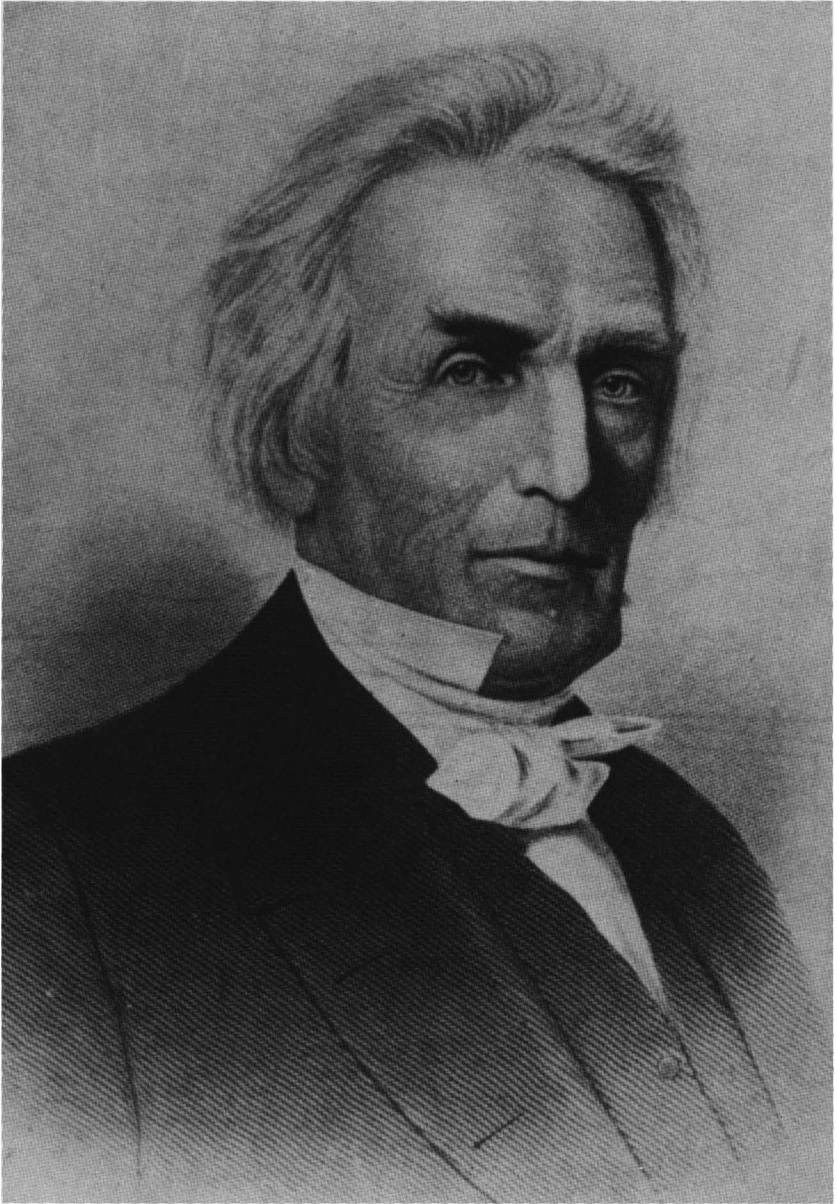
**Introduction
James M. Seale**

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Alexander Campbell

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INTRODUCTION

Alexander Campbell, born September 12, 1788, near Shane's Castle in County Antrim, North Ireland, emigrated to the United States at age twenty-one. His life was a major influence in the Campbell-Stone Movement which began on the American frontier in the early 1800's. As a man of the Scottish and English Enlightenment, Campbell employed his varied talents and concerns in the service of the church and the nation. He was a religious reformer, Bible translator, and scholar deeply influenced by the philosophies of John Locke and the Scottish School of Common Sense. He was author, editor, and publisher; educator and college president; preacher, lecturer, and debater; gentleman farmer and sheepbreeder.

At the age of thirty Campbell founded Buffaloe Seminary in his home and in 1840 established Bethany College on a hilltop of his farm at Bethany, Virginia (now West Virginia). He served as delegate to the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829 which he entered because of his special concerns as an advocate of free public schools and the gradual emancipation of slaves. In that convention he became a leader in the struggle to embody the principles of Jacksonian democracy in the new constitution of Virginia. His major editorial works were *The Christian Baptist*, published from 1823 to 1830, and *The Millennial Harbinger*, started in 1830 and continuing until 1870, four years after his death on March 4, 1866.

Campbell Lectures

Committed to the uniting of Christians under the teachings of the New Testament, Campbell traveled extensively, spoke eloquently, and left an indelible mark on the Christian Church of the Nineteenth Century. His concepts of Christian unity and freedom—positing a unity without uniformity and an open world of observation and experiment and reason against a closed world of dogma and tradition—offer both challenge and fruitful suggestion to the church of the Twentieth Century.

Because of Alexander Campbell's important place in the life of the church and the nation, the Disciples of Christ Historical Society Board of Trustees in 1984 set forth a program to celebrate the 200th birth date of Campbell. It was determined that a lecture series would be given in three different locations of the United States. Five lecturers from within the Campbell-Stone Movement would deliver lectures in Fort Worth, Texas; Claremont, California; and Indianapolis, Indiana. In addition a noted historian from outside the movement would be asked to deliver a Campbell lecture at only one location thus including three such historians.

The Campbell celebration began with a lecture by Eva Jean Wrather at the Historical Society Dinner during the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) held in Louisville, Kentucky, in October 1987. This lecture with the lectures from the series provide the nine lectures included in this book. They were edited by Lester McAllister, Professor of Modern Church History, Emeritus. The Index was prepared by David I. McWhirter, Director of Library and Archives for the Historical Society. We wish to express sincere thanks to the lecturers for their scholarly papers and to Lester McAllister and David McWhirter for their work in preparing the manuscript. Proofing of the text was done by Bondie Thompson, Secretary at the Historical Society, and for this she deserves much credit.

The Board of Trustees of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society is very pleased to offer this historical review of aspects of the life of Alexander Campbell in their continuing effort to create history as well as to preserve history.

James M. Seale, President
Disciples of Christ Historical Society

Lecture 1

Alexander Campbell: Child of the Puritans?

*T. Dwight Bozeman, Associate Professor in the School of
Religion at the University of Iowa.*

Is the label, “child of the Puritans,” suggestive of useful ways to approach the thought of Alexander Campbell? On the premise that comparison and contrast are potent tools of understanding, the answer is surely yes. Even should we assume the least promising case—that Campbell’s values were largely dissimilar to those of the classical English and American Puritans—the path of research and reflection bringing us to such a conclusion well might prove a fruitful one. To commence with such a comparison, we first must define Puritanism.

In this paper, the term “Puritanism” will denote the tradition of demand for “further reformation” that entrenched itself within the Church of England shortly after the Protestant return to power in 1558. That demand sustained major activities of dissent from the Elizabethan Settlement of religion until the breakdown of the Cromwellian regime and the restoration of monarchy in 1660. It generated as well the Congregational spinoff that laid the foundations of New England in the second and third decades of the seventeenth century. Puritanism also contributed impulses to more radical sectaries—to Separatists, Baptists, and sundry antinomians and spiritists—but with these we are not presently concerned. Our focus will fall upon the nonseparating center, the mainstream that remained decidedly a part of the magisterial Reformation and that clamored from within for a fuller reform of the English church and nation. Thomas Cartwright,

William Perkins or John Winthrop, not Roger Williams, George Fox, or Richard Coppin, embody the dominant impulses of that tradition during its great century; and it is the thought of such figures that will here determine the root meanings of Puritanism.

In the existing state of knowledge it is difficult to estimate to what degree a specifically English Puritan inheritance helped shape the Scotch-Irish Presbyterianism within which Thomas and Alexander Campbell initially were bred. It probably was not a determinative factor in the activities of John Glas, Robert Sandeman, the Haldanes, and other British restorationists of the 18th and early 19th centuries who played a role in the development of young Alexander's outlook. In all of these cases Scottish Presbyterianism was the operative tradition, and while that tradition had much in common with English Puritanism it was a sturdily independent and relatively privileged development with far less incentive to develop an oppositional "puritan" outlook in the English manner. Certainly, then, Alexander Campbell was not a "child of the Puritans" in the sense of sustaining major historical continuity with a specifically English movement fueled by antagonism to the diocesan, disciplinary, and liturgical forms of the national church.¹

It would, however, be a clear error to dissociate Campbell outright from mainstream English dissent. During the Puritan century from 1560 to 1660 there was a fertile exchange of influences between England and Scotland. That exchange was facilitated by a shared orientation to the vigorous internationale of Reformed Protestantism. It was strengthened by the common aversion of both sides to the Radical Reformation and to select elements within Lutheranism. And clearly the Presbyterian and Independent communities which carried on the Puritan impulse after 1660 continued to impart and share influences with their Scottish and Irish colleagues. In addition, it is important to remember that from the age of twenty-one and his migration to Pennsylvania Campbell's intellectual environment bore more distinctly the stamp of the Puritan past.

Thus we are not surprised to find Puritanism a familiar and major part—if only one part—of the religious inheritance within which young Campbell consciously worked, and a part with which he felt obliged to come to some terms. In his magnum opus of those years, the seven volume series of *The Christian Baptist* (1823–1830), there are hundreds of refer-

ences both direct and indirect to that inheritance. He looked back with authentically puritan venom upon the career of Archbishop William Laud, and he could echo heartily the classic puritan complaint that “the Church of England . . . has made but a few and very short strides from her mother, the church of Rome.”² Likewise, he approved the course of the Independents in their struggle to foil the planned Presbyterian establishment of religion during the mid-seventeenth century turmoils.³

But hostility is the more pronounced note. Thus we find Campbell assailing “the quaint style of puritanical divinity,” with its bent toward “Geneva metaphysics” and its taste for systematic statement.⁴ He had little use for Puritan religious intolerance whether among English Presbyterians or Massachusetts Congregationals, and recalled with righteous anger “how [the] Cotton Mathers and those of that learned fraternity governed . . . the public will, even to . . . imprisoning and whipping Baptists . . .”⁵ One of the largest projects of *The Christian Baptist* was a six-part series on the Westminster Confession, a puritan product which Campbell found dominated by the fossilizing, divisive tendency of all “human” creeds and confessions.⁶

Certainly we will not look to Campbell for a well-rounded or objective appraisal of the Puritan heritage. He appears to have known but a few of its constituent elements, and he of course approached them with intensely polemical purpose. On most occasions he was far readier to blame than to praise the puritan past as he understood it. I will not, therefore, dwell further upon Campbell’s analysis of Puritanism, but will venture some independent comparison of the two theologies, Campbellite and Puritan. To make the project manageable, coverage of Campbell is restricted to his own “primitive” period before circa 1830, the years in which he entered the American Protestant stage with a spirited sectarian outlook and came into his own as a distinctive force and voice.⁷ This should in no way diminish the interest of the comparison, since in that decade most of the essentials of his mature outlook already were in place.

To juxtapose the two theologies, to compare their respective crucial premises and the positions taken on the great and constitutive issues of Protestant thought, is to reveal alike areas of overlap and intimate agreement and areas of the deepest antagonism. To begin with the former, there are many points of affinity between Campbell’s democratic congrega-

tionalism and the concentration upon local prerogatives characteristic of puritan church polities. Again, Campbell shared with figures like Thomas Cartwright and John Cotton an individualizing appeal to the right of private judgment in religious affairs. At a deeper and more telling level, they shared as well a profound iconophobia, a hostility to inherited concepts of sacred places and things.⁸

Perhaps students of Disciples history will be more interested to learn that the Puritan agitation too, if less single-mindedly than the Campbellite, arose from a will to return to the norms and ways of a primitive, sacred past. To take but one example, Thomas Cartwright, the foundational figure of Elizabethan Presbyterianism, stood forth some two centuries before the birth of Alexander Campbell to risk not only his academic career at Cambridge University but also his personal freedom by applying to the Church of England the thesis that "whatsoever is first, that is true; and whatsoever is later, that is false." And thus he was committed by explicit and passionately held principle to present his shocking, anti-episcopal plan of church polity as a transcript of "the perfectest church that ever was, which was that in the apostles' time."⁹

From this fundamental principle—the supremacy of the first—issued a variety of other theological commitments which will sound more than familiar to men and women of Campbellite faith. Prominent among these was a conviction that biblical Christianity was a simple, unmixed affair wholly unlike the encrusted complexity that was historic Roman Catholicism and that had carried over in far too many details into the Protestant churches. Celebration of the uncorrupted purity and the "glorious simplicity" of New Testament doctrine and institution was basic to Campbell's rhetoric,¹⁰ and much of the flavor of his ecclesiological and doctrinal teaching is missed if its strong bias against the alloyed and the complex is not perceived. Similarly, the appeal to primitive simplicity and purity was one of the most regular clichés of Puritan discourse. Advocacy of a plain style in preaching, of a homiletical speech stripped of erudite adornment, is perhaps the most familiar example, although a distaste for complexity and for the addition of "mixtures" to the first and pure is a large common denominator throughout the Puritan movement.¹¹

Flowing likewise from allegiance to the first was a deeply held belief that the norms and patterns of the great

age constituted an order of fixed and changeless perfection. Preadjusted to all the circumstances and fluctuations of ordinary human history, first things were final; they defied change. Alexander Campbell never tired of reminding readers of *The Christian Baptist* that the apostolic office of the elder/bishop, to take but one example, was not relative to the times and places of history. Because all future states were “as present to [the] mind [of Christ] as the circumstances that encompassed him,” he had formed “a system of things suitable to all exigencies . . . of men and things,” and thus “eternal and unchangeable.”¹²

For such statements a legion of equivalents appear in Puritan texts. According to Elizabethan, early Tudor, and New England advocates of further reformation, a biblical original was “no commandment belonging to any certain time, but perpetuall, and pertaining to all times and states of the Church”; wherefore the orders of biblical worship and polity (like Cartwright’s Presbyterian scheme), once correctly grasped and instituted, should “stand firme and inviolable, without alteration . . . whilst the world standeth.”¹³ Certainly Campbell and the Puritans wished to inspire change, and their appeal to a sacred past had a power in excess of intent to subvert the confidence of men and women in existing values and institutions. Yet at no time was that appeal intended to elevate change itself into a virtue, or to affirm it as a permanent attribute of Christian thought and organization. On the contrary, the aim was to enshrine fixity. It was to recover a total and final order of ideas and institutions and to cherish and preserve it inviolate until the end of history.

An order of things thus comprehended as primitive, pure, simple, and final obviously was not open to human intervention. But something there is in man that will not yield to sacred finality, that will seek to modify originals or contrive altogether new and unauthorized religious forms. It is the source alike of the spoiling alterations, the corruptions and the needless complications of Christianity since the time of the ancient order. Against this age-old tendency, a restorationist must stand to protest. Campbell did it this way: “in the christian religion, there are no new discoveries, no new improvements to be made”; again, “the institution of which [Christ] is the author and founder, can never be either improved or reformed, or better adapted to existing circumstances.”¹⁴ Save for the appeal to a special past itself, no ele-

ment is more fundamental to the early Campbell than this pronounced antagonism to the tainting intrusions of man upon divinely perfected things.

Yet it would be a large mistake to assume that this emphasis was a Campbellite innovation. Together with the larger reflex of appeal to a golden time, it took its place within an historical series extending back to the first Christian centuries.¹⁵ It was a note often sounded, for instance, in earliest New England. Hostility to the “meer inve[n]tions . . . of men”¹⁶ is a commonplace of the founding documents of American Congregationalism, and indeed no term in Puritan polemic carried fuller menace than “human invention.” John Cotton was never more indignant than when confronted with Roger Williams’ claim that church order in the Bay colony was an unbiblical “invention” of man.¹⁷ Early in the Antinomian controversy, John Winthrop asked John Wheelwright to cease using “some words and phrases,” such as “person of the Holy Ghost” and “real union” with the Holy Ghost, “which were of human invention,” and thereby put a stop to the spreading antinomian infection.¹⁸ And so it went in countless cases, as in the Watertown congregation’s “covenant . . . to renounce all . . . Humane Traditions and Inventions whatsoever, in the Worship of God,” or in Thomas Hooker’s attacks upon the Presbyterian concept of an authoritarian elder as “a human creature of man’s devising.”¹⁹ In Congregational Massachusetts no less than in restorationist circles in 19th century Pennsylvania and Virginia, this habitual castigation of “invention” was far more than an occasional embellishment of the rhetoric. It was an index of deeply held convictions, of a distinctly premodern attachment to the perfect and fixed and of an ascetic, restrictive attitude to the human mind.

At many more specific points, Alexander Campbell’s diagnosis of the current ills of the Christian movement echoed that of the English and American Puritans. There was solid agreement, for instance, that the liturgies of most existing churches were littered with human inventions and thus were at serious variance with the purity and plainness of primitive worship. Contemporary ecclesiastical polities, too, especially those which perpetuated the Catholic “invention” of hierarchy, were found far removed from the simple communal life of the apostolic churches. Campbell himself judged the Presbyterian polity to be as much a product of hierarchical thinking as Anglican episcopacy,²⁰ but in the context of Elizabethan or Stuart England it was nothing of the kind. Calling for a dra-

matic reversal of initiative at the parish level, Cartwright and his colleagues proposed an outright abolition of prelacy, local election of all congregational officers, and defined the relations among clergy in terms of absolute parity.²¹ Finally, Puritans no less than Campbellites assailed the theologies and sermons of their day which ascribed authoritative status to Aristotelian, Platonic, Stoic, patristic or other classical sources which stood outside the primitive deposit.²²

Given the many actual convergences of his thought with the Puritan past, and in particular the common reversion to a normative age and the common instinct to eliminate and simplify, may we conclude that Campbell's theology was essentially puritan in type? This conclusion, unless carefully restricted to those convergent themes, would confuse as much as it would clarify. In fact, Campbell's considerable animus toward Puritanism was based upon a perceptive intuition of glaring differences between the larger Puritan rendering of the Christian redemption and his own.

Of several such differences he was explicitly and resentfully aware. Together with the overwhelming majority of their Protestant countrymen, the Puritans identified with the magisterial mainstream of the Reformation. Its obvious and central premise was the *corpus christianum*, the comprehensive Christian social community with religious order and orthodoxy underwritten by magistracy and law.²³ Campbell's dissent from this concept, and his fervent advocacy of religious toleration, was far more relative to his time and place than he was prepared to recognize; but he did grasp and articulate clearly the far-reaching trend, running at high tide in his adopted nation, towards religious liberty and pluralism. And he believed as well that movement away from the international Protestant mainstream on these issues also must subvert the traditional Reformed and certainly Puritan concept of the National Covenant. It also would subvert the accompanying apparatus of communal fastdays orchestrated by clerical "watchmen" assuming special guardianship over the nation's status before God. And if the communally organized Sabbath celebration was an integral element of puritan reform programs, if, indeed, the Elizabethan Puritans were the strongest sabbatarian force in the Protestant movement of their day, so Campbell found that this ordinance too must be abolished. For in a society pledged to religious toleration the Christian day of worship—now divested of unauthorized Hebrew sanctions and nomenclature—must be reconceived as

an entirely private and congregational affair: the "Lord's Day" or "the first day of the week."²⁴

Such changes were not minor alterations. If Cartwright or John Cotton could have foreseen them, they could only have felt dismay. What could such things mean but a triumph of Anabaptism, the appalling and structural ruin of the Protestant campaign to sustain, reform, and perfect christian society?

Could we indeed catch Cartwright or Cotton in a moment of visionary insight into the Protestant future, we would find their dismay deepening as they followed Campbell further through his iconoclastic course. Pondering his appeals to the apostolic golden age and his general critique of human invention, they would continue to experience moments of recognition and gratification. But this hardly could be sustained when they found him, presuming a virtually transhistorical level of special insight, casting aside at will the perspectives, findings, and wisdom of nearly two and a half centuries of Reformed biblical exegesis. To Campbell's justification of this activity as an exercise of Protestant private judgment, they might have said, yes, genuine Protestantism rests upon a principle of private judgment. But consider the context in which this doctrine arose and was sustained in the 16th century. Men like Luther, Calvin, and certainly our English Reformed forebears were troubled both by the tendency of Catholic scholastic and mystical theology to speculate beyond biblical bounds and by the wildly irresponsible spiritism of the Radical Reformation. Their doctrine of total depravity, for example, with its insistence that the intellect shared fully in the Fall's debilitation of human capacities, was directed in part against these errors; but so was their repeated and firm insistence upon subjecting individual judgment to checks and balances. They affirmed private judgment but just as emphatically placed it within the larger and overruling corporate context of the church and its credal tradition. And indeed the case of Campbell offers indisputable proof of the foresight and prudence of our Reformed founders in these matters. We scarcely can imagine a more cogent demonstration of the folly of an unchecked mind than the many misrepresentations of traditional doctrine and the decidedly arbitrary exegeses of biblical texts that stream from Campbell's pen. And what lies behind these gestures is clear. It is the immeasurable presumption that a single mind, ascribing almost infinite prerogative to itself, can know more and see

more deeply than the generations of men.—Speaking in some such terms as these, our puritan representatives would have pinpointed a crucial area in which Campbell stood at variance with the English and New England quest for further reformation. They could, however, hardly have been content to stop there, for Campbell's demolition of older Protestant ideologies moved beyond creeds and confessions to encompass the larger enterprise of theology itself. When he declared that "on the subject of religion . . . nothing but the inspired scriptures ought ever to have been published," and when he complained sarcastically that "*instead of the apostles doctrine . . . we have got the sublime science of Theology, subdivided into scholastic, polemic, dogmatic, and practical Divinity,*"²⁵ he had post-puritan productions partly in mind. His remarks apply best to the highly elaborate and ordered productions of the period of Reformed high orthodoxy spanning approximately the last two-thirds of the 17th century and the yet later Reformed *summae* written in that scholastic tradition.

And yet his complaint applied with only slightly reduced rigor to the theology of the Puritan century. For from the first anti-vestiarrians of the 1560s to figures like Hugh Peter or Thomas Goodwin of the revolutionary period, dissenting pastor-theologians participating gladly in the larger and international process by which mainstream Protestantism was coming constructively to terms with its own success. The special connections with Cambridge University, the oft-remarked interest in Ramist logic, the learned cast of the bulk of puritan utterance, the belief in systematic theological inquiry and statement,²⁶—these were important typifying features of the puritan movement. But more, they signaled its firm affiliations to the evolution of an international Reformed divinity. They represented the Reformed response to several pressing challenges of the day: the need to define and clarify the doctrinal gains of the Reformation, to formulate an intellectually adequate response to the sweeping and immensely learned theologies of the Counter-reformation, to defend biblical and Protestant faith against a growing host of intra-Protestant heterodoxies, and to create a carefully formulated and methodologically respectable Protestant theology capable of standing among other disciplines in the great universities and traditions of learning—including those at Oxford and Cambridge—inherited from the Catholic past.²⁷

Integral to this enterprise were not only commitments to precise definition and systematic organization, but also the

covenantal constructions that were peculiarly characteristic of Reformed thought. These, in turn, rested upon a conception of the biblical primordium into which the Old Testament (especially the “deuteronomic” theme) was generously interwoven. Thus when Campbell, in a further thrust at the vitals of Reformed tradition, bluntly devalued the Old Testament as a source of Christian revelation, he subverted both the unity of redemptive history and the validity of Old Testament moral and contractual ideals upon which the pervasive covenant themes in Reformed and especially puritan theology had been based.²⁸

In a number of ways the fundamental conception of the Christian redemption entertained within Reformed-Puritan theology hinged upon these ideas. Hence we should not be surprised to find our puritan spokesmen, watching with alarm the Campbellite sample of future theology, hastening to damn Alexander Campbell’s critique of Reformed orthodoxy. Not only was it sheer intellectual anarchism to destroy the Bible’s narrative and theological unity, but what must be the consequence for the redemption of doomed souls which it was the unified purpose of biblical revelation to effect?

But even yet the extent of Campbell’s deviation from Reformed-Puritan tradition is not revealed fully. When puritan spokesmen defined redemption in predestinarian terms, when they spoke of the covenant of grace first forged with Abraham by which the benefits of Christ were conveyed to humanity, they wished to project a vision of overriding divine initiative in the process of salvation. If, as all Reformed Protestants believed, men and women are fallen creatures desperately unable to know or to do the good, then all initiative lay with God and the divine purpose and power to change human minds and wills.

The Puritans may be said to have invented “conversion” as a major preoccupation of soterial doctrine and pastoral care within magisterial Protestantism, but consistently they defined it in relation to the depravity of unregenerate nature. In keeping with standard Reformed (and Lutheran) doctrine, Puritans defined an extended process of self-recognition and despair (“conviction”) as the manner of entry into the regenerate life. Men and women, entrapped within their doomed existence, could not generate their own conversions. For the achievement of self-knowledge, and for the ensuing transformation, two outside agencies were essential. First, there was the apostolic ordinance of preaching, whose mission was first

to terrify and then to comfort the conscience.²⁹ Then, when the supplicant fully had confronted his or her doomed and helpless condition, conversion might follow; but it would and must be effected by external *supernatural* agency, by an explicit infusion of power into the human mind and heart.³⁰

With these conceptions, emphasizing clerical agency and depicting a saga of the soul's doom and transfiguration, the puritan leadership hoped to bring the largely unregenerate and undisciplined (and often residually Catholic) members of the average English parish into the kingdom of Christ. They underlay the well-known puritan concentration upon moral transformation, upon an ascetic style of life, upon strict personal and ecclesiastical discipline, and upon the special legal obligations imposed alike by the deuteronomic and gracious covenants. And it was the same conceptions, with their perceived galaxy of effects within the human personality, which unfolded into the strikingly elaborate—and, again, clerically orchestrated—spirituality which became a hallmark of the puritan movement from the later 16th century.³¹

With a number of deceptively simple gestures, young Alexander Campbell undercut the foundations upholding these large edifices of puritan thought and piety. First, he professed to find no warrant in the normative period either for belief in the self's congenital and disabling depravity or for the vision of a predestinating God regenerating his elect with irresistible infusions of power. There were no grounds in sacred writ for a "terrible process of terror and despair through which a person must pass . . . before he can believe the gospel,"³² let alone for discussion of an "invisible, indescribable energy exerted upon the minds of men in order to make them christians."³³ Finally, pursuing to yet another limit his claim to singular insight, he announced that "it was no part of the revealed design of the Saviour to employ clergymen . . . in the diffusion . . . of his religion in the world."³⁴

Faced with these final and ruinous disclosures, what could our prophetic observers do but, in the best spirit of puritan "church discipline," commend Campbell to excommunication and the outer darkness. However he might profess to value the New Testament, seek for a more biblical theology, acknowledge the purity, simplicity, and fixity of revelation, share a diagnosis of post-apostolic times as a declension from the first, abhor human invention, hold in contempt all elaborate liturgies and episcopal hierarchies, and share a special affinity with the Congregational type of Puritan polity, he re-

mained a renegade from far too many elementary tenets of Reformed and Puritan faith. Should his agenda be put into effect, most of the prominent landmarks of that faith must pass away. Then must dissolve the venerable vision of the covenanted English (or New England) nation dwelling under the mercy and judgment of the Lord and shepherded by clerical "watchmen"; and, indeed, then the dissenting clergy's courageous spearheading of the drive for further reformation, together with their sacrificial efforts day in and day out to awaken and sanctify the English people, must be accounted a colossal mistake. Then must vanish the biblical Sabbath which it had been a distinctive mission of the English Puritans (principally of the clergy) to restore to the Protestant movement. Then must fall the objective credal standards by which true from wayward exercises of private judgment might be distinguished and doctrinal error and schism avoided. Then the Old Testament with its priceless deuteronomic paradigms, must recede into the far background of Christian consciousness. Then the critically important insights of predestinarian theology and the realistically sombre estimate of human nature conveyed in the Reformed concept of sin must be relinquished. Then the painful but healing exercises of "conviction" that stand at the door to regeneration must be dismissed, and with them the hope of an unequivocally *supernatural* uplifting into a higher and spiritually arduous life beyond the reach of natural man. So too must be discredited the passionately moral and disciplinary commitments that go far to distinguish puritan believers from the halfhearted baptized masses in the English church (or, in New England, to inaugurate the tradition of American Protestant church discipline which was still very much alive in the ante-bellum United States). And, to add a final woe, there must fade the rich pietistic spirituality which was another distinctive (and arguably the most impressive) creation of the Puritans.

Our conclusion therefore is clear. If the intended standard is the classical English and American Puritanism of the century and more after 1560, then young Alexander Campbell was far more a prodigal son than a loyal child of the Puritans—and a prodigal who did not return to eat the fatted calf. His theology does not meaningfully assimilate to a "puritan" type. In certain matters there is affinity and overlap, principally in common appeal to a sacred past; but in many others the relation is oblique and contrary. The truth is that

the older primitivism, notwithstanding the appeal to an original simplicity, was a considerably more complex affair than Campbell's. It was interwoven and variously enriched and qualified by a large variety of other concerns. Hence the standard, "whatsoever is first, that is true," was the more discriminating, more qualified instrument in the hands of men like Cartwright or Cotton.

Thus Campbell's restorationist faith appears the more radical, but the point should not be granted too glibly. Relative to his context, he was in some senses *less* radical. Undeniably the positions he took were less risky, less antagonistic to the fundamental interests of his society and thus less likely to evoke serious censure and punishment. Obviously there was never a question of his being summoned to the American equivalent of a Lambeth palace for a humbling archiepiscopal interrogation, or of being disbeneficed or imprisoned or driven from Virginia to the safety of a foreign shore. Yet it remains true that his application of the primitive standard was logically the more consistent, that he employed to fuller effect the restorationist's tactic of elimination and simplification, and that he struck aside many more landmarks of traditional theological culture and spirituality. In traditional Puritanism the primitive norm shared pride of place with other major commitments, but in the thought of Alexander Campbell it was the unchallenged center.

Footnotes

1. The claim that Alexander Campbell "derived his emphasis on restoration from Puritanism" rests upon an ascription of "Puritan" dependence or character to Robert Sandeman, John Glas, the Haldanes and late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Scotch-Irish Seceder Presbyterianism. Yet it is unlikely that a distinctively English Puritan element played a role in any of these cases, let alone that it became *the* essential primitivist source. Richard T. Hughes, "From Primitive Church to Civil Religion: The Millennial Odyssey of Alexander Campbell," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* XLIV (March, 1976), 92-93, esp. 92 n. 41. It is also misleading to suggest that the Campbells "can best be understood against the background of . . . left-wing Protestantism classically exemplified by the Anabaptists and Spiritual Reformers of 16th century Europe," or that the Scottish primitivist "inde-

pendency” of Glas, Sandeman, and the Haldanes “represented a merging of Calvinist and Anabaptist elements.” Harold L. Lunger, *The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell* (St. Louis, 1954), 20. All of the above judgments overlook the independent and prominent role played by primitivist elements in militantly anti-Anabaptist Scottish and Scotch-Irish Presbyterianism (as in the thought of John Knox or Andrew Melville). Indeed, such elements were constituent, of course in varying degrees, to Reformed Protestantism everywhere.

2. *CB*, II, 134.
3. *CB*, III, 26–27, 52, 69–70.
4. *CB*, III, 226, 244.
5. *CB*, IV, 10.
6. *CB*, II, 198–204, 210–216, 231–234; *CB*, III, 25–29, 47–52, 69–72.
7. The texts from Campbell I have canvassed are the seven volumes of *The Christian Baptist*, the volumes of debates with John Walker, W. L. McCalla and Robert Owen, and the new edition of the New Testament.
8. See. e.g. *CB*, I, 23, 240–241, and Arthur Hildersam, *CVIII Lectures upon the Fourth of John* (London, 1632), 119.
9. Thomas Cartwright, *A Reply to an Answer Made of M. Doctor Whitgifte* (n.p., 1573), 104.
10. *CB*, I, 16. For other typical appeals to the primitively simple, see I, 15, 55; IV, 35.
11. See Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism* (Chapel Hill, published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1988), 16–17, 44–45, and *passim*.
12. *CB*, II, 152; *CB*, III, 154.
13. Walter Travers, *A Full and Plaine Declaration of Ecclesiastical Discipline . . .* (Leiden, 1617), 7; John Davenport, *The Knowledge of Christ . . .* (London, 1653), 85.
14. *CB*, III, 154; II, 152.
15. The belittlement of linked tradition peculiar to restorationist perspectives is itself eminently traditional.
16. *A Platform of Church Discipline Gathered out of the Word of God* (the “Cambridge Platform”, 1648), in Williston Walker, ed., *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* (1893; Boston, 1960), 236.
17. John Cotton, *Letter to Mr. Williams*, in *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, I, 55.
18. John Winthrop, *The History of New England from 1630 to 1649*, ed. James Savage (1853; New York, 1972), I, 203, 206–207.

19. Champlin Burrage, *The Church-Covenant Idea* (Philadelphia, 1904). 92–93; Thomas Hooker, *A Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline* (London, 1648), pt. 1, 2, 119.
20. *CB*, III, 51.
21. See, e.g., Thomas Cartwright, *The Second Reply of Thomas Cartwright against Master Doctor Whitgift's Second Answer Touching the Church Discipline* (n.p., 1575), 404–415. As Campbell recognized, the polity of Puritan Congregationalism differed only in a few details from his own vision of congregational democracy. See e.g. *CB*, III, 26–7, 49, 52, 69–70.
22. E.g., Cartwright, *Colossians*, 122; *CB*, VI, 176.
23. The core element in Puritan political teaching, for example, was the “good magistrate” considered as divinely ordained “nursing father” of the true church. For an example, see John Udall, *Amendment of Life* (London, 1588), sig. F2.
24. *CB*, III, 23–24; *CB*, I, 131.
25. *CB*, IV, 3; *CB*, I, 15, emphasis mine.
26. There are several puritan systematic theologies. See e.g. Dudley Fenner, *Sacra Theologia* (Middleburg, 1585?); William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine: or, the Description of Theologie* (Cambridge, 1600); John Norton, *The Orthodox Evangelist* (London, 1654).
27. On these issues, see Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics; Volume One: Prolegomena to Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1987). The principal intra-Protestant enemies were antinomianism, arminianism, socinianism, spiritism, and certain Lutheran sacramental and soteriological errors.
28. See e.g. Campbell's “Sermon on the Law” (1816), reprinted in the *Millennial Harbinger*, ser. 3, III, 493–521. For Puritan contract theology and its Old Testament foundations, see e.g. Michael McGiffert, “Covenant, Crown, and Commons in Elizabethan Puritanism,” *Journal of British Studies* (Fall, 1980), 32–52.
29. For examples of the role of preaching in the “conviction” of sinners, see Hooker, *Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline*, Sig. Ccc2; William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, trans. and ed. John Dykstra Eusden (1629; Boston and Philadelphia, 1968), 193–194.
30. See e.g. Richard Greenham, *The Works of the Reverend . . . M[aster] Richard Greenham. . . .*, 3d ed. (London, 1601), 54, 131–139; Ames, *Marrow of Theology*, 157–170.
31. See e.g. Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New*

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England (Chapel Hill, Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

32. *CB*, I, 148. See also *CB*, III, 175.
33. *CB*, I, 145–6. See also *CB*, I, 149. Campbell did not “contend for a religion in which the Holy Spirit has nothing to do,” but he found no scriptural support for the “mysterious reasoning” upon “infused” grace common to Reformed scholasticism and revivalism. *CB*, IV, 35; *CB*, III, 241.
34. *CB*, III, 15. Campbell recognized only the New Testament “bishop” or “elder,” understanding him as a locally elected “overseer” and teacher with no professional training, no identification with a clerical class or consociational body, and no standing or authority beyond his individual congregation. See *CB*, IV, 6–8; *CB*, III, 188–190, 214–215.

Lecture 2

In the Spirit of the Prophets: Alexander Campbell as a Social Thinker

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“Blow the trumpet in Zion;
 sound the alarm on my holy hill.
Let all who live in the land tremble,
 for the day of the Lord is coming.
It is close at hand—
 a day of darkness and gloom,
 a day of blackness. . . .
Multitudes, multitudes
 in the valley of decision!
For the day of the Lord is near
 in the valley of decision.”
 (Joel 2:1, 2; 3:14 NIV)

“As sure as the Ohio winds its way to the Gulph of Mexico, will slavery desolate and blast our political existence, unless effectual measures be adopted to bring it to a close while it is in the power of the nation—while it is called today.” (Alexander Campbell, *Millennial Harbinger*, (1832), p. 240)

These earnest warnings stand separated by two thousand five hundred years. Yet, they shared a common conviction that man’s secular decisions will be judged in history, according to the justice required by the Living God. (Micah 6:8; Acts 17:31)

The first utterance was spoken by the Hebrew prophet Joel. The second was written in 1832 by Alexander Campbell, the bicentennial of whose birth we now celebrate.¹ Each of

these warnings declared to its own generation that the “day of decision” in which evil could be repented was fast drawing to a close.

Campbell shared the prophetic perspective which was rooted in profound awareness of what God has done for man, what He requires of man, and His consequent judgement of man.² With the prophets, the reformer believed that God is involved in human history to accomplish His ultimate purpose.³ This meant that one should seek continually to discern the meaning of contemporary events *sub specie aeternitatis*—that is, from the standpoint of Heaven. That standpoint, so far as man can discern it, is revealed in the Bible.⁴ Where it speaks and is rightly interpreted, Campbell believed the Scripture conveyed the ultimate authority of the Lord of history.⁵

In 1852, Campbell gave an address entitled, “The Destiny of Our Country.” There he voiced the fundamental conviction of the prophets when he declared, “THE UNIVERSE IS FOUNDED UPON A MORAL IDEA.” In consequence, he continued,

the perpetuity and prosperity of a people, or nation, are wholly dependent upon their goodness, their humanity, their philanthropy. And what is either individual or social goodness or humanity, but the proper combination of three ingredients—justice, truth and piety? No nation ever survived the death of these three principles. . . .⁶

While Campbell admired such figures as Alexander Pope,⁷ and Thomas Jefferson, he was especially indebted to John Locke,⁸ Thomas Reid,⁹ and James H. Beattie.¹⁰ From these formative minds of the “Christian Enlightenment” Campbell adopted much of his political and social thought. If the Stoics defined “*natural law*” as “the highest reason implanted in nature,”¹¹ Campbell and his mentors would add that this “*law*” was given by God in the beginning (Rom 1:18–24). It may be universally discerned by reason, for as Campbell wrote, “Reason is the eye of the soul to which the light of revelation is addressed.”¹²

An early instance of Campbell’s prophetic spirit is seen in his advocacy of the rights of the Cherokee Indians. Insatiable greed for land on which to produce cotton had reached the deep South. Solemn treaties were being violated, and Indian lands seized. The white community generally favored

this policy. President Andrew Jackson promoted it, even to the point of defying a Supreme Court decision.¹³ But Campbell had the prophetic courage to condemn the seizures. He wrote,

THE "*rights of man*," one would think, are anything and every thing which any body and every body pleases to make them, if we yield to the opinions of those who maintain that any state in this Union has a right to seize the property and exile or banish the owner, because he is red, or yellow, or some other unfashionable color. . . . Has one man, because he is rich and has many friends, the right to seize the farm of his poor neighbor and give him a tract in the moon, or in "*No Man's Island*" for it, just as he pleases?¹⁴

Campbell could well have quoted the words of Amos when he said,

You trample on the poor
and force him to give you corn.
Therefore, though you have built stone mansions,
you will not live in them. . . .
You deprive the poor of justice in the courts.
(Amos, 5:11–13a NIV)

Campbell said no more of the plight of American Indians, even though within two years the Cherokees were to take the "Trail of Tears." A problem of vastly greater proportions was increasingly absorbing his social thought. That problem was the institution of American slavery.

John Bright says of Amos that he

did not attack crimes against justice merely out of personal outrage, or for humanitarian reasons; his attack was deeply rooted in theology.¹⁵

Likewise, for theological reasons, Campbell condemned laws which forbade teaching slaves to read "the Sacred Oracles,"¹⁶ but he refused to condemn all masters for the simple reason that they held slaves.¹⁷

Campbell's doctrine of the Church also influenced his view of the Christian community's proper role within a society. Using the categories of Joachim Wach, Harold Lunger sees Campbell moving from a "Sectarian" to a "Denominational" view of the relation of Church and Society.¹⁸ The

“Sect” type is withdrawn and, according to Wach, “radical in the criticism of civil authority.”¹⁹ In contrast, the “Denomination” tends to be more involved in the world, and assumes more responsibility for its fate.

Useful as this construction may be, it is limited in the extent to which it describes Campbell’s thought. Indeed, Lunger himself notes certain inconsistencies in applying Wach’s categories to Campbell.²⁰

I would therefore propose a different motif which is suggested in another context by A. T. DeGroot. With remarkable insight, DeGroot says, “Disciples are Free Church Catholics.”²¹ In the Free Church tradition, the Church is viewed as a voluntary community of faith which is gathered by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, and orders its common life according to the New Covenant Scriptures. The Free Church rejects interference by the State, and disavows interference in the affairs of the State.²²

In keeping with this conviction, Campbell rejected any effort by the Church *as an institution* to engage in direct political action. In a series of essays entitled, “Our Position to American Slavery,” Campbell wrote, “The state is the world, not the church: the church cannot constitutionally undertake to reform the state.”²³ But if the Church has no “*direct*” power to “attempt the reformation of the state,” it does have “immense *indirect* power . . . by the reflex light of the gospel through its example.”²⁴ As William Robinson has said, “It is the political irrelevancy of the church [sic] which constitutes her political power.”²⁵

The catholicity in Campbell’s thought is seen in his urgent plea for the unity of the Church, that it might bear a more credible witness to the age.²⁶ Christian unity could indeed be achieved through the quest of that which is both original and universal.²⁷

As a “Free Church Catholic,” Campbell opposed the effort of Abolitionists to narrow the ground of Christian fellowship by demanding, “NO UNION WITH SLAVEHOLDERS.”²⁸ Nor could he have approved making antislavery opinion a test of fellowship, as did the “Friends of Humanity Baptists” in Kentucky, or the “Beecher Bible and Rifle Church” in Kansas.²⁹

DeGroot has said that “the import of the word ‘catholic’ is livingness.”³⁰ So Campbell urged congregations to live out their faith through “care for the poor,” “unfeigned sympathy for the distressed of mankind,” and “an ardent zeal for the conversion of sinners.”³¹

Far from separating evangelism and social action, Campbell considered them both essential if the Church were to have “a regenerating influence upon society at large.”³²

Campbell’s doctrine of the Millennium also had profound significance for his social thought. Harold Lunger, David Edwin Harrell, and Richard T. Hughes have explored at length this dimension of his thinking.³³

In effect, Campbell’s millennial expectations made his social thought two-dimensional. The first, or immediate dimension, was his involvement as a Christian reformer in what he termed, “the amelioration of the social state.” In this realm of endeavor, Campbell participated in the Virginia Constitution Convention of 1829–1830. It was also in this realm he strove mightily on behalf of emancipation, education, and peace.

But to Campbell, mankind’s social destiny could only find ultimate fulfillment in the Millennial Reign of the Christ. The vision long treasured by Utopians, and even modern Marxists, could never be realized by “man on his own.” Sin is real, and only under the beneficent reign of the Redeemer-Lord would the hopes of generations be fulfilled.

Campbell described his millennial hope in an “Oration in Honor of the Fourth of July, 1830.” “Jesus Christ will yet govern the world by religion only,” he declared. Under Jesus’ reign but one principle will be needful: Love.³⁴ Eloquently, Campbell compared the best of all human governments with the Reign of the Redeemer:

The admirers of American liberty and American institutions have no cause to regret such an event, no cause to fear it. It will be but the removing of a tent to build a temple—the falling of a cottage after the family are removed into a castle. Not by might, nor by sword, but by the Spirit of the Lord will the political institutions of our government be laid aside. The sun itself and the systems of worlds which revolve round it we can well dispense with when we arrive in the palace of the universe, where God is the Sun, the Light and the Glory. So our best political institutions we can part with without a tear or a sigh, when Jesus reigns on earth, and has placed a throne in every heart and built a temple in every family.³⁵

With such a vision, we may see why Campbell believed that proclamation and exhibition of the Lordship of Jesus was the most radical course of social transformation the

Church could pursue. The reformer wished God's blessing on every man that worked good for society, but he chose to put his "axe at the root of the tree." He said, "I choose to plead that cause which in its genuine catholicity aims a mortal blow at the root of every political, every moral, every antichristian error and defect in society."³⁶ A task of such proportions could only be accomplished by a united Church, for which he prayed and labored.

But meanwhile, the provisional social task remained, to which the reformer would devote his gifts. We shall now briefly consider his involvement in four significant events.

In 1829, Cincinnati, "the Queen City of the West," was host to a classic encounter between two world views which even now grapple for the allegiance of millions. The protagonists in this struggle were Robert Owen (1771–1858) and Alexander Campbell.³⁷ The two world views were Biblical faith and materialistic Utopianism.

Enormous interest was generated by the encounter, which thousands attended. The English traveler, Frances Trollope, was present throughout the debate, and called it "a spectacle unprecedented."³⁸

The Campbell-Owen debate is not sufficiently appreciated by many modern thinkers, for whom Karl Marx represents a vast historical watershed.³⁹ Yet, for two reasons the debate possesses profound contemporary significance. First, it was there that Christian faith early encountered the roots of the modern Marxist claim that "religion is the opium of the people,"⁴⁰ and the source of human alienation.⁴¹ Second, it was there that Christian faith was challenged by an early form of the behaviouristic psychology now popularized by B. F. Skinner.

The Marxist debt to Robert Owen was expressed by Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), the trusted collaborator of Karl Marx.⁴² B. F. Skinner acknowledged his debt to Owen in his popular book, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*.⁴³

Robert Owen was son-in-law of the Scottish industrialist, David Dale, the "Benevolent Magistrate," who also served as a Christian pastor.⁴⁴ Dale owned large textile mills in Lanarkshire, where he introduced advanced labor practices.⁴⁵ Modern historians commonly overlook the significant fact that many labor policies advocated by the skeptic, Robert Owen, were actually pioneered by the Christian, David Dale.⁴⁶ During their debate, Campbell reminded Owen of this fact.⁴⁷

Owen seems not to have been impressed with the social transformation which the Wesleyan Revival was already working in the lives of thousands of Britons.⁴⁸ Instead, he strongly reacted against the social blindness of the Established Church, and concluded that religion is a major barrier to human progress.⁴⁹ Henceforth, as a skeptic Owen determined to seek social justice through what he called, “scientific” principles.

When Owen came to America, the freedom and diversity of the new nation presented a golden opportunity to demonstrate his “newly discovered” principles. He purchased Harmony, Indiana, from a Christian commune led by “Father” Georg Rapp.⁵⁰ Renaming it “New Harmony,” Owen set about constructing a new social order based upon his Utopian philosophy. “Free thinkers” and social theorists from all over America were invited to join the new community. With great enthusiasm the famous “boatload of knowledge” proceeded from Pittsburgh down the Ohio, and up the Wabash to New Harmony. But adventurers and speculators also came. It was these self-seekers whom Owen was to blame for the early failure of the New Harmony experiment.⁵¹

Owen formulated his social program on twelve “natural laws,” fondly called “Jewels” of his “Casket.”⁵² In essence, these principles affirmed that heredity and environment totally control human behaviour. Therefore, he denied the reality of free will, and declared that a person is neither to be praised nor blamed for his actions.⁵³

Owen traveled widely to disseminate his views, especially attacking religion as the bulwark of ignorance, and chief barrier to social progress. While lecturing in New Orleans, religious leaders took exception to his criticisms. Owen therefore challenged them, or any other religious leader, to debate the Christian religion. When Alexander Campbell learned that no one had accepted Owen’s challenge, he accepted it.⁵⁴

Owen visited Campbell at Bethany where the debate was arranged. Although they became good friends, and the debate was conducted with remarkable courtesy,⁵⁵ the proposition Owen sought to prove was radically critical of religion. Owen affirmed

that all the religions of the world have originated in error; that they are directly opposed to the divine, unchanging laws of human nature; that they are

necessarily the source of vice, disunion, and misery; that they are now the only obstacle to the formation of a society, over the earth, of intelligence, of charity in its most extended sense, and of sincerity and affection.⁵⁶

Despite the impending failure of New Harmony, Owen expounded over and over again his proposed reconstruction of society. Traditional religion which teaches human responsibility would be abandoned. Laws of reward and punishment would be abolished. Private property and the profit motive would be forbidden. Permanent marriage would be abandoned. Children would be scientifically reared by the community. And, significantly, the science of animal husbandry would be utilized to improve the genetic traits of the human race.⁵⁷ Such a society would (in Skinner's terms) be "beyond freedom and dignity." But to Owen it promised a new and wonderful age.

Campbell addressed each of Owen's principles to his own satisfaction.⁵⁸ He then concentrated on denying the proposition which occasioned the debate, marshalling massive evidence in support of Biblical faith.⁵⁹ It might, therefore, appear that the two great minds never really came to grips. But such an impression misses their true, crucial encounter.

That encounter had to do with two questions. The first is, "What is Man?"⁶⁰ Campbell raised this question when he noted that Owen's "Twelve Jewels" were as applicable to a kid or goat as they were to a human being.⁶¹ To Campbell it was no accident that Owen's skepticism concerning God led to the question of Man. If God is dead, does Man exist? This is still a crucial issue of the Twentieth Century.⁶²

The second question concerned the reformation of society. Owen affirmed that application of his "natural laws" would fulfill the vision. But who was to apply these "natural laws"? Who possessed the wisdom and virtue to teach and administer them? It is significant that Campbell anticipated Karl Marx in his criticism of Owen. Marx declared what Owen forgot: "That it is men who change circumstances and that it is essential to educate the educator himself." This, Marx declared, could only be achieved by "revolutionising practice."⁶³

To Campbell, the only true "revolutionising practice" is the "renewing of the mind" through the Gospel's call to "repentance." (Rom 12:1, 2) Education which does not unite "the moral with the intellectual culture of the mind" is not sufficient.⁶⁴ People must be *converted*. Sin must first be

repented, for the problem of social injustice roots in the human heart.

Since Owen placed such confidence in human nature,⁶⁵ Campbell asked him the following question:

How came the social circumstances to be irrational and antinatural, seeing necessity, or what he calls nature, has introduced them?⁶⁶

Rightly assuming that Owen would be unable to answer this question, Campbell gave the answer found in the Bible. Sin is the reason for the “irrational and antinatural” human conditions. Moreover, the Gospel possesses the power to “bring men out of them.”

Thus Campbell faithfully represented the classical Christian humanist tradition which at once recognized man’s enormous propensity for evil, while affirming his marvelous potential for good.⁶⁷

More than once, Campbell reminded Owen that his social benevolence was but a “plagiarism” from Christian sources. Campbell observed, “Not one good idea has he submitted, which has not been derived, or which is not derivable from christianity [sic].”⁶⁸ Indeed, Owen’s dependence upon the social vision of Scripture anticipated the indebtedness of Karl Marx to the prophets,⁶⁹ and to the Gospel.⁷⁰

But Campbell was not content simply to critique Owen. He expounded the social vision of classical Christianity. Mankind’s hopes would indeed be realized under the Lordship of Jesus. Campbell said,

I most sanguinely anticipate a restoration of the ancient order of things, and a state of society far superior to anything yet exhibited on earth. I believe that there will be what is commonly believed by all christians, a Millennium; a period, a long period of general or universal peace, happiness, and political and religious prosperity. And that some of the views of Mr. Owen may then be realized as the legitimate fruits of christianity, I would not deny.⁷¹

The contrast between two world views was made clearly evident in the Campbell-Owen debate. Both views sought fulfillment of human hope. The issue was—and is—whether that hope will be fulfilled by “man on his own,” or by God in covenant with man.

In 1828, turbulent demands of western Virginians for more just representation in their government led to a call for a Constitutional Convention.⁷² Among eminent statesmen elected as delegates was the young reformer from Bethany, Alexander Campbell.⁷³

At first, Campbell had resisted nomination, believing that the cause of religious reformation might be impaired.⁷⁴ But friends persuaded him that a Christian citizen dared not abdicate his civic responsibility.⁷⁵

Upon his election, Campbell turned his attention to the subject of human rights—an issue which was to loom large in the Convention. As we have noted, Campbell belonged to the Christian Enlightenment, which found the source of human rights in the Creator.⁷⁶ It was therefore a “sin” against God to deprive human beings of their rights.⁷⁷ With Micah, Campbell would demand that men “do justice” and “love mercy” (Micah 6:8).⁷⁸ In the prophetic tradition, “inhumanity was a religious offense.”⁷⁹

If Campbell initially hoped the new Constitution would make provision for gradual emancipation of slaves, it soon became evident that the first necessary step was to remove the property qualification for voting. This qualification disfranchised thousands of anti-slavery laborers and artisans. Appealing to the principle of justice, Campbell introduced a resolution which would extend suffrage to all free white males over twenty-one.⁸⁰

The slaveholders immediately recognized the danger which this resolution posed to their “peculiar institution.” Nicholas of Richmond disdainfully observed that anyone familiar with politics “must know, that in those matters, there was no such thing as abstract truth.” Leigh of Chesterfield wanted to know why some would “put the power of controlling the wealth of the State into hands different from those which hold that wealth.”⁸¹

Campbell answered by calling the Convention to abide by the *Virginia Bill of Rights*, which had been adopted June 12, 1776.⁸² One might have thought that leaders of the Old Dominion, who often boasted that their *Bill of Rights* had been written before the *Declaration of Independence*, would have honored Campbell’s appeal. But it was not to be so. The powerful plantation owners were threatened by their own heritage.

Judge Caleb Upshur put it baldly when he said,

In truth, Mr. Chairman, there are no original principles of Government at all. . . . I think, Sir, it must be manifest by this time . . . that property is entitled to protection, and that *our* property imperiously demands *that kind of protection* which flows from the possession of power.⁸³

Of course, the “property” to which Upshur referred was the slave.

This is hardly what John Locke meant when he affirmed the right to “lives, liberties, and estates.”⁸⁴ But most sobering is the realization that only two generations after the *Declaration of Independence*, an American jurist disavowed the role of principles in government.

Again, Campbell replied,

I know, Sir, that local interests, and district feelings, can only yield to principles. Animosities and contentions must arise between rival interests, unless fellow-citizens are determined to be governed by principles.⁸⁵

Campbell vigorously opposed the Tidewater’s amendment to count slaves in apportioning representation. The proposal was more suited to the aristocratic regimes of the Old World, than to the democratic freedoms of the New. He demanded to know “why a citizen, having a hundred negroes, should have ten times more political power than a Joseph Lancaster, or a Robert Fulton, with only a house and garden.”⁸⁶

A deep chasm was developing between two ways of life. Slavery was the issue between the two. Indeed, President Monroe said, “I am satisfied, if no such thing as slavery existed, that the people of the Atlantic border, would meet their brethren of the west, upon the basis of a majority of the free white population.”⁸⁷

But slavery did exist.

Campbell continued the struggle for social justice. He presented a motion to equalize the tax burden. This was rejected. He then moved that the judiciary be elected, instead of judges appointing their own successors. This, too, was rejected.

But perhaps the most significant effort of the reformer was his resolution proposing establishment of a public school system.⁸⁸ In an eloquent appeal to the Convention, Campbell

declared that the existence of “republican institutions and the blessings of free Government” depended upon free, public education.⁸⁹

The Convention printed the resolution, but when Campbell moved its adoption, the Convention refused even to consider it.

Thomas Jefferson is praised for establishment of the University of Virginia. But little honor is accorded Alexander Campbell. One exception is Robert Michaelson, who does acknowledge Campbell’s role as “a leader in the eventual establishment of a common school system” in Virginia.⁹⁰ But the Constitutional Convention of 1829–1830 would have none of it.⁹¹

Thus, Campbell lost every substantive cause which he advocated in the Convention.⁹² But even so, he proved himself a social prophet of integrity and clear vision. Amidst the controversy over the role of principles in government, Campbell declared,

Mr. Chairman, we might now bless Virginia with a social compact which would . . . contribute to the political good of the whole commonwealth. . . . But if we exhaust our energies on these little localities, time, the great innovator, will break our arrangements to pieces: For it is decreed, that every system of Government not based upon the true philosophy of man—not adapted to public opinion, to the genius of the age, shall fall into ruins.⁹³

Within three decades, history was to vindicate the reformer’s words. But in doing so, it would break his heart.

Historians have often asked, Is it only the radicals who make history? How appropriate this question is when one views the controversy over American slavery! As the “irrepressible conflict”⁹⁴ reached a climax, both radical Abolitionists and Southern “Fireaters” engaged in civil, and not so civil disobedience, to impose their convictions on others.⁹⁵

We have noted that as early as 1832, Campbell warned of such a prospect, and pled for a peaceful solution while it was “yet today.” But this required that social passion be tempered with wisdom and understanding—qualities which have never been abundant in public life.

Eva Jean Wrather has called Campbell an advocate of “the Golden Mean.”⁹⁶ Some who are devoted to contemporary revolutionary theologies, might say that Campbell’s posture was unworthy of the prophetic tradition.⁹⁷ But surely, spiri-

tual wisdom and courage were required to follow an unpopular course which sought both justice and peace. To extremists who called for violence, Campbell said, "Christians can never be reformers in any system which uses violence, recommends or expects it."⁹⁸

Campbell believed that the Bible did not condemn the "simple relationship" of master and slave.⁹⁹ Yet he well knew there was a vast difference between the "simple relationship" and the institution of American slavery. Few abolitionists equaled the reformer's condemnation of slavery as

that largest and blackest blot upon our national escutcheon, that many-headed monster, that Pandora's box, that bitter root, that blighting and blasting curse, under which so far and so large a portion of our beloved country groans—that deadly Upas, whose breath pollutes and poisons every thing within its influence . . .¹⁰⁰

Campbell perceived that if slaves were slaves of masters, masters were "slaves of slaves," being bound by legal and moral obligations.¹⁰¹ Not a few prayed for the day when they could emancipate their slaves.¹⁰² Often they lived in fear of the bell in the night, especially after the bloody revolts of Denmark Vesey¹⁰³ and Nat Turner.¹⁰⁴ So Campbell declared himself concerned for the liberation of both masters and slaves.

But Campbell was not an abolitionist. He was an emancipationist. What was the difference? Abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison demanded the immediate and unconditional liberation of all slaves. Some advocated violence if necessary. With Garrison, many abolitionists gave little thought to the consequences which might follow such a course for both slaves and masters. Indeed, one modern social historian has faulted Garrison for his glaring failure to look beyond abolition, when the freedmen at last had the right "to pick up and go." But "go where?" Garrison had no answer.¹⁰⁵

Campbell advocated liberation accompanied by measures to provide a better life for freedmen. The first necessary measure would be their education. "Knowledge and slavery are incompatible," he declared.¹⁰⁶ By the same token, to liberate a multitude of uneducated slaves was only to doom them to new forms of bondage.

The reformer was also concerned to assist the South in building a new economic order based on free labor. Surely, if the South were left economically prostrate, the freedmen

would suffer most of all. Therefore, in 1832, Campbell proposed that Congress annually appropriate ten million dollars for the purchase, education, and colonization of all slaves, until the land would not be "trod by the foot of one slave, nor enriched by a drop of his sweat or blood."¹⁰⁷

Immediately, Campbell was pelted by criticisms from both sides. Southern "Fireaters" passionately resented his "intrusion" into their way of life. Northern Abolitionists violently opposed the idea of compensating masters for their loss of slaves. They said the master had no legal right to such "property" in the first place. Campbell replied that neither did many abolitionists have any original legal right to lands on which they lived—lands which had been violently seized from Indian tribes.¹⁰⁸ The point was to remove a major barrier from the path of emancipation.¹⁰⁹

In 1849, when Kentucky called a Convention to revise its Constitution, Campbell saw an opportunity once again to urge the cause of emancipation. He therefore published a "Tract for the People of Kentucky."¹¹⁰ The "Tract" is noteworthy in that it criticized the institution of slavery on economic, social, and psychological, as well as moral grounds. It also urged a plan for emancipation which had been introduced by Henry Clay.¹¹¹

Campbell hoped that his prominence as a religious reformer would provide a sympathetic hearing. But in this he was disappointed.

From the deep South, "A Southern Clergyman" responded in a vitriolic *Defense of Southern Slavery, Against the Attacks of Henry Clay and A. Campbell*. The "Southern Clergyman" took "the liberty of suggesting to Messrs. Clay and Campbell and the whole clan of the abolitionists," that it was "a serious business for short sighted worms of the human race, to set themselves up under any motives as censors of God's institutions, and judges to decide upon his providential arrangements."¹¹²

Campbell's "Tract" was to no avail. Despite thousands who voted in favor of emancipation, they were too scattered to be effective. Not one antislavery delegate was elected to the Constitutional Convention.¹¹³

But if Campbell's "Tract for the People of Kentucky" brought him condemnation in the South, his attitude toward the "Fugitive Slave Law" subjected him to opprobrium in the North.

The Fugitive Slave Law was part of the extensive "Compromise of 1850," which was designed to preserve the Federal Union.¹¹⁴ Most violently condemned in the North was a provision which required that any citizen who prevented the arrest of a fugitive, aided in his rescue, or concealed him from officials was subject to a fine of one thousand dollars, and imprisonment for six months.

Scripture enjoins the Christian to "be subject unto the higher powers" (Rom 13:1). But what should one do when the "powers" command that which violates conscience? Some saw the Law as the "last straw," and counseled violence.¹¹⁵ But a congregation in Berrien, Michigan is worthy of honor as "a moral decision maker."¹¹⁶ It resolved that it could not in conscience obey the Law. Rather, it would "feed the poor panting fugitive, and point him to the North Star, abiding the penalty of the law."¹¹⁷

Campbell respectfully published the "Berrien Resolve," and further urged his own view: Let Christians obey the Law until it could be constitutionally changed. Ovid Butler¹¹⁸ and Isaac Errett¹¹⁹ regretfully disagreed with Campbell. Others, such as John Boggs (Editor of the abolitionist *North-Western Christian Magazine*), appealed to a "higher law" than the Constitution.¹²⁰ Ironically, Southern "Fireaters" also appealed to a "higher law."¹²¹ This controversy reflected the great debate in the United States Senate between William Seward and Daniel Webster.¹²²

Campbell challenged the "higher law" as a valid social principle. He declared, "In the affairs of this life in all temporal and earthly matters the civil law, the social compact, is our rule of action."¹²³ Lunger says of Campbell's position that "he was obviously more concerned about order and obedience to law in general than he was for the injustices that might be involved in particular cases."¹²⁴ But lest we misjudge Campbell, we must remember that he faced the most dreadful prospect of all: The nation plunging into the abyss of civil war.

In 1848, Campbell delivered an "Address on War" before the Wheeling Lyceum.¹²⁵ The reformer could not see how a Christian, whose "shield" is faith, and whose "sword" is "the word of God," could fight the battles of Caesar.¹²⁶ "War is not now, nor was it ever, a process of justice." It is not "a test of truth—a criterion of right."¹²⁷ The cost of war is beyond comprehension, "when we attempt to reflect upon one human being in the amplitude and magnitude of his whole destiny."¹²⁸

In contrast, Campbell described a world in which the treasure expended upon instruments of destruction is devoted to peace. "What would be wanting," he asked, to "make the wilderness and solitary place glad," and to cause "the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose . . . !" ¹²⁹

But this was not to be. On April 12, 1861, South Carolina batteries fired on Fort Sumter. With the hysterical calls to arms in both North and South, Campbell was faced by the prophecy he made in 1832. ¹³⁰

"Today" was fast slipping away. The long night of civil war threatened to engulf the nation. Passionately, Campbell condemned the violence:

Civilized America! civilized UNITED STATES! Boasting of a humane and Christian paternity and fraternity, unsheathing your swords, discharging your cannon, boasting of your heathen brutality, gluttonously satiating your furious appetites for fraternal blood, caps the climax of all human inconsistencies inscribed on the blurred and moth eaten pages of time in all its records. ¹³¹

While many other Disciples joined in pleading for peace, ¹³² others as quickly answered the call to arms. Like Jeremiah of old, Campbell lamented the tragedy. James A. Garfield described Bethany in June, 1861.

The College closed nearly two months ago. It is a deserted looking place, I assure you. Brother Campbell is for the Union but his son, wife, and daughter sympathize with the South. It is sad to see a family so divided. Brother Campbell is getting very broken. He cannot last long, I fear. He frequently says, in a very mournful way, "I shall never see peace in this country again." ¹³³

The venerable reformer did live through the agony of his country's terrible judgment. Then, once again, the prophetic vision returned—a vision described by Vachel Lindsay as

Millennial trumpets poised, half lifted,
Millennial trumpets that wait. ¹³⁴

Campbell believed those trumpets would yet sound! For the Good News of God's Reign is truly "in harmony with the cravings, desires and necessities of humanity in all its phases, desires, and aspirations." With undimmed confidence in God's faithfulness, Campbell penned his last public words:

The present material universe, yet unrevealed in all its area, in all its tenantries, in all its riches, beauty and grandeur, will be wholly regenerated. Of this fact we have full assurance, since He that now sits upon the throne of the universe has pledged his word for it, saying, *Behold I will create all things new!*¹³⁵

Footnotes

1. The standard biography is Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* (Cincinnati, 1897), Vols. I, II.
2. This reflected the common prophetic pronouncement. See Jer. 7:22f; Amos 3:1f; Micah 6:4f; etc.
3. Campbell placed great emphasis upon the relation of historical fact, historical testimony, and personal faith. See *The Christian System, in Reference to the Union of Christians, and a Restoration of Primitive Christianity, as Plead in the Current Reformation* (Bethany, [W.] VA, 3rd. ed., 1840), pp. 110–123. Hereafter designated, *The Christian System*.
4. Harold L. Lunger concludes that Campbell's social conscience was not sufficiently informed by the social passion of the prophets, and Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount," leaning more heavily upon the Acts and Epistles. This impression may be better evaluated as we proceed. See Harold L. Lunger, *The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell* (St. Louis, 1954), pp. 266f. Hereafter referred to as *Political Ethics*.
5. For a brief statement of the principles of interpretation advocated by Campbell, see *The Christian System*, pp. 16, 17.
6. "The Destiny of our Country," in *Popular Lectures and Addresses* (Cincinnati, 1879), pp. 164, 180.
7. See *Alexander Pope*, ed. Peter Dixon (Athens, OH, 1972).
8. See John W. Gough, *John Locke's Political Philosophy* (Oxford, 1973); George Mace, *Locke, Hobbes, and the Federalist Papers: An Essay on the Genesis of the American Political Heritage* (Carbondale, 1979).
9. See *The Works of Thomas Reid, D.D.*, ed. Sir William Hamilton (Edinburgh, 1863); *Essays on the Active Powers of the Human Mind* (Cambridge, MA, 1969).
10. See James H. Beattie, *Elements of Moral Science* (Edinburgh, 1790); also (Scholars Facsimiles Reprints, 1976).
11. Cicero, *Laws*, quoted in Smith, T. V., *Philosophers Speak for Themselves* (Chicago, 1952), p. 617.
12. *MH* (1832), p. 99

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13. See Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal* (Norman, OK., 1932); Wilson Lumpkin, *The Removal of the Cherokee Indians from Georgia* (2 vols. in one, New York, 1907).
14. *MH* (1830), pp. 44, 45.
15. John Bright, *Covenant and Promise: The Prophetic Understanding of the Future in Pre-Exilic Israel* (Philadelphia, 1976), p. 84.
16. See Robert O. Fife, "Alexander Campbell and the Christian Church in the Slavery Controversy" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, 1960), pp. 32f. Hereafter referred to as "Slavery."
17. See *Ibid*, p. 43f.
18. Harold L. Lunger, *op. cit.*, Part One, Part Three.
19. See Joachim Wach, *Types of Religious Experience, Christian and Non-Christian* (Chicago, 1972), p. 201.
20. Lunger, *op. cit.*, pp. 264, 265.
21. A. T. DeGroot, *Disciple Thought: A History*, Intro. by W. E. Garrison (Ft. Worth, TX, 1965), pp. 270f.
22. See the recently published *Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren, Volume I*, tr. and ed. by the Hutterian Brethren (Rifton, NY: 1987). A magnificent collection of original source material.
23. *MH* (1845), p. 238.
24. *MH* (1845), pp. 356, 357.
25. *The Biblical Doctrine of the Church* (St. Louis, 1948), p. 116. See also Jacques Ellul, *False Presence of the Kingdom*, tr. C. Edward Hopkin (New York, 1972); Vernard Eller, *Christian Anarchy: Jesus' Primacy Over the Powers* (Grand Rapids, 1987).
26. For the catholicity in Campbell's thought see Dean E. Walker, *The Tradition of Christ* (Milligan College, n.d.); William Robinson, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 134f, 165f; E. Lyall Williams, *A Biblical Approach to Unity* (Melbourne, 1957), Chap. XI; Frederick W. Norris, "Apostolic, Catholic, and Sensible: The Concensus Fidelity," in C. Robert Wetzell, ed., *Essays on New Testament Christianity* (Cincinnati, 1978). See also the accompanying essay by William Richardson.
27. Campbell approved a "Union Meeting at Lexington" which "RESOLVED, That the union of Christians can be scripturally effected by practically acknowledging such articles of belief, and such rules of piety and morality as are admitted by all Christian denominations." *MH* (1841), p. 237.
28. See William Lloyd Garrison, *Liberator*, (Boston, 1830–1865), XVII (1847), April 30.
29. See Asa E. Martin, "The Anti-Slavery Societies of Tennessee,"

- Tennessee Historical Magazine*, I (1915); J. Winston Coleman, Jr., *Slavery Times in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill, 1940). For the "Beecher Bible and Rifle Church," see Gifford Clark, *Henry Ward Beecher* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society).
30. *Op. Cit.*, p. 276.
 31. *Christian System*, p. 289.
 32. Even so, Timothy L. Smith says that by 1855 Disciples "were not yet in a position greatly to influence American society." *Revivalism & Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Baltimore, 1980), p. 29.
 33. Lunger, *op. cit.*, pp. 54, 56; David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866* (Nashville, 1966), pp. 42f; Richard T. Hughes, "From Primitive Church to Civil Religion: The Millennial Odyssey of Alexander Campbell," (Unpublished Manuscript).
 34. See *Popular Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 47f.
 35. *Ibid.*, p. 374.
 36. *MH* (1836), pp. 282, 283.
 37. The transcript of the debate is found in *The Evidences of Christianity: A Debate Between Robert Owen, of New Lanark, Scotland, and Alexander Campbell, President of Bethany Coll., VA; Containing an Examination of the "Social System," and All the Systems of Skepticism of Ancient and Modern Times* (Cincinnati, 1829). Hereafter referred to as *Debate*.
 38. See Frances Trollope, *The Domestic Manners of Americans*, Donald Smalley, ed. (New York, 1941), pp. 147–154.
 39. While the *Millennial Harbinger* reveals Campbell to have been very much a man of his age, there is no evidence that he knew of Karl Marx. In July, 1847, Campbell addressed a society of skeptics in London on the theme, "Has God ever spoken to man?" [Richardson, *op. cit.*, II, p. 547.] But Marx was not to seek political asylum in London until the fall of 1849. [Robert C. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York, 1972), xiii.] The *Communist Manifesto*, which was published in London in 1848, received no notice in the *Harbinger*. However, Campbell did describe with great perception the social conditions of labor in Manchester. Predicting that the United States would itself become a great industrial nation, he warned that in creating a thousand "cotton Lords," America could "create also a million of paupers." *MH* (1848), p. 91.
 40. Marx wrote, "religion is the cry of the oppressed creature, the comfort of a heartless world, it is like the spirit of a spiritless condition. It is the opium of the people." *Die Frühschriften, Marx-Engels*; Dietz-Verlag (Berlin, 1955), p. 139; quoted in

- Jan Milic Lochman, *Encountering Marx*, trans. Edwin H. Robertson (Philadelphia, 1977), p. 82.
41. Marx is said to have followed Feuerbach in concluding that religion is the source of man's self-alienation. "Theses on Feuerbach," quoted in Tucker, op. cit., p. 108.
 42. Engels wrote, "Every social movement, every real advance in England on behalf of the workers links itself on to the name of Robert Owen." Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, (authorized English edition, 1892), quoted in Robert C. Tucker, op. cit., p. 615. See also Robert Owen, *A New View of Society: or Essays on the Formation of the Human Character Preparatory to the Development of a Plan for Gradually Ameliorating the Condition of Mankind* (London, 1817); *Essays on the Formation of the Human Character* (Manchester, 1837). See also *The Life of Robert Owen, Written by Himself, With Selections from His Writings and Correspondence* (London, 1857-58); *The Life of Robert Owen*, Intro. M. Beer (New York, 1920).
 43. See *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (New York, 1972), pp. 175, 176. Skinner pays tribute to Owen's pioneer advocacy of human conditioning as an instrument of social reform. Skinner's major criticism is that Owen and other Utopians did not possess an adequate knowledge of "how the environment works" in changing human behaviour.
 44. For David Dale see Robert Richardson's biographical sketch in *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, I, pp. 184, 185.
 45. These included shortened work hours, advantages of cooperative buying, economical housing, and free education. Owen was to play a major role in passage of the First Factory Act of 1819, which limited the working hours of women and children. See *The Factory Act of 1819; Six Pamphlets, 1818-1819* (New York, 1972).
 46. For a description of the inhumane conditions of labor during the early Industrial Revolution in Britain, see "Evidence Given Before the Sadler Committee," *Parliamentary Papers, 1831-1832* (London, 1832), XV; and "Evidence Given Before Lord Ashley's Mines Commission of 1842," *Parliamentary Papers* (London, 1842), XV-XVII, Appendix 1; Appendix 2. Quoted in Eugen Weber, *The Western Tradition* (Boston: 1959), pp. 564-570. Significantly, Weber takes no note of the fact that both Lord Ashley Shaftsbury and Michael Sadler were converts of the Wesleyan Revival.
 47. Campbell said, "It was the Christian benevolence of Mr. Dale which prompted him to invent a plan for the education of the

- children of the poor. By instituting a system of co-operation, Mr. Dale was enabled to sustain five hundred poor children at one time, who were collected in the manufactories which he controlled, and were there maintained and educated by his philanthropy. And to these circumstances, instituted by Mr. Dale, is Mr. Owen indebted for the origination of his new views of society." *Debate*, p. 167.
48. For an extensive treatment of the impact of the Wesleyan Revival on British society, see J. Wesley Bready, *England: Before and After Wesley, The Evangelical Revival and Social Reform* (London: 1939), Ch. XXII. See also *The Factory Act of 1833; Eight Pamphlets, 1833–1834* (New York, 1972). These pamphlets show the influence of the Wesleyans in passage of the Bill. But Wesleyanism did not significantly penetrate the Continent. There the religious establishments were judged by a German Protestant leader, who declared, "What has the proletariat expected from the church? Everything! What has the church given the proletariat? Nothing." Leonhard Ragaz, *Signs of the Kingdom*, ed. and tr. by Paul Bock (Grand Rapids, 1984) p. 79.
 49. Campbell said of Owen, "Unfortunately he had not discriminated between the state-religions of Europe and the Christian Religion of the New Testament." *Debate*, p. viii.
 50. Johan Georg "Father" Rapp, a German pastor, had led a band of followers to establish a Christian commune in Harmony. They later relocated in Economy, PA. See Hilda Adam Kring, *The Harmonist a Folk-Cultural Approach* (Metuchen, N.J., 1973). See also John S. Duss, *The Harmonists, A Personal History* (Ambridge, Pa., 1970); Karl J. R. Arndt, *George Rapp's Harmony Society 1785–1847* (Philadelphia, 1965).
 51. See George B. Lockwood, *The New Harmony Movement* (New York, 1905); Robert Owen, *New Harmony Addresses*, ed. D. K. Ennis (Evansville, 1977); Paul Brown, *Twelve Months in New Harmony* (Philadelphia, 1972); William E. Wilson, *The Angel and the Serpent: the Story of New Harmony* (Bloomington, IN, 1964).
 52. These principles are reiterated in the *Debate*, pp. 22–24; 128–132.
 53. Robert O. Fife, "Reformers Skeptical and Religious: A Prophetic Encounter," *MPL Journal* (Waco, Texas, 1980—), Vol. VII, No. 2, p. 11.
 54. See *Christian Baptist*, (Bethany, [W.] VA) V, Nos. 10–12, (May–July, 1828).
 55. Trollope commented on the courteous decorum of the principals.

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56. *Debate*, pp. 21, 22, 39. See also pp. 184f.
57. Owen's proposed reconstruction of society is set forth in *Debate*, pp. 115f.
58. See *Debate*, pp. 22–24.
59. Campbell's apology for the Christian faith extended over twelve hours, and remains unexcelled. *Debate*, pp. 269–404.
60. Eva Jean Wrather has rightly noted that this question was "at the heart" of the Debate. See, "Campbell: Marx to Jackson," *infra*, p. 151.
61. See "The Twelve Fundamental Laws of Brutal Nature," in which Campbell quoted Owen's "Twelve Jewels," substituting the terms "goat," or "kid" where Owen used the terms, "man," or "child." *Debate*, pp. 446, 447.
62. Paul Tillich has written, "The disruption of man's unity . . . a disruption belonging to man's being as spirit, signifies for man as man the threat of the loss of his being and his meaning." *Political Expectation* (New York, 1971), p. 47. See also Karl Barth's discussion of "Theological Anthropology" in *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. III, Part 2, tr. Harold Knight et. al. (Edinburgh, 1960), pp. 41–45. Barth advocates "the founding of anthropology on Christology."
63. "The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionising practice." "Theses on Feuerbach," quoted in Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
64. See the "Importance of Uniting the Moral With the Intellectual Culture of the Mind," *Popular Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 453f.
65. Skinner considers "sin" a useless construct. Skinner, *op. cit.*, p. 188.
66. *Debate*, p. 134.
67. For the Christian Humanist tradition see Avery Dulles, S.J., *Princeps Concordiae, Pico Della Mirandola and the Scholastic Tradition* (Cambridge: MA, 1941). Award winning Phi Beta Kappa essay.
68. *Debate*, pp. 393, 395.
69. Jan Milic Lochman says of the Marxists, "They lost contact with the prophetic tradition which meant so much to Karl Marx." *Encountering Marx*, p. 35.
70. Fritz Lieb writes, "Despite his show of being an atheist, Marx very strongly developed the high points of his doctrine from his knowledge of the Gospel." Quoted by Lochman, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
71. *Debate*, p. 395.

72. See Charles H. Ambler, *Sectionalism in Virginia from 1776 to 1861* (Chicago, 1910), Chapter 5.
73. See *Proceedings and Debates of the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829, 1830* (Richmond, 1830). Hereafter called, *Proceedings*. Former Presidents Madison and Monroe, Chief Justice John Marshall, Governor William B. Giles, and John Randolph of Roanoke, were prominent in the Convention.
74. Richardson, *op. cit.*, II pp. 304f. Campbell's own anticlericalism may also have made him sensitive that as a religious leader he might be resented. *Proceedings*, pp. 297, 298.
75. It is to be questioned whether Campbell ever embraced the Anabaptist view that government was "given in wrath," and that in consequence Christians neither needed government, nor ought they participate in it. Compare Harold Lunger, *op. cit.*, pp. 59f. For the Anabaptist view see Peter Riedemann, *Account of our Religion, Doctrine, and Faith*, trans. by K. E. Hasenberg (London, 1950).
76. Therefore, Campbell's view of "natural rights," was radically different from the tradition of the skeptical French philosophies. See Lee W. Gibbs, "We, the Theologians," in *Christianity Today* (December 11, 1987), pp. 29–31. For a study of the impact of the philosophes upon the Church, see Adrien Dantette, *Religious History of Modern France*, 2 Vols., tr. John Dingle (New York, 1961), I, pp. 5f.
77. Campbell wrote, "Whatever the natural rights of men are, they belong to all men naturally; consequently the natural rights of men are equal rights . . . To give to others what belongs to them, is a duty we owe to them; to withhold from them what belongs to them is a sin. There can be no favor, donation, or gift, in conferring natural rights upon others; for natural rights cannot be conferred; they belong to man merely because he exists." *Christian Baptist* (Bethany, [W.] VA 1823–1829), VII, No. 1., p. 1.
78. For the prophetic advocacy of human rights, especially those of the widow, the orphan, and the poor, see James Limburg, *The Prophets and the Powerless* (Atlanta, 1977). See also John Bright, *Covenant and Promise*, pp. 116f.
79. E. W. Heaton, *The Old Testament Prophets* (Atlanta, 1977), p. 69.
80. *Proceedings*, pp. 42, 43. Modern activists may judge Campbell's failure to advocate suffrage for females. But he was in advance of his times in advocating free white male suffrage.
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 53.

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82. Campbell said, "Either adopt the principles in the *Bill of Rights* as Canonical, and base all your subsequent proceedings from them; or if those principles are considered as unsound, let them be modified or amended; or else let gentlemen propose other principles as a substitute for them. Let them give us their principles. . . ." *Ibid.*, pp. 64, 65.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
84. *Second Treatise*, Ch IX, par. 123.
85. *Proceedings*, p. 117.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
88. *Proceedings*, p. 750. The resolution read,
"Whereas republican institutions and the blessings of free government originated in, and must always depend upon, the intelligence, virtue and patriotism of the community; and whereas neither intelligence nor virtue can be maintained or promoted in any community without education, it shall always be the duty of the Legislature of this Commonwealth to patronize and encourage common schools and seminaries of learning, as will in their wisdom be deemed to be most conducive to secure to the youth of this commonwealth, such an education as may most promote the public good."
89. For Campbell's view of education, see his lectures on "Education," "Common Schools," "Colleges," and "Importance of Uniting the Moral with the Intellectual Culture of the Mind," in *Popular Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 230f. See also the accompanying lecture in this series by Thomas Olbricht.
90. Robert Michaelson writes,
"Thomas Jefferson's bold plans for a common school system in Virginia were finally effected, after much modification, by an essentially Protestant coalition. The Reverend Alexander Campbell helped form this coalition by arguing in the early 1840's for a common Christianity in the schools." *Piety in the Public School* (New York, 1970), p. 69.
91. One other major issue remained: Future apportionment. Campbell's amendment of Madison's motion so as to require only a simple majority of the legislature was also defeated. *Proceedings*, pp. 349–352.
92. But Campbell had represented his constituents faithfully, for in the referendum on the new Constitution they did not cast a single vote for it.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 390.
94. See Arthur C. Cole, *The Irrepressible Conflict, 1850–1865* (New York, 1936). This work is Vol. VII of the *History of Amer-*

- ican *Life* series, ed. by Arthur M. Schlesinger and others. The reader may also wish to consult Robert O. Fife, "Slavery."
95. For radical Abolitionism see Stephen S. Foster, *The Brotherhood of Thieves; or a True Picture of the American Church and Clergy* (New London, 1843); quoted in *Christian Union and Religious Review*, Ed. Edward E. Orvis (Baltimore, MD 1851–1856), II (1852), p. 379. Moses Cummings, Editor of the *Christian Sun*, (1844—) (Journal of the O'Kelly Christians in the South) wrote that the Northern pulpit was "stained with the filth of political controversy . . . Millerism, Fourierism, Spiritualism and Free-Loveism, with open-mouthed Infidelity." *Christian Sun*, XXV (1856), pp. 211–213.
 96. Quoted in Wrather, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
 97. From the multitude of sources concerning the Theology of Revolution, I cite only two: Phillip Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion* (Maryknoll, NY, 1984), pp. 51f; Guenter Lewy, *Religion and Revolution* (New York, 1974), Chapter 20.
 98. Wrather says, "In a world of extremes, in a world of constantly shifting values, only the uncommon man of sound sense and fine sensibility is able to pursue a sane and moderate course." *Op. Cit.*, p. 7.
 99. *MH* (1840), p. 102.
 100. *MH* (1832), p. 86.
 101. *MH* (1830), pp. 128, 129.
 102. See S. B. Braden "The Early History of the Disciples of Christ in Kansas (1855–1870)," Unpublished MSS, Disciples of Christ Historical Society (Nashville, 1933), p. 30; Rosetta B. Hastings, *Personal Recollections of Pardee Butler, With Reminiscences by His Daughter* (Cincinnati, 1889), pp. 65f.
 103. See William F. Cheek, *Black Resistance Before the Civil War*, (Los Angeles, 1970), pp. 111f.
 104. *Ibid.*, pp. 116f.
 105. See John L. Thomas, "Epilogue from The Liberator," in *Essays on American Social History*, ed., John Lankford and David Reimers (New York, 1970), pp. 131f.
 106. *MH* (1830), p. 47.
 107. *MH* (1832), pp. 87f. Campbell hoped Henry Clay would introduce this as a resolution in Congress.
 108. By compensating masters, Campbell believed a major objection to emancipation would be removed. It would also assist the South in moving from slave labor to free labor. With opposition from both extremes, Campbell's proposal was dismissed. Many moderns would also fault Campbell for advocating the "colonization" of the freedmen, either in some part of the

- American West, or in Africa. But if Campbell was not “sanguine” of the prospect of a free black population amidst their former masters, he at least recognized the need to provide freedmen with land—something which in the event did not happen.
109. In 1847, Campbell sailed for Great Britain in hope of advancing the cause of religious reformation. There he experienced once again the difficulty of being an emancipationist amidst a society now passionately devoted to immediate abolition. He was placarded as a “defender of man-stealers.” See Newton B. Fowler, Jr., “Alexander Campbell’s Imprisonment in Scotland,” *Discipliana* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1940—), (Summer 1984), pp. 19f; Thomas Chalmers, *Alexander Campbell’s Tour in Scotland* (Louisville, 1892); Robert Richardson, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 552f.
 110. *MH*, (1849, pp. 242f. See also Robert O. Fife, “Slavery,” pp. 88f.
 111. See Clay’s Letter to Richard Pendell in *Life and Correspondence*, ed. by Calvin Colton (6 vols., New York, 1857); J. Winston Coleman, *Slavery Times in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill, 1940), p. 314.
 112. A Southern Clergyman [Iveson L. Brookes], *A Defence of Southern Slavery, Against the Attacks of Henry Clay and A. Campbell* (Hamburg, SC, 1851). Copy in the New York Public Library.
 113. The “meddling of abolitionists from other states” evidently caused some counties which had no slaves to vote pro-slavery delegates. Coleman, *op. cit.*, pp. 316, 317; See also Thomas D. Clark, *A History of Kentucky* (New York, 1937), p. 300.
 114. See *House and Senate Journals*, 31st Cong., 1st Sess.; William MacDonald, *Select Documents of the United States, 1776–1861* (rev. ed., New York, 1905); Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Age of Jackson* (New York, 1945), chap. XXXIV; Robert O. Fife, “Slavery,” pp. 182f.
 115. See Oscar Sherwin, *Prophet of Liberty: the Life and Times of Wendell Phillips* (New York, 1958), pp. 223f.
 116. James M. Gustafson, *The Church as a Moral Decision Maker* (Boston, 1970).
 117. *MH*, (1851), pp. 631, 632.
 118. *MH*, (1851), p. 430. Ovid Butler was a prominent civic leader and elder in the Christian Church in Indianapolis. In his honor, the name of North-Western Christian University was changed to Butler University.

119. *MH*, (1851), pp. 435f. Isaac Errett was to become a prominent second generation leader of the Disciples. He served as Secretary of the American Christian Missionary Society, and was founding editor of the *Christian Standard* (Cincinnati, 1866-)
120. *North-Western Christian Magazine*, ed. John Boggs (Cincinnati, 1854-1858), (1857), pp. 15f.
121. See *Gospel Advocate*, ed. Tolbert Fanning (Nashville, TN, 1855-), (1861), pp. 65-70.
122. For Seward, see his *Works*, ed. by George E. Baker (5 vols., Boston, 1853), I, pp. 66, 74. Webster's repudiation of "higher law" in his "Seventh of March Speech" led Whittier to write, "Ichabod." T. C. Smith, *Parties and Slavery, 1850-1859. American Nation, a History*, ed. Albert B. Hart, XVIII (New York, 1906), p. 17.
123. *MH* (1851), pp. 28-31.
124. *Op. cit.*, p. 225. Perhaps some might think that Campbell's wealth tended to make him more conservative. For Campbell's wealth, see Ralph Edwin Groover, "Alexander Campbell and the Family: Precept and Example" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Emory University, 1982), pp. 128f.
125. See *MH* (1848), pp. 361f. Campbell regretted that he had waited until the war with Mexico was over before speaking out. *Ibid.*, p. 385.
126. Campbell asked, "Has one Christian nation a right to wage war against another Christian nation?" In reply, he observed that no country on earth could be truly called, "Christian." There is, indeed, a "Christian nation," but it is "composed of all the Christian communities and individuals in the whole earth." *Ibid.*, p. 365.
127. *Ibid.*, p. 377.
128. *Ibid.*, p. 362.
129. *Ibid.*, p. 384. Apparently, Campbell never addressed the paradox of his admiration of the American Revolution, and his opposition to war.
130. *Supra*, p. 1.
131. *MH*, (1861), p. 348.
132. See Robert O. Fife, "Slavery," pp. 277f.
133. Garfield to Harmon Austin, in Theodore C. Smith, *Life and Letters of James Abram Garfield* (2 vols., New Haven, 1925), II, p. 650.
134. Vachel Lindsay, "Alexander Campbell."
135. *MH* (1865), p. 517.

Lecture 3

Nailed to the Church Door: How Protestant was Alexander Campbell's Reform?

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Nailed to the church door. That is certainly what some would have like to have done to Alexander Campbell. But he would have understood the phrase a little differently. "Nailed to the church door" is a way of connecting Alexander Campbell with the Protestant Reformation and Martin Luther. For it was Luther's act of nailing 95 Theses, 95 points for debate, to the church door in his university town of Wittenberg that began what would become the Protestant Reformation. The nailing of the 95 Theses has a place in history like the Boston Tea Party or the storming of the Bastille. It was a beginning, however, small, of a major new epoch in history.

Campbell knew that he was a Protestant. He knew that he stood in a line of tradition stretching from Luther and John Calvin and John Knox to his own day. He was proud of that heritage.¹ More, Alexander Campbell saw himself continuing the tradition of the Reformation by picking up from Luther and Calvin and moving forward with their greatest contributions.² It is no accident that the heirs of the Stone-Campbell tradition have often referred to their beginnings as the Reformation of the nineteenth century, or the New Reformation. One of Campbell's favorite terms for his followers was "reformers."

On the other hand, the rejection of denominationalism and denominational names, the slogan "Christians only," has given rise to a myth about the Stone-Campbell movement. It is sometimes said, or argued, that the movement was not Protestant, that it was a departure from Protestantism and the Reformation. I recall as a child even hearing it put in this absurd way: "We are not Protestants because we are not protesting against anything."

Others would say that Protestantism has to do with the Reformation of the sixteenth century, while the new Reformation of the nineteenth century is really a restoration of the ancient order of things, a restoration of the New Testament church, of New Testament Christianity, and thus the Campbell-Stone movement moves behind the Reformation to the first century, and beyond the Reformation to restoration of the pristine purity of the church as Jesus desired it to be.³

Alexander Campbell's ideas and concerns were not the same as those of the Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century. He was, nevertheless, thoroughly Protestant. And if we are to understand the full meaning of the Stone-Campbell movement, if we are to grasp the underlying assumptions of their ideas and actions, if we are to perceive the points of relationship and distinction between the Stone-Campbell churches and the rest of the Christian community, we need to think through the Protestant character of Campbell's Reformation.

This essay will look at some of the most important themes of the Protestant Reformation, and then compare them with Campbell. We will try to be aware that at many places where Campbell diverges from the sixteenth century reformers, Campbell was not alone. Protestants of many stripes evolved in ways that led them to be in conflict with Luther and Calvin. This was as true of Lutherans and Presbyterians as it was with Baptists and Campbellites.

We will then look at issues where Campbell was more clearly and often intentionally at odds with the original Protestants.

There is no more crucial theological issue for Protestants than Luther's confession that our salvation comes to us by God's freely given, unmerited grace. As he put it, based on his study of the Apostle Paul, we are justified, we are put in right relationship with God by faith through grace. The meaning of this is that salvation is God's action. The individual human, the human community, cannot earn salvation.

The central point for Luther is this: God's holiness requires a level of righteousness that is simply not possible for sin-impaired humans. To meet this obstacle, God sent Jesus who took on our sins and died for us. To argue that there is some work, some action or even right belief that we must accomplish in order to be saved is to say that what Jesus did on the cross was not sufficient. And, since Luther understood sin in the rather classical way as self-centeredness, selfishness, any time we do some good deed in order to earn God's favor, we have again sinned, for we have acted for ourselves, for our own interest, and we have denied the Christ.

By the time Alexander Campbell arrived on the scene such thinking was second nature to Protestants. Even though most Protestants had found ways around some of the problems involved in a radical salvation by faith through grace theology, the ideal was still affirmed.

Campbell, also, affirmed the basic concept, while criticizing some of the more extreme interpretations. In his book *The Christian System*, Campbell says:

Luther said that the doctrine of justification, or forgiveness, was the test of a standing or falling church. If right in this, she could not be very far wrong in anything else; but if wrong here, it was not easy to suppose her right in any thing. I quote from memory, but this was the idea of that great reformer. We agree with him in this as well as in many other sentiments.⁴

Campbell's modification of the Protestant principle of salvation by faith through grace was much like that of other Protestants since the sixteenth century. Campbell did not want to fall into the trap of arguing for salvation by works, or even salvation by faith and works; he also wanted to avoid a necessary acceptance of the doctrine of predestination. Campbell was too much a child of the Enlightenment with its emphasis on reason and freedom and individuality to return to determinism.

What he did then was to interpret God's gracious offer of salvation as that which is offered, but not forced, upon a sinful humanity. According to Campbell, God gives the gift of salvation, but it is up to the individual to accept or reject the gift. He argues that there is no merit, no works righteousness attached to accepting the gift. All is at the initiative of God, but we have the freedom and the ability to say no as well as yes.

Campbell defended his views in 1838 saying, salvation is “the free gift of God in sending his Son, Spirit, Apostles, &c.” and is not to be ascribed “to any petition or work done by any of our race to obtain it. It is therefore of free favor, wholly of grace in its origin and procuring causes—such as the death of Christ, the descent of the Spirit, the mission of the Apostles, and their labors of love and martyrdom in establishing the faith for us.”⁵

But, as Campbell put it, this is a view of grace that involves the assent, the concurrence, the acceptance by the individual. To his mind, this understanding of God’s grace is “*more honorable to the grace of God*” because it works “by the employment of my own faculties and affections, than that which relieves me without such employment of them. It is in my judgment, more gracious to save me actively than passively; or with, than without, the concurrence of my whole intellectual and moral nature.”⁶

In response to the criticism that this position limits or even denies the sovereignty of God, as a Calvin might say, Campbell argues,

is there not as much sovereignty in either sending or permitting an affliction, or a preacher, to secure our attention to a message, as there is in sending an angel, a dream, or a miracle to effect it! . . . So long as the Spirit of God is the spirit of truth and the author of the written word, who inspired the Apostles and breathes in their writings, whatever or whoever may be the instrumental cause of our attending to his voice, the result is the work of God’s own Spirit and grace in and upon us.⁷

In a variation on one of his favorite illustrations of the relationship between God as the author of salvation and the degree of human participation in salvation, Campbell tells the story of a man standing on the shore who observes a foundering ship. He sends his son out to rescue the sailors. The son rows out and extends an oar to the drowning people. Urges them to accept the oar, to grasp it and he helps them climb into the boat. He then has them assist him in rowing back to shore. How does salvation come? It is a process beginning with the observer—God—and is effected by the rescuer—Jesus. The sailors must want to be saved, be willing to accept that which is offered.⁸

The instrumental and meritorious causes of salvation are God’s will and gracious acts in Jesus Christ. Nothing the

individual does can earn this grace. But to receive the benefits, the individual must concur with, agree to, accept, that which is offered.⁹ Both Luther and Calvin would have reacted negatively to such an understanding of the process of salvation. But Campbell was not alone. The “New Light” movement in Presbyterianism and the New Haven Theology, best characterized by Nathaniel William Taylor (1786–1858), were contemporary with Campbell. Both claimed to be faithful to the Protestant principle of *sola gratia*, salvation by grace alone, yet both compromised by allowing for some human participation in salvation. In many ways, Campbell was more faithful to the original reformers than these nineteenth century descendants.¹⁰

For Martin Luther and John Calvin, for the entire Protestant tradition, there is no source of authority for faith and life more significant than the Bible. As the Campbell tradition would put it, “Where the scriptures speak, we speak; where the scriptures are silent, we are silent.”

It was in the acceptance of scripture alone, *sola scriptura*, as the source for his ideas that Luther was able to move beyond being just another reformer spelled with a little “r” to become the founder of the Reformation, capital “R.” Luther was able to persuade the people of his day that when the church moved beyond the letter and spirit of scripture it had opened itself to corruption and error.

More, Luther brought back to the church the richness of scripture as the guiding force for public worship and service. Under the influence of the Reformation Christians relearned the importance of studying the Bible as a way to encounter the living Word of God. From this point it was easy for the Reformers to call for a broad program of education so that the carpenter and mid-wife as well as the priest could read the Bible. In this there was revolution, for authority now centered in scripture as the witness to God’s Word. Less authority and power would be granted to the church and its leaders.

The Protestant emphasis on the Bible led to an outpouring of translations of scripture into the common languages of the day. Translations meant that there were increasing numbers of scholars devoting their lives to the careful study of the text and history of the Bible and the teachings of scripture.

The Stone-Campbell movement so fully continued this Protestant emphasis that they have sometimes referred to themselves as “People of the Book.” (A designation claimed by numerous Protestant groups.)

As for Alexander Campbell, time and time again he would quote Chillingworth's famous dictum, "The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestantism."¹¹ For Campbell, "the Bible is to the intellectual and moral world . . . what the sun is to the planets . . . —the fountain and source of light and life, spiritual and eternal." For the Christian faith, "the Bible, or the Old and New Testaments, in Hebrew and Greek, contains a full and perfect revelation of God" and the divine will, adapted for humankind.¹²

The centrality of scripture for Campbell's theology was such that he made scriptural support necessary for any essential issue in his movement. This applied even to renaming traditional Christian practices. "Bible Names for Bible Things" became another slogan announced with more enthusiasm than significance by Campbell and his followers. Campbell said,

*We choose to speak of Bible things by Bible words, because we are always suspicious that if the word is not in the Bible the idea which it represents is not there; and always confident that the things taught by God are better taught in the words and under the names which the Holy Spirit has chosen and appropriated, than in the words which man's wisdom teaches.*¹³

Under the direction of this idea, Campbell would argue for the name, "The Breaking of Bread," rather than communion or Eucharist. He would avoid the use of a term such as Trinity, preferring Godhead, even though he believed the traditional, orthodox theology of a Divine Trinity.¹⁴ This sort of iconoclastic behavior attracted attention, and misunderstanding, to the movement. It also emphasized differences between the followers of Campbell and the rest of the Christian world in a way so as to accentuate that which was often of minor importance.

There could also be something of the ironic in Campbell's efforts to avoid non-biblical language. For instance, instead of the word "sacrament" as the term for baptism and the Lord's Supper, Campbell urged the use of the word "ordinance." He said that "sacrament" was not a biblical term. But, in reference to baptism and the Lord's Supper, neither is "ordinance" a biblical term! Here was a case of Campbell accepting tradition while being critical of tradition. His use of "ordinance" came directly from his Presbyterian heritage.

Nevertheless, the reliance on the authority of scripture by Alexander Campbell was an essential part of his own views, and the structure and motivation for his movement. His own edition of the New Testament became one of his best selling—and most controversial—works.¹⁵ Campbell came to this point of view honestly, not only through the influence of his father,¹⁶ but also from his own Presbyterian roots.

When Martin Luther began to take those steps that resulted in his condemnation by Rome and the eventual creation of what we now call Protestantism, one of the most radical and revolutionary of his ideas was the Priesthood of All Believers.

Based on his reading of Paul and the other epistles of the New Testament, Luther began to teach that each person can believe, pray, and reach out to God without the intermediary role of anyone else, priest, bishop, or saint. Some would hear only this part of what Luther said, and conclude that faith is a purely private matter, even individualistic. But Luther not only said that each believer can be his or her own priest, he also said that each believer is to be a priest to others.¹⁷

The significance of this teaching is found in at least two points. First of all, with the priesthood of all believers the church cannot exercise as much power over the life of the believer as was the case in the Middle Ages. All too often, in the period just prior to the Reformation, worship was attended by laity only to observe what others—priests, choirs, etc.—were doing on their behalf. After the Reformation, Protestant *and* Roman Catholic worship was changed to include far more participation by all the people.

With the Protestant emphasis on the Bible, individual Christians took responsibility for themselves to read and study the scriptures. They were encouraged to seek the guidance and direction of teachers, including ministers and scholars, but they were themselves, individually, free to own and ponder the Bible. This was part of what the concept of priesthood of all believers included.

In the Reformation as directed by Luther, the laity who had authority in the community, often princes or city councils, were to have a role in the direction of the church. While rulers often dictated the life of the church in the Middle Ages, there was constant conflict between church and state. With Luther's ideas, the local leaders were expected to exercise

their leadership in the church—to a certain degree, at least—as well as the state.

For the Reformation as it developed under Calvin, not only were local leaders involved, all *laymen* were eligible for leadership in the church along with the ministers. This was nothing like the concept of local autonomy that would come with later Protestants, but it was the opening of the door to a new form of participation in the life of the church by the laity.

When the Campbells came along, the social and political situation had changed radically. The Campbells were the heirs of the Protestant valuing of the priesthood of all believers, practiced in some form by every Protestant group.

But the Campbell-Stone movement was also this side of the American Revolution and the period known as the Enlightenment. In American society in the nineteenth century, individual freedoms, including freedom of religion, were highly prized values of a new order. The concept of the priesthood of all believers had a new force and power, based on new assumptions that allowed Alexander Campbell to push for new levels of involvement by lay people in the life and leadership of the church.

Campbell, like Luther, said that in baptism Christians are ordained to the priesthood. But also like Luther, Campbell said that while all are eligible to provide Christian leadership, only those chosen by the Christian community may legitimately serve the church. That is, while any baptized Christian may baptize or serve communion, for instance, the legitimacy of their act depends upon their being chosen by the community, by the church. As he put it, "Persons not ordained by the church to attend on its institutions are not authorized nor commanded by the Lord to baptize."¹⁸ The church and all of its component parts, including the sacraments, belong to the people, the community, under the authority of Christ, not to the individual.

Of course, for Campbell and his age, there were still other limits to those who could administer the sacraments of the church. Campbell believed that women could baptize only other women, though they could pass the elements of the Lord's Supper to men as well as women. Two things should be noted here. First of all, Campbell's opposition to women baptizing men is based on his reading of I Timothy 2:11–13, concerning the prohibition of female authority over males, and such passages as Ephesians 5:22–28, concerning the submission of women to men.¹⁹ To interpret these portions of scrip-

ture in a manner so as to see them as a beginning step towards full participation for women in the life of the church was virtually impossible for Campbell. That there were voices beginning to be raised on these issues at that time does not alter the fact that Campbell's vision was shaped by the dominant views of the early nineteenth century.

On the other hand, Campbell did break some new ground for the Reformed faith, that branch of the Protestant faith represented in the Presbyterian heritage of the Campbells and Barton Stone. When Campbell agreed that women could at least baptize other women, he was challenging the expressed prohibition against women as ministrants of baptism found in the Scots Confession of 1560. In opposing this traditional view, Campbell was applying the Protestant form of truth testing. He read his New Testament, particularly those passages attributed to Paul. He determined that they meant that women could not baptize men, but saw in scripture no prohibition against their baptizing other women. This was an expression of the priesthood of all believers, and if not the opening of a door, at least the turning of the handle of the door to full humanity and equality of all persons in Christ's church.²⁰

The values of the Enlightenment and the American Revolution led the Campbell-Stone movement to emphasize another part of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. They took the right of each individual to be responsible for the study and interpretation of scripture and turned it into a defense of freedom of thought. For the Campbells, so long as a person did not try to impose views on the church, there was extraordinary tolerance for diversity. Barton Stone was willing to go further than the Campbells, and it is likely that Thomas was willing to allow more freedom than Alexander.²¹ But their differences were only of degree. The Campbell-Stone movement, in its appropriation of the priesthood of all believers, defended a level of freedom of opinion and inquiry in the church that was rare in the nineteenth century.

This is not to say that it did not matter what a person believed, or that freedom of interpretation was absolute. In fact, persons who were argumentative and persons willing to act out differing views of moral behavior could be and were disciplined. Some were even excommunicated (this would generally be called "disfellowshipping"). Despite this, the Campbell movement represents a major development in the history of toleration.

If Alexander Campbell was so clearly a part of the Protestant tradition, why did he separate himself from his specific Protestant church, the Presbyterians? It is clear that to call Campbell a Protestant, while accurate, is not the whole story. At a number of significant points, Campbell was very critical of the mainstream of Protestantism. It is necessary to take note of some of these conflicting issues in order to understand fully his place as a Protestant. Four issues will be cited, Campbell's views on creeds, church and state, believers' baptism, and Christian unity.

The Stone-Campbell movement very early took a stand against creeds as tests of fellowship, and for two reasons. First of all, given the principle of *sola scriptura*, creeds could not be given the kind of authority traditionally associated with creeds. If the creed said something more than was clearly stated in scripture, said Campbell, then the creed said too much. If the creed said something less than scripture, then it said too little.²²

Secondly, as Campbell pointed out time and again, creeds have almost always been used to separate Christians from one another. Insofar as creeds divide the body of Christ, they become virtually anti-Christian in character, for division in the church is sin.²³

Another slogan, "No creed but Christ," was bandied about by the Campbell movement. With this simplistic battle cry, followers of Campbell would attack as intolerant and bigoted the credalism of other Christians. All the while proclaiming the value of individual interpretation of scripture and freedom of opinion (using another slogan, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things, charity"), unwritten creedal positions began to rise in the Campbell movement.

The most visible of these unwritten creeds was the requirement of believers' immersion as a condition for admission to the Lord's Table in many Campbell-related churches. The use of unwritten creeds means that the statement cannot be approved or disapproved, even challenge or correction becomes difficult. And, an unwritten creed becomes as divisive and as limiting of individual freedom as does any written creed. Alexander Campbell recognized this, saying, in the midst of a blast against creeds, it would be better to "have a *written* than an *unwritten* standard of orthodoxy."²⁴

A second issue of divergence between the Campbell movement and the main branches of Protestantism has to do

with a stance in favor of a radical separation of church and state. From the days of the first decade of the Reformation, some Christians had called for a severing of the church-state relationship. However, after twelve hundred years of living with close ties between the church and the secular powers, though often with great tension, the idea of prying the two institutions apart was viewed as both theologically unsound and socially destructive. Most people of the Reformation era believed that without some form of the traditional connection between church and state, neither the state nor the church could survive.

Some of the radical reformers of the sixteenth century, and the early Baptists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were loud if lonely voices calling for separation of church and state.

The Campbells had experienced some of the difficulties of living with state supported religion in Northern Ireland and Scotland. In a newly free America, they quickly supported the constitutional concept of separation. Alexander went beyond even the Baptists, and criticized those Protestants who were pressuring the government to adhere to religious beliefs in the operations of government.

Nowhere was this more at issue than in the question of Blue Laws, those laws that prohibited various activities, mostly business, on Sundays. The prohibitions were clearly based on religious, specifically Christian, principles. Campbell was particularly critical of the attempts of the churches to limit the movement of mail on Sundays. He argued that imposing religious views on the state at this point could be a first step towards a state church.²⁵

Campbell's position on church and state has long been proclaimed by many churches as an ideal, but most have had their own pet exceptions. This has been as true of Campbell's followers as anyone else. The difference between Campbell and other Protestants on this issue is one of degree. In his own day, Campbell tended to be far more radical than most Protestants on the matter of separation of church and state.²⁶

This is not the place to go into any detail on Campbell's view of believers' baptism by immersion. But this was and is a point at which the Campbell movement was at variance with the mainstream of Protestantism. Campbell's position was based on his Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*. He found in the Bible no support for the baptism of infants or baptism by any form other than complete immersion.²⁷

Campbell was a sufficiently strong student of church history to know that the major reformers of the sixteenth century had all agreed that immersion was the New Testament practice. But he vehemently disagreed with their conclusion that it was a matter of indifference.²⁸

The call for believers'—as opposed to infant—baptism was a far more divisive position. Some of the radicals of the Reformation had come to practice believers' baptism, and had paid the price of martyrdom for their faith. Others since, especially the Baptists, had taken the same stance. The critical issue for Campbell and his descendants is not so much whether or not to advocate and practice believers' baptism, but how to interpret this practice as a test of fellowship. The degree to which Campbell believed that immersion of believers was an essential step in salvation can be debated, but clearly, by the middle of the 1830s, when he was in his late forties, Alexander Campbell began to move away from the narrow sectarian view that believers' immersion was an essential for salvation. Indeed, he denied that he had ever said or implied such. Slowly, even reluctantly, Campbell began to move to a broader view of baptism that would allow a more charitable relationship with other Christians. Campbell's descendants are not of one mind on this issue.²⁹

Almost all Protestants from the sixteenth century to the present have stated their belief that the church should not be divided. Many have been willing to argue that division and sectarianism is more than inconvenient and impractical, but even evil. Still, few have been as committed to the unity of the church as were Campbell and his co-workers.

Christian unity is not just one of the distinctive concerns of the Stone-Campbell movement, it is the primary issue that has allowed the movement to make a significant contribution to the church universal. No other theme, not restorationism, not liberty of opinion, not rationalism, no other issue has been such a major gift to the ongoing life and witness of the church as the question of Christian unity.³⁰

The distinction between Campbell and the Protestant tradition here is again one of degree. For the Reformation, the unity of the church was something to be worked for, but was not a primary commitment in an age of division and doctrinal warfare. In the centuries following the Reformation, the various Protestant churches regarded their particular beliefs and practices more highly than unity.

During Campbell's lifetime that was to begin to change,

ever so slowly, in Europe and Great Britain as well as in America. It was the desire for Christian unity that helped shape and create the Campbell movement as a distinctive group of Christians. Without this issue, the Campbell movement would have been little more than another Presbyterian-restorationist sect.

The Protestant character and heritage of Alexander Campbell's theology and movement provides more than background and context. The Protestant faith is the very heart and substance of Campbell's fundamental concerns. To understand the significance of his reforming activity it is essential that his own Protestantism be seen as the prism through which he viewed Christianity and the gospel message.

Campbell's critique of the church of his own day not only centered in his Protestant perspective, it was often a call for a return to the Protestant ideal, an ideal which he believed ultimately sought to be faithful to the New Testament witness.

The theological, ecclesiological, even social and political assumptions, of Alexander Campbell were based on a Protestant, particularly Reformed or Presbyterian, value system. The points, and there were many, at which he challenged this tradition, those areas in which he called for change in Protestant belief and practice, were themselves based on the ideals of the Reformation. Nowhere is this clearer than with the issues of justification by faith, the authority of scripture, and the priesthood of all believers.

When the Campbell movement is placed properly in its Reformation heritage, the gifts of the movement to the whole church can be better understood and articulated in the present day. This is as true of those areas where Campbell criticized Protestantism as where he was in agreement.

Alexander Campbell belonged to a family. That family included the immediate relationship to his parents and their ancestors, it included the Campbell Clan, the Scots, the Presbyterians, and through them, the Calvinist-Reformed tradition of Protestantism, and from there, the larger Christian family. The richness of any individual's contributions to the world is enhanced by an understanding of that person in relationship to others, especially the family. To appreciate and learn from Alexander Campbell, it is essential to see that he was a particular kind of Christian called Protestant. His independence of thought both arose from and complimented this heritage.

Most basically, to be a Protestant Christian for Alexander Campbell meant to remind the church that it stands always in need of reformation. The church, then, is not only One, Holy, and Catholic, it is also *semper reformanda*, always reforming. There is always a place for a Luther or a Calvin or an Alexander Campbell, with hammer in hand, ready to nail something, or some issue, or someone to the church door.

Footnotes

1. In the debates with both Robert Owen and Bishop Purcell, Alexander Campbell was publicly described as the defender of Protestantism, though in the first instance he was also seen as the advocate of Christianity in general. See Alexander Campbell and Robert Owen, *Debate on the Evidences of Christianity; Containing an Examination of the "Social System," and of all the Systems of Scepticism of Ancient and Modern Times* (Bethany, VA: Alexander Campbell, 1829); Alexander Campbell and John B. Purcell, *A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion* (Cincinnati: J. A. James & Co., 1837); Bill J. Humble, *Campbell and Controversy: The Story of Alexander Campbell's Great Debates with Skepticism, Catholicism, and Presbyterianism* (n.p.: Old Paths Book Club, 1952).
2. Richard L. Harrison, Jr., "Alexander Campbell on Luther and the Reformation," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 19:4 (October 1984): 124–152.
3. C. Leonard Allen and Richard T. Hughes address this issue in a very helpful way in their book *Discovering our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 1988).
4. Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System*, 5th edition (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1901), p. 153.
5. Alexander Campbell, *Millennial Harbinger* (August 1838): 361–362. Hereafter referred to as MH.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 362–363.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Alexander Campbell, *Christian Baptism: With its Antecedents and Consequents* (Bethany, VA: Alexander Campbell, 1851), pp. 280–281.
9. Alexander Campbell, MH (June 1851): 322–324. Both Luther and Calvin would have had serious difficulties with Campbell's position. But any accusation that Campbell was returning to a

medieval works righteousness position cannot be defended, for he was not suggesting that salvation was dependent upon the human ability, with or without grace, to fulfill works of the law. Rather, Campbell's view was based on an understanding of faith that included and then went beyond that of the reformers, an understanding that included the ability to understand and respond to God. Campbell's anthropology was shaped more by the Enlightenment than the Reformation, thus a relatively positive view of faith and human nature. While Campbell clearly saw faith as a gift of God, he believed it to be available to all rational persons, thus enabling the individual to respond in trust to the offer of salvation. Campbell's anthropology did not fully accept the sixteenth century Protestant view of human depravity. For Campbell, faith is an enabling gift that may or may not be exercised, a gift characterized by the ability to respond rationally to the message of salvation. Again, there is no merit in exercising faith as it was intended, rather, it is a means to receive that which is already offered.

10. Sidney E. Mead, *Nathaniel William Taylor, 1786–1858: A Connecticut Liberal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942); George M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).
11. See, for instance, *Popular Lectures and Addresses* (Philadelphia: James Challen and Son, 1863), p. 309.
12. Campbell, *The Christian System*, p. 3. See also Cecil K. Thomas, *Alexander Campbell and His New Version* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1958); M. Eugene Boring, "The Formation of a Tradition: Alexander Campbell and the New Testament," *Disciples Theological Digest* 2 (1987): 5–62; Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "The Reconsideration of a Tradition: The Disciples and the New Testament," *Disciples Theological Digest* 2 (1987): 63–67; W. Clark Gilpin, "The End of a Tradition: Alexander Campbell and the New Testament," *Disciples Theological Digest* 2 (1987): 68–71.
13. Campbell, *The Christian System*, p. 104.
14. Campbell, *Christian Baptism*, p. 20.
15. Alexander Campbell, ed., *The Sacred Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ, Commonly styled the New Testament, translated from the original Greek by George Campbell, James Macknight, and Philip Doddridge, Doctors of the Church of Scotland* (Buffalo, Brooke Co., VA: Alexander Campbell, 1826). Campbell provided prefaces and notes to give emphasis to his primary concerns.

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16. Thomas Campbell, *The Declaration and Address* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1955), p. 44. In the famous proposition in which Thomas defines the unity of the church as “essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one,” he goes on to say that the church consists “of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures. . . .”
17. Martin Luther, “To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate,” in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 44, edited by James Atkinson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 127–129.
18. Alexander Campbell, MH (November 1849): 612. See also D. Ray Lindley, *Apostle of Freedom* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1957), p. 115.
19. Alexander Campbell, MH (May 1832): 236–237; *Christian Baptist* 4 (July 1827): 262.
20. Richard L. Harrison, Jr., “Early Disciples Sacramental Theology: Catholic, Reformed, and Free,” in *Classic Themes of Disciples Theology*, edited by Kenneth Lawrence (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1986), p. 86.
21. See the story of Thomas Campbell’s defense of Aylett Raines in Lester G. McAllister, *Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1954), p. 201.
22. Alexander Campbell, *Christian Baptist* 4 (March 1827): 155; (April 1827): 176–178.
23. Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System*, pp. 85–90.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
25. Alexander Campbell, *Christian Baptist* 6 (April 1829): 213–218; 7 (April 1830): 233–234; (May 1830): 248–255; (June 1830): 283; MH (September 1833): 464–467; see also David Edwin Harrell, *Quest for a Christian America*, vol. 1 of *A Social History of the Disciples of Christ* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966), pp. 190–196; and Harold L. Lunger, *The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1954), pp. 38–52.
26. Lunger, *The Political Ethics*, pp. 48–52.
27. The literature on Campbell’s position on baptism is enormous. One of the best recent studies, though of much broader perspective, is Clark M. Williamson, *Baptism: Embodiment of the Gospel: Disciples Baptismal Theology*, *The Nature of the Church*, 4 (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication for the Council on Christian Unity, 1987); see also Harrison, “Early Disciples Sacramental Theology.”

28. See, for example, Alexander Campbell, *Debate on Christian Baptism, Between Mr. John Walker . . . and Alexander Campbell* (Pittsburg: Eichbaum and Johnston, 1822), p. 256; *A Public Debate on Christian Baptism Between The Rev. W. L. Maccalla . . . and Alexander Campbell* (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1842), pp. 310–311, 315–317; *A Debate Between Rev. A. Campbell and Rev. N. L. Rice* (Lexington, KY et al.: A. T. Skillman & Son, et al., 1844), pp. 117, 131, 152, 260; *Christian Baptism*, p. 192; Harrison, “Campbell on Luther,” pp. 134–135.
29. Williamson, *Baptism*, pp. 38–39.
30. This is another subject on which there is a significant body of literature. For further exploration, see, for example, Winfred E. Garrison, *Christian Unity and Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1955); Paul A. Crow, Jr., “The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Ecumenical Movement,” in *The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ): An Interpretative Examination in the Cultural Context*, pp. 253–307, edited by George G. Beazley, Jr. (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1973); Michael K. Kinnamon, “A Special Calling: Christian Unity and the Disciples of Christ,” in *Interpreting Disciples: Practical Theology in the Disciples of Christ*, pp. 248–273, edited by L. Dale Richesin and Larry D. Bouchard (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1987).

Lecture 4

Campbell-Stone on the Frontier: The Only Ones Weren't the Only Ones

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University of Florida.*

Being secure in one's personal identity is a simple mark of maturity. Thus presenting one's credentials, an act proper for diplomats arriving at foreign courts, is unnecessary in establishing the authenticity and credibility of university scholars. Nevertheless, let me present a few of my credentials for delivering a paper at an Alexander Campbell bicentennial. You may even conclude that I am legitimate, possibly that you did well to invite me, now upon hearing this, if not later after listening to the paper.

I begin with some names, places and dates: Georgetown, Kentucky; a high school teacher there named Stone; and southwest Pennsylvania. During high school and college years, I lived in Georgetown, beauty spot of the Bluegrass, where my father was president of a college, not Bacon College, but a Baptist one named for the town. Following seminary, for two years I served in Burlington, Boone County, Kentucky, near the Bullittsville Christian Church, all familiar territory to students of father Thomas's career in 1817-1819 and his anger over the inferior place accorded to Afro-Americans in that southern community.

Then too I mention that area from Winchester and Mt. Sterling northeast to the Ohio River where such names as Millersburg and Washington stand out and where the Campbellites practically dislodged the Baptists in a single act in

1832. One special friend of mine in Mt. Sterling, a devout Baptist, was still lamenting this take over a century and a third later and still hoping the Baptists could plan a re-quest.

On a more historically serious note, I call to your attention the title of this paper, "Campbell-Stone on the Frontier". When speaking about the Campbells' headquarters on the frontier, I am referring to a time and place, an area during a specific period, that holds great personal interest for me. My mother's ancestors settled in Kentucky between 1780 and 1790, having lived in southwestern Pennsylvania for some years, before floating down the Ohio River to the Falls of the Ohio (Louisville), thence moving inland some 50 miles. They were Baptist, many from Virginia originally. Some of the men were Baptist preachers. All were religious people, ready to brave the dangers of the frontier for economic opportunity and religious freedom.

My topic holds great interest for my wife as well; she is a Pennsylvanian. And her ancestors lived in southwestern Pennsylvania between 1760 and 1806. These settlers were Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who moved into northwestern Pennsylvania as soon as the land became available for settlement. While still in Washington County, Pennsylvania, these sturdy and stern Presbyterians settled along the creek beds, attending church at Pigeon Creek, and Buffalo, and Cross Creek Presbyterian Churches.

In 1806 they were moving north to new frontiers one year before Thomas Campbell came from the North of Ireland to live in the new state. They had been gone three years when Alexander, his mother, brothers and sister joined Thomas Campbell.

The area of southwestern Pennsylvania, south of the Ohio and west of the Monongahela, was the "Gateway to the West." It was claimed by both Virginia and Pennsylvania, until the Mason and Dixon line placed the area inside Pennsylvania. Virginia land claims were honored, but the majority of the Virginians (most of them Baptists) sold their claims to newly arriving settlers (most of them Scotch-Irish Presbyterians) and took up land in the newly opened territory of Kentucky. During the years 1780 to 1795, movement by flatboat to Kentucky was brisk.

Even this early, the only ones weren't the only ones, as my subtitle says. (This reference points to the old slogan, "We

are not the only Christians, but we are Christians only”). When Washington County was formed in 1781, its thirteen townships names reflected the mixed origins of the settlers: Quakers from New Jersey, Baptists from Virginia, Baptists from New Jersey, Scotch-Irish Presbyterians from eastern and central Pennsylvania. Some had come directly from the North of Ireland, or from Scotland. One township, Smiths, was named for the local Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Joseph Smith, minister to the Cross Creek and Buffalo Presbyterian Churches.

A graduate of Princeton, he was one of four remarkable pioneer Presbyterian clergymen who formed the Redstone Presbytery. All four men had great interest in education, and each formed an academy. The Rev. Joseph Smith began an academy at the Upper Buffalo Church in 1785. Among his students was James McGready. Yes, James McGready of Kentucky fame started out in southwestern Pennsylvania.

Many people at this meeting, historians all, know that James McGready became an influential frontier preacher, and that his influence upon a young student in central North Carolina, Barton W. Stone, is of interest to this narrative. Young Stone, too, had done some moving, from Maryland to nearby Pittsylvania County, Virginia. (I cannot help remarking that my father’s family lived in that same county and the next Virginia county to the east, Halifax, from at least the 1820s).

The Second Great Awakening began in 1792 in New England, and swept south along the seaboard states. Then the revival fever followed the wilderness trails to the West. Stone, ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1798, moved into Kentucky via the Cumberland Gap, taking up charges in Cane Ridge near Lexington. In 1800, James McGready was leading revivals in Logan County, Kentucky, some 200 miles to the southwest. In 1801, the Cane Ridge revival began. In 1802, the Great Revival came to Western Pennsylvania, along the Buffalo Creek.

By noting all these connections and interactions, typically quite random and altogether unpredictable, we see that “the only ones weren’t the only ones” refers to internal migration as well as to the mixed denominational makeup of particular settled communities. Alexander Campbell’s later peregrinations to “eastern Virginia,” New Orleans, and Missouri simply built upon the busy stir of peoples moving about

in the decades following independence, and even earlier—in my mother's family's case from the 1730s.

The central attention of this paper is to the fundamental significance of the timing of the origins of the Campbell-Stone movement. It appeared and took shape in the first three decades of the nineteenth century on the American western frontier. What emanated, under Alexander Campbell's leadership especially, could not have taken place earlier or later. That is to say, this season was a *kairos*, a fullness of time, for the unfolding of a major new emphasis in Protestant Christianity.

It takes nothing away from a major figure's achievement to observe that he or she did not provide leadership in a vacuum. In the words of the old adage, "the times make the man." I am arguing that interpretation here, to a real though limited extent. Homing in on my point through the use of theory formulated by Clifford Geertz, I observe that Alexander Campbell, a leader of thousands, could not have led people who were not willing to be led.

When expanded according to Geertzian theory, the issue becomes: a leader's message has to "strike fire" with the people. Its effectiveness owes much to his or her skills and perspicacity, of course. But it also is due to the responsiveness of the people. So to speak, it takes two to make a leader—or, for that matter, to develop a following. In order for Campbell to elicit a following, he had to tell his listeners something they already knew, something that was part of their perception of reality. Like Winston Churchill galvanizing patriotic loyalties during the "battle of Britain," Campbell touched the concerns and aspirations of a great many western Americans. Those people probably had not formulated these perceptions when they heard and heard about the Restorationists' principles and system. Nor would most of them have managed to do any formulating of a public theology. That is what leaders do. But when the frontier men and women heard the message, they recognized it and they liked it. It struck a chord. They were ready for it, indeed in some real if inchoate sense they believed it already.

To describe Campbell's role this way is to pay respect to his capabilities and achievements. Theologically, it is also to affirm faith in God's providence, his guidance and exploitation of historical conditions. In addition it tells us a great deal about the people of the Western Reserve and the upper Ohio River valley, many of them just migrated, some still

moving west in search of homes, lands, and a living. This social movement, like all others, is a complex network of forces and factors and requires the kind of “thick” analysis that Geertz provides.

With specific reference to Alexander Campbell, we are seeing confirmation of his positive role as architect and builder, and are contesting any charge that he was a reactionary. It is certain that he reacted with sadness and revulsion over the disunion within the Christian cause as exemplified in the various “sects” of the church, back in the British Isles earlier, and now and more importantly in the new American nation. But what he sought to accomplish was an authentic Christian system of belief and practice. To anticipate our argument, the people were ready for a religious constitution and Campbell was passionate to tell them that it already existed—and then to show them what it was.

So, Campbell was in the right place at the right time. That conclusion presents itself to those who examine “Campbell-Stone on the Frontier” in the light of a theology of providence or by dependence on social scientific data and interpretation. (By the way, many of us are committed to both avenues toward understanding. At least inherently, no one need view this as a forced choice option.) And let me repeat that attribution of a major role to the Lord of history or to the social setting detracts nothing from Campbell’s contributions as leader. Both Christian providentialists—most especially rationalists and Arminians like those in his movement—and social scientists recognize this.

Looking at that setting, that situation, those conditions, those times, is our next assignment. We gain insight by contrasting, first, the Ulster and the Scotland of the two Campbells’ experience with what they found in America. Second, we will juxtapose an earlier American religious-social frontier, Virginia in the mid-eighteenth century, with early Campbell-Stone territories in Ohio and Kentucky, also Virginia, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri.

Concerning the first, Garrison and DeGroot wrote in 1948 that none of the Scotland and Ulster restoration groups “cherished the slightest expectation that their primitive platforms would serve as a rallying ground” for uniting Christians.¹ The Haldanes, Glas, Sandeman, and the others promoted the restorationist cause only because they knew it to be right and not for any strategic reasons or with any societal hopes. Several generations later, this time on the west-

ern side of the Atlantic, major changes in social patterns and political structures produced a dramatic alteration of the religious situation.

In the words of Garrison and DeGroot again, in America by the 1820s, "the problem of union had entered upon an absolutely new phase." What had been a political and social problem where pressure and compulsion had been injurious forces, now was "purely religious," an issue best solved "by religious means, by persuasion, and by voluntary action." Circumstances had become not only tolerable, but downright propitious, conducive to a new era, perhaps even the millennial age. "It was under these conditions that the pioneers of the Disciples of Christ began their movement for the restoration of a simple and noncreedal Christianity and the union of all Christians on the basis of the essential and primitive conditions of discipleship."²

Revealing as the comparison of eighteenth century Ulster and Scotland with the American frontier after 1800 is, an intra-American comparison illuminates "Campbell-Stone on the Frontier" more. What transpired in Virginia in the last two-thirds of the eighteenth century bears some resemblance to developments surrounding Campbell and his colleagues. It also helped to set the stage for the experimentation and radical departures that religion embarked on on the frontier, even playing a certain causative role.

But its real importance is a hermeneutical one. The interpretation of the evangelical revolt in the Virginia backcountry set alongside the interpretation of the Campbell-Stone movement west of the Appalachian range marks off the early Restoration movement as a second-generation phenomenon. Perhaps few devices disclose so much for grasping what the frontier Restoration movement was and why it was so successful. A major point, I want to stress—it has been made before in different ways—is that the Campbell-Stone message fit into the post-Independence setting. I judge that it could not have been heard earlier, that is, that it did not address the condition of the society and the church as they existed and coexisted earlier. To point this out is to reinforce the application of Geertz's anthropological theory to Campbell's prominence as a major American leader. What he—and the other preachers of the "theology of the people"—succeeded in undertaking was a task relevant to the next political-social-religious generation. In a sense by now well understood, I trust, the times made the man. More piously stated,

the Almighty raised up Campbell for a special mission and, together, they wrought marvelous things. Impiously put, even the Almighty could not have accomplished his ends through an Alexander Campbell before the Great Awakening and the enactment of the Constitution of the American Republic.

In a nutshell, the Campbell-Stone message rectifies better than it recruits. It is hard to imagine the cause of the disestablished, democratized church being expanded very effectively by that message. It serves Christianity's purposes far better as a regularizing agent than as salesman, as standard setter and stabilizer than as spreader.

Evidence exists that the "Christians" in the West after 1830 did recruit some from the ranks of the unchurched, that is, they converted people. Predictably, it met with some success in convincing skeptics that the Bible was true and the Christian message was valid. It is beyond the scope of historical inquiry to assert that the Restoration Movement could not have been an effective evangelistic agency in the eighteenth century (whether in New England or the Middle Colonies or the South). But we know that it did not emerge until the 1790s (through Elias Smith in Vermont and James O'Kelly in Virginia), and we may infer that the time was not yet right. Perhaps it is not going too far to argue that the movement did not emerge because its integrity and power to attract awaited a new set of conditions, religious, political, and social. Some things had to happen to set the stage for the acting out of a movement that sought to restore.

In the eighteenth century, "restoring" was not "the name of the game." In the religious life of the American people, as in their politics, two steps were required to place the social order on a sound footing. In politics, a war for independence had to be fought and won first, before a regulating and coordinating text, the Constitution, could command respect and obedience. Analogously in religion, independence had to be won. Institutionally that meant the established church had to be dismantled. In New England the established church was tied to no overseas ecclesiastical agency, but that fact did not prevent the Standing Order from exercising power and normative influence. The South's official church was England's. Free church Protestants were contesting its authority by the 1740s, often having to pay a price for expressing their aspiration to freedom. Both patterns, the indigenous and the foreign, were overthrown by the Constitution and Bill of Rights. It is worth reminding ourselves that the ratification of those

two documents in 1787 and 1789, respectively, preceded the Elias Smith, Abner Jones, and James O'Kelly impulses by no more than five years. If this sequence is not clarified by *post hoc, propter hoc*, and it is not, perhaps we may argue that the later development would have been an impertinence without the earlier.

But more was taking place than the disestablishment of state churches. The democratization of church life began to make its weight felt. Church polity was more and more typically congregational, and membership was symbolized by the drama of baptism by immersion associated with personal religious experience. Place of privilege associated with social class gave way to an effective equality. Informal and practical independence—meaning democracy, really—went along with, political, civil independence. Still, something was missing, or, the second and consummatory step needed climbing, before full proportion could be attained.

The door had been opened for the exercise of religious liberty, but where to go and what to do with that liberty had not been determined. A constitution was needed. Enter Alexander Campbell. (Notice, not Thomas Campbell or Barton W. Stone or Walter Scott.) It fell the younger Campbell's lot, in reality, his vocation in the divine economy, to provide the constitution. What he "provided", of course, was simply the recognition of the existing constitution. Somewhat older than the American Republic's 1787 document, the Bible was in point of fact the description of the "ancient order of things." All human opinions and inventions, in the form of creeds or theologies or ecclesiastical systems that had arisen since the primitive Christian era, were thus gratuitous—not so much evil as gratuitous. What the Almighty God was leading the reformers, the restorers, toward, in the new nation's new age, was acknowledging that they had in their hands the blueprint He meant for them to follow. The nation had a new Constitution; the church had the ancient and ever-valid New Testament. (And New Testament more than Bible really, a choice that this kind of analysis might help decipher.)

By backing up briefly to examine the significance of the evangelical revolt of the eighteenth century, we will be in better position to penetrate the second stage that Alexander Campbell engineered. East of the mountains from New England to Georgia, the old order was toppling. Plain folks preaching and responding to the evangelical message overcame the culturally dominant versions of Christianity that

kept it an aristocratic force. By experiencing it emotionally, in the Great Awakening and more local occasions, they took religion to heart and took the churches to themselves. From an historical-social perspective what they did was to get rid of something old, to get something new started. They participated in bringing to an end the old order in which religion and the church were there for the taking by any and every one, but stood whether or not there were any takers. They embodied, symbolized, and perpetuated a hierarchical structure of things, no less on earth in human society than in God's heaven.

In his study of Lunenburg County, Virginia, between 1746 and 1832, Richard R. Beeman furnishes a narrative that discloses how the "evangelical revolt in the backcountry" brought the former and traditional state of things to an end and launched an important new perception of religion and society. The rise of this new religion "posed a striking challenge to an Anglican-gentry culture." That culture used forms that "relied on an educated clergy discoursing from learned texts before a congregation often seated in strict observance of the prevailing social hierarchy of the parish."³

Beeman's research reinforces the recent historical achievement of Rhys Isaac who traces the "transformation" of Virginia between 1740 and 1790. The "hegemony of the gentry," Isaac writes, was weakened in many spheres. Its love of "vivid culture," of "magnificent display," stood in stark contrast to the "austere culture of the evangelicals with their burden of guilt." At least now, throughout the southern backcountry, an alternative cultural pattern had developed. And it was home-grown, the product of a culture "that was not serving the spiritual and worldly needs of all" the people.⁴

Comparable departures from the old ways of structuring religion as a formal agency in society were occurring in New England. Although "vivid culture" and "magnificent display" were not characteristic of the Standing Order there, a strong sense of order and propriety and hierarchy prevailed. Thus the Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s and the attendant developments of radical religion drove a wedge there too between an old vision of things, the cue being taken from traditional European societies even when, as in Puritan New England, the manifestations had already undergone modification in the direction of democratization.

Between the Atlantic and the Appalachians, the hold of the *ancien regime* in religion and society had been challenged

and was in process of breaking up. West of the mountains, the *ancien regime* was giving way to the “ancient order of things.” At least this was true in the eyes of Alexander Campbell and growing thousands from the 1820s. The shift is dramatic: from “revolt” (Beeman) and “transformation” (Isaac) to “restoration” and “restitution.” The terms tell us a great deal.

As both major recent histories of the movement indicate, Campbell’s message and the frontier society of the new nation fit very well. You cannot “restore” until you have the luxury of some kind of identity and equilibrium. The “revolt” and the “transformation” set things up for “restoration.” Now the “new nation” existed as both political fact and metaphor for self understanding. Now a “theology of the people” was a possibility and a suitability. Now the society’s need was to arrive at consensus, to achieve victory, to bring about consolidation, to realize destiny. The second generation, epitomized by Campbell, could not have come about without the accomplishments of the first, but the first only prepared the way for Alexander the Baptist, or, shall we say, borrowing from the restorer himself, the Immerser.

Earlier I observed that Alexander Campbell’s system and movement rectifies better than it recruits. Or at the very least that it is rectifying while it is recruiting. Walter Scott’s successful form of evangelism, McAllister and Tucker inform us, was no “frenzy of emotion”—in that differing sharply from the early Stone in the Great Revival and especially at Cane Ridge. Its stalwart qualities were rationality, authority, and common sense. The newness of the novel conditions on the frontier permitted and invited the acceptance of such qualities. How heady indeed was the proclamation that a long-lost truth had been rediscovered in their own time and place, and they were “witnessing the beginning of a new period in Christian history.”⁵

Regularization was the hallmark of the Disciples/Christian movement. It offered a plumb-line, it straightened out. These destiny-minded witnesses were mopping up, smoothing the rough edges, consolidating the forces. God’s plan was unfolding before their eyes and through their agency. The common sense and rationality of their perception dispelled the vagaries of sectarianism, the unreliability of emotional religion, and the mystery that had informed traditional sacramental Christianity. Things are now known to be certain, in place, based on standards, accessible to every person, and best of all, true, factual, and verifiable.

As keenly as the Campbell-Stone Christians on the frontier desired to be the only ones, the only kind of Christians, that is, there were others. In the early days, those days, those others were Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists. Later, Shakers, Mormons, and Rappites (along with some others), were their neighbors. Obviously, if there had not been others, that is, a profusion of "sects," dedication to the unity God was holding up before his restorationist followers would not have emerged as their calling.

Obviously also, this new company, leaders and followers alike, had belonged to these other groups. We know that the Campbells began as Presbyterians, in fact as devotees of one branch of the already divided Calvinist tradition in Ulster and Scotland, let us remember. Then for more than a decade they were Baptists, however unenthusiastically. Stone was something else, a Presbyterian of quite a different variety from the Campbells, and later a "Christian," embodying a distinctive form of independency, or undenominationality, that Alexander called "Disciples," after he broke with the Baptists.

The followers were sometimes converted to Christianity by the new movement. More often, they saw the Campbell-light after some degree of myopia associated with Methodist membership, or Baptist belonging, or Presbyterian participation. Some moved, one way or back and forth, between the Restoration and the Mormons or Shakers.

If unity was the goal, then there was plenty to do on the western frontier in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Campbells, Stone, Walter Scott, and the others stared reality in the face, at the same time that they were poring over the Holy Scriptures. The condition of multiplicity, indeed competitiveness, was regrettable in and of itself. But the clear teaching of the New Testament elevated regrettable to disobedience and blindness. The Lord had built one church of which the Bible spoke with authority. New in the fullness of time, he had brought about a society for which he had intended classic destiny. In America, the millennial time and place, the plural condition could give way to the unity he had prescribed for his church, in the latter days just as in the primitive times, that is, in line with the ancient order of things.

Restorationism is a noble cause, a compelling ideal—no matter what else one concludes about it. But like all positions or truth-assertions in religion—and politics and personal life,

for that matter, it is corruptible. It can be overbearing. It can arrogate to itself the power to solve too many issues. It can blind adherents to other ideals and causes. It can be lacking in the ironic sense, the awareness that in this world nothing is exactly what it seems to be; that the relationship between people and viewpoints may be curious, take strange twists, misguide as well as steer straight.

The reader of early "Christian" or "Disciples" or "Reformers" literature is impressed with the frequency of symbols that point in the direction of exclusivism. "Only" is a significant word, as in that salient phrase: "We are not the only Christians but we are Christians only." The sentiment expressed is not the same as the goal of "unity"—indeed may be at odds with that goal. The early Campbell-Stone movement did recruit aggressively from the ranks of existing bodies that, not being committed to restoration, needed rectification. It advocated a standard, *the* Christian standard. This second-generation movement, by implication regularly and by direct action sometimes, confronted the older Christian bodies with the insufficiency of their understanding and presented them with the constitution for the truly obedient church.

In these ways, with these qualifications, the Campbell-Stone movement developed a tilt toward exclusivism. For certain sectors of the movement to this day, exclusivism is embodied in attitude and practice, if less often in a message of superiority or absolutism. Most often, the congregation holds or a common viewpoint leads to concentrating on the obligation for those who hold the position, without producing any real program of condemnation of others. Occasionally, a harshly condemnatory spirit appears. Generally, the attitude is one of intense dedication to living up to the standard. Thus the result is more likely to be provincialism or separatism—ironically, sectarianism—than a judgmental policy toward other Christians.

The conviction that the unity of all Christians is essential became more than a conviction; it was no less than a binding commandment. Actually, the message was more toward acknowledging that a unity existed when faithful obedience was carried out than a directive to campaign for unifying diverse bodies. Unity was seen as a fact, and a commandment, and a necessity, and—no less important—a possibility. This position is still held by the majority in the two more conservative sectors of the Campbell-Stone heritage.

Campbell himself seems to have acknowledged the legitimacy of other Christian bodies as early as the "Lunenburg letter" of 1837—although without compromising his dedication to the Restoration ideal. But the tilt toward exclusivism, present from the beginning, has enjoyed a long life.

Careful inquiry into the work of Alexander Campbell discloses a career that was energetic and effective. His direct impact and indirect influence on a great many Americans evoke genuine respect. But his sense of the times in which he lived impresses this inquirer even more. He caught on early to what was happening in his newly adopted American culture.

Unlike his contemporary, Lyman Beecher, who also was concerned with developments in the real America, the society that lay west of the Alleghenies, his agenda was not to prevent; instead his goal was to generate. Beecher was driven by the fear that the West, and the rest of America eventually, would be taken over by alien and seditious forces, French political absolutism, infidelism, and anticlericalism, among them. His aim was to take the old, the received Euro-American Protestant tradition, spread it, apply it, and enforce it. By contrast, Campbell wanted to get behind the old to the ancient—perhaps it is not unfair to say, to the "timeless". Freshness and innocence, some might say pretentiousness, characterized his program. In seeking to call all Americans to the classic religious constitution, he flirted with exclusivism, with an insistence on a particular particularity that could have condemned and left out. But he also caught the spirit of, and thus embraced, the American values of freedom and tolerance.⁶

Was Alexander Campbell a child of his times? Yes, of course. But he also transcended them and offered to them a standard not of their own making. What this son of Ulster and Scotland decried about the old world he endeavored indefatigably to implant in the new world. The facts do not allow us to argue that he failed.

Footnotes

1. Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ: A History* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1948), p. 46.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

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3. Richard R. Beeman, *The Evolution of the Southern Back Country, 1746–1832* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), p. 97.
4. Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), pp. 322, 163–164.
5. Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker, *Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1975), p. 134.
6. Two treatments of Campbell's role in nineteenth century American public society that are especially perceptive are: Richard T. Hughes, "From Primitive Church to Civil Religion: The Millennial Odyssey of Alexander Campbell," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* XLIV (March, 1976), 87–104; and Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), esp. pp. 171–175.

Lecture 5

Alexander Campbell as an Educator

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Alexander Campbell's interest in repositioning American education was subordinate only to his interest in restoring the ancient order. In fact, for Campbell the two were inextricably related. In his thinking the Christian system can flourish only where the people are literate.

Campbell's "Baccalaureate Address To the Graduates of Bethany College", on July 4, 1846, was basically a charge to the graduates to support universal education, a matter at that time before many state legislatures. "But especially are you under obligation to advocate just views of education, and to plead for its universal diffusion throughout society."¹ Among the reasons was precisely the argument that religion is dependent upon people who can read.

Religion is founded upon learning so far as it is founded upon truth and the knowledge of truth. The Bible is a written communication from Heaven to man, and must be read in order to be understood, believed and obeyed. . . . While it is possible—barely possible—to communicate a saving portion of religious knowledge to those who cannot read, certain it is that it is impossible to make any one, however gifted, master of any book, human or divine, which he cannot read. To withhold from the myriads the means of reading and understanding the Book of God—the volume of human destiny—is the great-

est sin of omission of duty to God and man that any community, acknowledging the Divine authority of that volume, can be guilty of.²

Because of this commitment in respect to literacy, it is no surprise that throughout his life Alexander Campbell promoted and was involved in education. It is altogether appropriate as we reassess the significance of Alexander Campbell on this the 200th year of his birth that we give attention to his involvement in and support of education.

Alexander Campbell's earliest education was at the hands of his father who established the pattern for the family. Thomas Campbell spent most of his life as a teacher in schools he established and operated both in Northern Ireland and in America. He even enlisted Alexander at about eighteen to run the school in North Ireland in 1807 when he came to America. Alexander Campbell followed in his father's footsteps by establishing Buffalo Academy in his home, which continued from 1818 to 1823, and Bethany College on his farm, which commenced operation in 1841.³

It is interesting that as Campbell reflected on his career in 1856 at the age of sixty-eight he identified at least half of it as that of a professional teacher.

Gentlemen, from many years' experience and observation—at least one-quarter of a century of my life a professional teacher—and familiar with many of the most reputable teachers in the Old World and in the New, for at least half a century, I have come to the conclusion that no class of men, in any department of society, have more of the good or evil destiny of the world in their hands and under their influence than the teachers of our schools and colleges.⁴

At least ten of these years consisted of his teaching prior to the founding of Bethany College.

In the prospectus of the first *Millennial Harbinger* dated January 4, 1830 as the second item under the subjects to be addressed over the years by the new journal, Campbell wrote:

2. The inadequacy of all the present systems of education, literary and oral, to develop the powers of the human mind, and to prepare man for rational and social happiness.⁵

Eight years later, in 1838, Campbell stated: "We have been waiting with a good deal of impatience for room to call the attention of our readers to the subject of education. Next to the gospel, this is the most important of human concerns and interests."⁶ What does Campbell have in mind? What platform does he wish to push in regard to education?

Campbell's vision required advance on three fronts: (1) education for all, (2) a curriculum more suited to the nature of children, and (3) an emphasis on moral education which centers on the scriptures. To appreciate the forward looking significance and later impact of his outlooks we must situate them in their nineteenth century context.

Most Americans, from the time the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth until Campbell's day, some two hundred years later, had to arrange private schooling so their children could learn to read and write. Most of the schools were one room, one teacher arrangements with self designated and entrepreneurial teachers who tended to move with some frequency, especially in the newly settled regions. The proposal of Campbell and those who agreed with him was therefore a radical departure from the past. Very few schools in 1840 were operated on funds supplied through taxation. Massachusetts was in the forefront.⁷ In the states where Campbell's influence was the greatest, Virginia enacted a local taxing option in 1846, and a compulsory taxation in 1870.⁸ Ohio enacted their laws in 1853, and Kentucky in 1849, though it wasn't until after the Civil War that most school districts were created.

Several forces curtailed the movement to universal public school education. First and foremost was objection to taxation. Some felt that charity schools funded by gifts were preferable because they avoided taxation. Some churchmen objected on the grounds that public schools would turn out atheists and skeptics.

Most persons believed that religion had to be taught in such schools, but despaired over how it could be taught in a non-sectarian manner. Even the teaching of the Scriptures had critics from religious quarters on the ground that the translations and comments, if any, favored one religious group over another. In the 1858 *Millennial Harbinger*, Campbell reported in dismay that the trustees for the 4th Ward public school in New York passed the resolution that "... the reading of the Bible be dispensed with in all the schools of this ward."⁹ The major reason was the objection of Roman Catholic prelates whose constituency comprised the majority

population in the ward. One of the renowned leaders for public education, Horace Mann, favored religion, but wanted sectarianism purged from the classroom. He recommended the use of the Bible in moral education, but opposed sectarian comments, a position which coincided with that of Alexander Campbell.¹⁰

Alexander Campbell was one of the powerful voices speaking out for common school education in the Ohio Valley. He commanded the attention of numerous community leaders through the pages of the *Millennial Harbinger*. His readers might object to taxation, but like him they could support public school education which included non-sectarian study of the Bible. Campbell's significance is shown by Rush Welter in a 1971 book titled, *American Writings on Popular Education The Nineteenth Century*. Among the readings Welter included Campbell's address to the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers in Cincinnati in 1836.¹¹

This Cincinnati organization, resembling a contemporary educational association, was extraordinary in the mid-west and south for promoting all levels of education both public and private.¹² Many well known Americans living in the Ohio Valley were members including William Holmes McGuffey,¹³ Lyman Beecher, Calvin E. Stowe, married to Harriet Beecher Stowe, Roman Catholic Bishop J. B. Purcell, Walter Scott, P. H. Fall, Robert Richardson and D. S. Burnett. In 1837 the organization passed a resolution in regard to teaching the scriptures, presented by Bishop Purcell who chaired the committee.

Resolved that this Convention earnestly recommend the use of the Bible in all our Schools, to be read as a religious exercise, without denominational or sectarian comment, and that it is the deliberate conviction of this College, that the Bible may be so introduced in perfect consistency with religious freedom and without offence in the peculiar tenets of any Christian sect.¹⁴

Campbell lectured at schools and colleges, but also at various conventions and meetings relating to the Virginia legislature, including the convention for revising the constitution in 1829. About his participation he later wrote,

"I know not why it is, that the convention which revised and amended the Constitution of Virginia refused to ad-

mit into it a single provision expressive of the necessity of any legislative action on the subject of education. I had, indeed, the honor of offering the only resolution on that subject, which appears on the Journal of that distinguished body. In anticipation of the demands of this community, and believing it would be an additional impulse to future legislation on the subject, if not a formal demand for it, I anxiously desired to have it recognized as a national object in the supreme law of the land."¹⁵

On how to launch the system, Campbell proposed that colleges for the purpose of training teachers would have to be established at the same time as the common schools, because without adequately trained teachers the whole system would fail. As to a concrete program he proposed public lecturers who would travel about the state declaring the need. Second, he argued for an equitable distribution of the state literary fund. Then the counties would levy taxes, and school districts laid out five or six miles square. There would be at least fifty but not more than 100 families in a district. School committees would also be established.¹⁶

Even more interesting is Campbell's support for new approaches to education in which what is more immediate to the child, that is nature, is highlighted over the classical languages which in his view were far removed. The background for these convictions could well be Lockean, but they sound more like the newer presuppositions coming out of Europe, spawned by the Romantic Movement. In some measure Scottish educational changes, as reflected in the writings of George Jardine, Campbell's philosophy professor at Glasgow, had already anticipated these developments as we shall notice later in discussing the curriculum of Bethany College.

The changed approach to elementary education took concrete forms and methodologies in the work of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827), Phillip Emmanuel von Fellenberg (1771–1844) Swiss educators, and Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852), a German. Campbell apparently knew the proposal of these educators since they were circulating widely in America.¹⁷ He wrote in the 1842 *Millennial Harbinger*,

The combination of intellectual and moral culture, with a certain degree of physical labor has long appeared a desideratum; and various schemes for accomplishing it have been devised and submitted to the test of experiment.

The most flattering experiments have been made in Switzerland and Germany. In our own country not much has yet been done.¹⁸

The first American disciple of Pestalozzi was Scottish born William Maclure (1763–1840) who moved to Philadelphia in 1803. In 1805 he visited Pestalozzi at Yverdon and von Fellenberg at Hofwyl.¹⁹ Maclure attempted to attract Pestalozzi to the United States, but failing that, settled for a student and former colleague of Pestalozzi's, then conducting a school in Paris--Joseph Neef. Neef came to Philadelphia in 1806 and by 1809 he had established a Pestalozzi school there and published a book setting forth the Pestalozzi method.²⁰ The year 1825 found both Maclure and Neef in New Harmony, Indiana, attempting to set up schools in conjunction with the experiment of Scottish industrialist Robert Owen.²¹ There seems little doubt that Campbell would have heard of their proposals, especially by 1829 when he debated Owen in Cincinnati. I have not found references to Pestalozzi or Froebel in Campbell's writings, but in the 1840 *Millennial Harbinger* he cited the views of von Fellenberg, but not at any length.²²

A further indication of Campbell's reading comes from *The Western Academician and Journal of Education and Science*, 1837, 1838.²³ The editor and authors in this journal were also involved in the Western Literary Institute and Professional Teachers of which Campbell was an active member. In this journal are articles by John W. Picket on "Pestalozzi," and "Lancaster and Pestalozzi."²⁴ The journal also contained two selections condensed from Campbell's Glasgow professor, George Jardine, on improving attention and higher education.²⁵ The selections were apparently from Jardine's book on philosophical education, especially the teaching of logic.²⁶

These revisionist educators emphasized modern and practical concerns over against the classical languages and writings. The emphasis was upon clear thinking, accurate observation of actual objects, and the learning of words only as they related to concrete things. Campbell declared on one occasion that the sort of information learned in the traditional curriculum was in reverse order. "We begin in metaphysics, and end in physics. The *natural* sciences, in the present course, are for young men, the last years of their academic, and the *unnatural* sciences (pardon the antithesis) are for in-

fants and children.”²⁷ He himself had tried the reverse order in an experiment some eight years before. Activities recommended were drawing, writing, singing, physical exercise, group recitations, models, collections, map making and field trips. In some of the schools attention was also given to agriculture and simple trades.²⁸ In several articles in the *Millennial Harbinger* Campbell expressed an admiration for Prussian education which at this time was highly influenced by the educational philosophy of Pestalozzi.

Campbell’s most systematic statement on what and how in regard to elementary education is his “On Common Schools” address, delivered at Clarksburg, Virginia, in 1841 before a group assembled to discuss the claims of the western part of Virginia upon the state legislature, which in their view was controlled by the east.²⁹ This address is divided into three parts, (1) introductory remarks (2) what sort of education is to be adopted, and (3) how it is to be made common and accessible to all.

In his introductory remarks Campbell argued that it is especially in the interest of a self governing state to educate its citizenry. They can best develop the natural resources around them if they are properly educated. The fathers of the country could have made even greater contributions had more of the populace been better educated. He further argued that it is less expensive for the state to educate their youth than imprison them. Furthermore, the rich who have more at stake in society, should contribute more to education. He also argued for an education adapted equally to the head and the heart.³⁰ He concluded the introductory remarks by stating that “An Intelligent community will always be free; and ignorant one, never.”³¹

In discussing the kind of education, Campbell declared that education must cover physical, intellectual and moral development and improvement. He set out seven arts which encompass not only elementary education, but all of education. “They are as follows: 1st. The art of thinking; 2d. The art of speaking; 3rd. The art of reading; 4th. The art of singing; 5th. The art of writing; 6th. The art of calculating; and 7th. the art of book-keeping.”³² In acquiring these arts, the sciences will have to be taught, such as, grammar, arithmetic, geometry, algebra, music, and elocution. A study of the Bible is paramount. “All concur, sectarianism with all her brood and all her rival fears to the contrary notwithstanding, all unite, in recommending the Bible as a universal school-book,

from the first lesson in the reading class to the last recitation in the college course.”³³ Clearly Campbell has moved from an educational curriculum in which the classical languages prevail to one in which more immediate, practical matters are addressed.

In his writing and speaking on behalf of common schools Campbell made clear his belief that both the church and the state would prosper and benefit from universal education of all the citizens. He had definite views about the kind of education and ways of setting up the system, but all of these matters were negotiable. What was not negotiable was the teaching of the Bible without sectarian comment. Not only must humankind be educated, it must be educated for moral decision and lifestyle.³⁴ Campbell believed that the Scripture should be taught to all age levels from elementary schools through college. He felt strongly that moral education should be limited to a study of the scriptures.

I have much feeling on this subject, because I have experienced the bitterness of the popular catechetical course. I was compelled to memorize almost the whole New Testament, and many passages in the Old; but along with it I had to memorize and digest the Assembly’s Catechism, together with Brown’s explanation of it. This required as much of my time as to acquire the rudiments of the Latin and Greek tongues. The good effects of memorizing the New Testament were neutralized by the trash which the Westminster Divines had obliged me to interlard with it. This gave a coloring and a taste to all that I learned from the Scriptures. It was the same as if the Oracles of God had been translated into the Catechism—as if the spiritual meaning of the living word was decocted into it. I need not tell again the doleful tale. I was alienated from the life of God by the very means which men had contrived to reconcile me to it. Much observation and intercourse with those indoctrinated in the same way, have convinced me that this course has been to many others what woful (sic!) experience proved it to me.³⁵

Campbell went on to attack the teachings of “hypercalvinism”, especially the doctrine of total depravity. This doctrine, he charged, depicted God as angry, causing children to grow up hating God. Rather they should be instructed in the love of God. In another essay Campbell continued the ar-

gument. "Teach an infant that God is cruel, and it will hate him. Teach an infant that God is kind and benevolent, and it will love him."³⁶ Campbell then developed the point at length that the scriptures disclose a loving God and that is what children should be taught. Alexander Campbell hoped, but unrealistically as the history of the public schools proved, that Scripture alone, apart from any of the isms could be taught in those schools.

As an educator Campbell is best remembered for his role in the founding of Bethany College on his farm in West Virginia. As to purpose, the charter stated, "... a Seminary of learning for the instruction of youth in the various branches of science and literature, the useful arts, agriculture, and the learned and foreign languages." As to goals, Campbell set forth his vision in a prospectus in the 1839 *Millennial Harbinger*.

In one word, the objects of this (may I call it?) liberal and comprehensive institution will be to model *families, schools, colleges, and churches* according to the divine pattern shown to us in the oracles of reason, of sound philosophy, and of divine truth; and to raise up a host of accomplished fathers, teachers of schools, teachers of colleges, teachers of churches, preachers of the gospel, and good and useful citizens, or whatever the church or the state may afterwards choose to make of them.³⁷

It is clear from this comment that Bethany was to be a men's college, especially focused in training teachers and preachers, reflecting Campbell's own dual career and his conviction that the work of the one complemented the other. Though Campbell was committed to the education of women he likely was uneasy about training men and women together, despite the fact that Oberlin was founded as a co-educational and integrated school in 1836. Since Bethany was in a slave state, the school did not admit blacks. After 1857, because of sectional agitations, Bethany looked more to the south for its support.³⁸ The admissions procedure sought to assure that those admitted were upright, moral persons, but church membership was not a requirement. On the percentage of students who were Christians, Alexander Campbell stated in 1842, "... about one-third are professors of religion."³⁹

The first women students were admitted to Bethany without fanfare in 1877, after Campbell's death. It came about as the result of certain buildings burning at the Pleasant Hill Seminary in West Middletown, Pennsylvania. This academy was long under the direction of Jane Campbell McKeever, Alexander Campbell's sister, and at the time of the fire, her son Campbell McKeever. The females who so desired were added to the student body at Bethany. Women, however, did not make up a significant percentage of Bethany students for many years to come.⁴⁰ The first female faculty member was Mrs. J. S. Lowe who taught from 1880–83.⁴¹ Despite the failure to admit women to Bethany, Campbell was committed to female education. In an 1837 address to the Female Seminary at Steubenville, Ohio, Campbell remarked:

For my part, I may be thought an enthusiast, or to go to an extreme on the other side; but, be this as it may, I will hazard the declaration, that if the question rested on my vote, *whether, as a general rule, the female sex, or the male sex, ought to be better educated*, as a philanthropist I would say, The ladies should have it. And if any one asks me, Why? I would answer, Because posterity always depends for its mental and moral character incomparably more upon the mothers than upon the fathers of the existing generation.⁴²

Alexander Campbell delayed the founding of Bethany because of the success of Bacon College, first established in Georgetown, Kentucky, with Walter Scott as the president.⁴³ In his remarks on Bacon College in the 1837 *Millennial Harbinger*, Campbell stated his reluctance to recommend Bacon until he had ascertained whether it met his criteria as to what a college should be. After talking with the administration and faculty he concluded that he could give his support. These comments are important because they make clear Campbell's vision for a college.

I give my vote for learning and science and for high attainments in all branches of useful knowledge, but I would not give *morality* for them all; and therefore I have resolved never to speak in favor of any literary institution, from a common school to a University, however superior their literary eminence, that does not first of all, and above all, exercise a sovereign and supreme guardianship over the morals of its students and wards, and en-

deavor to make *good* rather than *great* men. Colleges without this are no blessing to any country.⁴⁴

I will follow the order set out by Campbell in this statement. I will discuss first his views on the total curriculum, next the guardianship over the morals of the youth, and finally Campbell's convictions on moral education.⁴⁵

"The Course of Instruction and Textbooks" which Campbell published in the *Millennial Harbinger* of 1855 shows us his philosophy of education as fleshed out curricularly.⁴⁶ The offerings were divided into schools after the manner of contemporary Scottish and European Universities. Seven schools are listed including the Preparatory School.

Discussing the schools briefly, the *first* listed is the School of Sacred History and Moral Philosophy. Subjects included are: evidences, sacred history, Biblical literature, ecclesiastical history, and moral philosophy. Several textbooks are mentioned, chiefly the Bible, but also Paley, Butler, Mosheim and Neander. The *second* school is the School of Ancient Languages, that is, Latin and Greek. Various Latin and Greek authors are mentioned. These were much the same as required at Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Cornell, and the University of Michigan.⁴⁷ The *third* school is that of Mathematics and Astronomy which is to develop the intellectual powers and habits of the students, as well as practical use in surveying and road building. The *fourth* school is that of Natural, Intellectual, and Political Philosophy. This includes such sciences as mechanics, acoustics, electricity, optics, while political philosophy is to stress the American constitution and law, but also the history and philosophy of political institutions. The *fifth* is that of Chemistry and Belles Lettres. Chemistry is to cover heat, light Galvanism, chemical philosophy, organic, mineralogy, botany, physiology, zoology, geology, agricultural chemistry with particular emphasis upon application to engineering and agriculture. Also to be covered in this school are natural theology, English language and literature, rhetoric, elements of criticism and English classics. The *Preparatory School* is for those who must still qualify to enter college. The *last* school is that of Hebrew and Modern Languages. These were not required for graduation, but available for those interested. The modern languages mentioned are German and French.

What is behind Bethany's curriculum and how does it differ from the typical curriculum of American colleges and uni-

versities of the time? Alexander Campbell made it clear in the opening *Millennial Harbinger* in 1830 that he was displeased with American education. We can be sure then that some obvious differences would obtain in a college he founded.

Obviously the Bethany curriculum did not depart entirely from the classical mold of Harvard, Yale and Princeton. Campbell was interested in training teachers and preachers and they needed the classical base. But he was also concerned that education provide useful, agricultural and working class information. In 1841 such schools as Harvard, Yale, Princeton and the University of Michigan taught, in addition to the classics, history, modern languages, physics and chemistry, natural history, and anatomy, but not the delineated applied sciences as at Bethany. It was not until after Charles W. Eliot came to the presidency of Harvard in 1869, and who introduced the elective system in 1872, that the sciences and other studies came to be emphasized above the classics.⁴⁸

In regard to curriculum Campbell was influenced by Scottish models and educational philosophy more than the older American colleges. Scottish universities took the lead in the English speaking world of developing the sciences in the eighteenth century and in applying the investigations of the professors to Scottish agriculture and industry.⁴⁹ In Campbell's time medical studies at Scottish universities were admired throughout the world. Students flocked to Scotland from both Europe and America. In the early part of the nineteenth century many of the teachers of science in American colleges were trained by medical faculties in Scotland.⁵⁰

Campbell believed strongly in the college as the guardian of student morals. While such was characteristic of American colleges at that time, Campbell took this responsibility more seriously than most. A set of by-laws for the students was drawn up on the eve of the first session. These by-laws possessed the same legal force as the corporation by-laws. All students were required to sign these by-laws in the matriculation book each fall.⁵¹ The rules negated the right to possess weapons, horses or servants. They also prohibited the use of musical instruments after 10:00 P. M., dissipation, profanity, gambling, and the neglecting of studies. Campbell sought to guarantee the moral quality of the student body by requiring character references for admission, but he soon discovered that standards varied in the minds of those doing the recommending. Campbell was committed to improving the moral standards of his students so that he and the faculty watched

their every move with the eyes of a hawk, resulting in several expulsions each year, far more than Campbell anticipated or hoped for.

Alexander Campbell came out of a tradition in which moral education lay at the center of the educational enterprise. Other colleges in America, especially Princeton, were likewise influenced by the ideas of Scottish professors such as Dugald Stewart, Thomas Brown, Sir William Hamilton, and James Beattie.⁵² Campbell made this preference for moral education clear in his address at the opening of the College.

With us the chief object of education is not the acquisition of knowledge. It consists not in mere literature and science. Many of those greatly learned and scientific men of the most distinguished schools were fit neither for the present world, nor for that which is to come. Their great learning disqualified them for heaven or earth.

With us education has primary regard to the formation of habits, more than to the acquisition of knowledge; more in teaching a person the use of himself than in teaching him to use the labors of others. We define education to be the *development and improvement of the physical, intellectual and moral powers of man, with a reference to his whole destiny in the Universe of God.*⁵³

What did Campbell mean by moral education? He, as well as his contemporaries had a much broader connotation for the word moral than do we. In fact, what they meant by "moral" was something equivalent to what we mean by religious, and this was especially the case with Campbell. In his address titled, "Is Moral Philosophy an Inductive Science?", delivered before the Charlottesville Lyceum in 1840, Campbell argued that moral education treats five points: "*the origin, the nature, the relations, the obligations and the destiny of man.*"⁵⁴

A second question now arises. What are the resources to be employed in moral education? Campbell was well aware that the standard approaches were either to teach the classics of Greece and Rome, or to treat the matter as an inductive science drawing upon human experience. But Campbell had little confidence in either. In his view, the primary source material for moral education was the Bible, almost the Bible alone.⁵⁵

In regard to the classics, Campbell was convinced that they tended more to destroy the morals than build them up.

In his first major essay on Education in the *Millennial Harbinger*, Campbell decried the effect of the classics on morals. "A few years are devoted to the dead languages and mythology of Pagan nations, frequently to the great moral detriment of the student, and seldom much to his literary and intellectual advantage in the acquisition of real knowledge."⁵⁶ Campbell continued in this essay to denounce the preference for the classics charging that "all our literary institutions have been as enslaved to the idolatry of Grecian and Roman models as were the Catholic laity to the See of Rome in the long dark night of papistical supremacy." He decried the results.

Yet the devotees of what is called the classic literature and science of Greece and Rome, when put to torture, can name no great political, moral, or religious boon, no permanent or essential service to the cause of social order or good government, which the lawgivers and statesmen, the orators, philosophers, and priests of antiquity conferred upon the communities which gave them birth. So deeply convinced are the most learned amongst us of the entire failure of these great masters of Grecian and Roman literature to be authoritative guides to us in politics, philosophy, and morals, that they regard them rather in the light of "beacons to warn us, than as guides to instruct us." Beyond "the mere accomplishments of education" it is confessed we can derive nothing from them which confers any practical blessings on mankind.⁵⁷

Campbell ended the essay by praising those intellectual leaders from the 1500s on, who in his opinion were not "inferior to antiquity in power and originality, in variety and felicity of talent." These included Newton, Leibnitz, Locke, Butler, Bacon, Chatham, Burke, Milton, Shakespeare, Linnaeus, Buffon, Lavoisier, as well as several great inventors.

In regard to the claim that moral philosophy is an inductive science, extrapolating morals from the experience of humanity, Campbell gave a decisive "no!" In the lecture, "Is Moral Philosophy an Inductive Science?" Campbell discussed the greats of Greece and Rome—Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero—as well as the contemporary Scottish moral philosophers, especially Dugald Stewart and Thomas Brown. Campbell was convinced that if ancient man could not answer the questions raised by moral philosophy then neither could his great philosophical contemporaries. After discussing the manner through which man knows, Campbell concluded:

If our mode of examining its pretensions be fair and logical, as we humbly conceive it is, does it not appear, by a liberal induction of witnesses from the best Pagan schools, that it has never taught, with the clearness and fullness of persuasion, nor with the authority of law or demonstration, the true doctrine of man's origin, nature, relations, obligations and destiny? And from a careful consideration of all our powers of acquiring knowledge, is it not equally evident that he is not furnished with the power of ascertaining any one of these essential points, without the aid of a light above that of reason and nature?⁵⁸

Moral philosophy is therefore not a science which man discovers by a search of history and nature. It only comes from reading the Bible, the very word of God.⁵⁹

In this regard Campbell's views differed from most of his contemporaries in both Scotland and America who in fact heralded moral philosophy as an inductive science, by some dependent upon natural theology and ethics.⁶⁰ It was for this reason then that Campbell turned his back on teaching theology at Bethany. Rather the Bible was to be the true ground and source of morality. Campbell wanted nothing of theology at Bethany. The charter of Bethany College contained the following final item: "14. *And be it further enacted*, That nothing herein contained shall be so construed as any time to authorize the establishment of a Theological Professorship in the said College."⁶¹ In an article the year before titled, "A New Institution" setting the stage for announcing the creation of Bethany College, Campbell made clear the manner in which religion would be taught at the College.

We want no scholastic or traditional theology. We desire, however, a much more intimate, critical, and thorough knowledge of the Bible, the whole Bible as the Book of God—the Book of Life and of human destiny, than is usually, or indeed can be, obtained in what are called Theological Schools. As we make the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible our creed, our standard of religion and of all moral science, we have no hesitation in saying that this institution from the nursery class upward to the church classes, shall make that volume a constant study. All science, all literature, all nature, all art, all attainments shall be made tributary to the Bible and man's ultimate temporal and eternal destiny.⁶²

Campbell was convinced that the uniqueness of Bethany College lay in the fact that there alone the Bible was taught as an academic course. In a May 1858 address in regard to the placing of a cornerstone, Campbell contended:

Bethany College . . . was the first college in the Union, and the first known to any history accessible to us, that was founded upon the Holy Bible, as an *every-day* lecture and an *every-day study*—as the only safe and authoritative text-book of humanity, theology and christology—of all true science upon the problems of Divinity and humanity—of the world or worlds that preceded this, or that shall succeed it.

From the origin of Bethany College, on the first Monday of November 1841, till this day, a period of over sixteen years, there has been a Bible study and a Bible lecture for every college day in the college year.⁶³

There is truth in what Campbell stated. The Bible was taught in European universities in the theological curriculum and in American seminaries prior to this time, it was not offered as an undergraduate course. The American pattern, with the founding of Harvard in 1636, was for the president to lecture on the Bible at early morning chapel, much in the manner of Campbell teaching his Bible class, but these were devotionals and the students were not examined on the scriptures as they were for their other courses as at Bethany.⁶⁴

The early chapel patterns may be seen in the vivid remarks on Campbell's teaching. In describing the college a year after its commencement and especially his own teaching Campbell commented:

We have already formed more than twenty classes. Of these the first meets at half past 6 in the morning. To form and establish that most healthful and useful habit of rising early, I chose that early hour for my lectures on sacred history, for Bible readings, and worship. My residence being just three-fourths of a mile from the College, gave me, for November and December, a very invigorating exercise of riding or walking that distance every morning before day-light.⁶⁵

For Campbell the Scriptures were a viable academic discipline since they could be taught as history. In 1860 he set forth a description:

Lectures on the Bible are lectures on antiquities of the world; on creation itself; on language; on man as he was, on man as he is, on man as he will hereafter be; on the foundation of states and fortunes of empires. They are lectures upon sacred geography, chronology, and the ancient policies, manners and customs of primordial society. They must be connected with Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, Roman history, manners customs and usages.⁶⁶

In regard to specific books studied he mentioned only “the five books of Moses, with other portions of Jewish history, and the five historical books of the New Testament.”⁶⁷ This approach is clearly compatible with Campbell’s epistemological and theological propensity to conceptualize Christianity as “primary facts.” M. Eugene Boring may be correct that Hebrews, then Romans are the center of Campbell’s theology, but apparently for Campbell these are to be utilized in church discourse, not in teaching the Scriptures as an academic discipline.⁶⁸

Several features of Campbell’s views on education are distinctive when assessed from the prospective of his times. He advocated universal public school education, teacher’s colleges to provide the teachers. Some fifty years after his death the United States exhibited such a system. He favored an education which emphasized the natural, the scientific, the useful and the contemporary. Such an educational philosophy in its multiple versions now characterizes all education in America. The pre-eminence of the classics is long past, more so than Campbell would have desired. He also insisted that moral education be the fundamental goal of all education, and that textbooks on moral philosophy be replaced with the Bible. He argued that as “Sacred History” the Bible should be taught in all schools as an academic subject. He believed, with apparent justification, that he was the first to so teach it in college. Scripture is now taught, with varying agendas, especially in private religious colleges, and even in state universities. It is not taught in schools prior to college, except infrequently as literature, which would be much to Campbell’s sorrow, for he argued that the Scriptures should be taught on all levels. Few schools or colleges, however, have made the Bible the center of the curriculum in the manner envisioned by Campbell.

What therefore remains to be said is that Campbell as an educator, to the best of his ability and understanding, as-

signed first priority in all levels of education to the way of life set forth by the God of the Scriptures.

Footnotes

1. Alexander Campbell, "Baccalaureate Address to the Graduates of Bethany College", *Popular Lectures and Addresses* (Nashville: Harbinger Book Club, n.d.) p. 507.
2. "Baccalaureate Address", pp. 512f.
3. Lester G. McAllister, *Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1954) pp. 22, 31, 33, 44, 181, 187. Also Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1956) pp. 130, 178, 468, 491.
4. Alexander Campbell, "Address on Education" [Cincinnati, 1856] *Popular Addresses*, p. 245.
5. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1830, p. 1. The annual indexes of *The Christian Baptist*, which Campbell published in seven volumes from 1823, register no entries on education.
6. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1838, p. 204.
7. Beginning in 1789 district committees were given taxing authority, but it was not until 1827 that compulsory taxation followed. Ten years later, 1837, following a bitter struggle a state board of education was established. Christopher J. Lucas, *Our Western Educational Heritage* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company) 1972, p. 498.
8. Lucas, p. 501. Free education was finally settled legally in Pennsylvania (1834), Rhode Island (1848), Indiana (1852), Illinois (1855), Vermont (1864), New York, (1867), Connecticut (1868), and New Jersey (1871). The earliest compulsory attendance law in the United States was enacted in 1852. Between 1852 and 1900 thirty-four states enacted compulsory school attendance laws, but some states did not come to such requirements until as late as 1918.
9. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1858, p. 525. Cf. Carl F. Kaestle, *The Evolution of an Urban School System, New York City, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).
10. Raymond B. Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion in the Massachusetts Public Schools*, (New Haven: The Yale University Press, 1929). Edward J. Power, *Main Currents in the History of Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970) p. 570.

11. Rush Welter, *American Writings on Popular Education The Nineteenth Century*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971) pp. 51–61, from *Transactions of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers* (Cincinnati, 1837), pp. 253–256.
12. B. A. and Mary L. Hinsdale, “The Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers,” Chapter XIII in *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1898–99* Volume 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900) pp. 707–745.
13. H. C. Minnich, *William Holmes McGuffey and the Peerless Pioneer McGuffey Readers*, (Oxford, Ohio: Miami University, 1928).
14. *Transactions of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers*, ed., D. L. Talbott (Cincinnati: 1837) p. 484.
15. Alexander Campbell, “On Common Schools”, *Popular Lectures*, pp. 264f. See also the comments of Harold L. Lunger, *The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1954) in his chapter on education, pp. 167–178.
16. “On Common Schools”, pp. 267f.
17. Edward J. Power, *Main Currents in the History of Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970) p. 494, 515. Campbell read educational journals as is obvious in his recommendation to readers that they subscribe to the *Western Journal of Education and Science*, edited by James R. Allbach of Cincinnati. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1838, p. 92.
18. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1842, p. 158.
19. Will S. Monroe, *History of the Pestalozzian Movement in the United States* (Syracuse: G. W. Bardeen, 1907) pp. 39–60.
20. Monroe, pp. 61–75. Joseph Neef’s book was *Sketch of a plan and method of Education* (Philadelphia: Printed for the author, 1808).
21. Monroe, pp. 109–126.
22. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1840, p. 157. In *Millennial Harbinger*, 1837, p. 199, a McClure is cited in regard to views on Girard College who may be William Maclure.
23. *The Western Academician and Journal of Education and Science*, John W. Picket, ed. (Cincinnati: James R. Albach, 1837, 1838).
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 45–52; 272–276.
25. John W. Picket, “Improvement of the faculty of Attention Condensed from Jardine,” pp. 184–191, and “The existing systems of Education in the higher places of learning, and the means of Improving them: Condensed from Jardine.” pp. 234–238.

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26. George Jardine, *Outlines of philosophical education, Illustrated by the method of teaching the logic, or first class of philosophy in the University of Glasgow* (Glasgow: A. & J. Duncan, 1816).
27. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1830, p. 252. See also Perry E. Gresham, "Alexander Campbell—Schoolmaster," in *The Sage of Bethany* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1960) pp. 17–20.
28. Monroe, pp. 77–96.
29. Alexander Campbell, "On Common Schools", in *Popular Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 247–271. See Henry Eli Speck, "The Education Contribution of a Religious Reformer—Alexander Campbell," (Unpublished Dissertation, University of Texas), 1951.
30. "On Common Schools", p. 253.
31. "On Common Schools", p. 254.
32. "On Common Schools", p. 255.
33. "On Common Schools", p. 259.
34. See also, Perry Ephler Gresham, *Campbell and the Colleges* (Nashville: The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1973), pp. 19–38.
35. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1830, pp. 252–53.
36. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1830, p. 320.
37. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1840, p. 449.
38. Lunger, *The Political Ethics*, p. 231.
39. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1842, p. 35.
40. W. K. Wollery, *Bethany Years, The Story of Old Bethany From Her Founding Years Through a Century of Trail and Triumph*, (Huntington: Standard Printing & Publishing Co., 1941), pp. 112f.
41. Woolery, *Bethany Years*, p. 280.
42. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1837, p. 257.
43. On Bacon College see: Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ, A History* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1948) p. 224. Also Dwight E. Stevenson, "The Bacon College Story, 1836–1865," *College of the Bible Quarterly*, 19 (1942); Robinette and Gerald C. Tiffin, "Descriptive Characteristics of Disciples-Related Colleges," *Discipliana*, 40 (1980):36; and William E. Tucker, "Dispersing the Fog: Disciples and Their Colleges," *Discipliana*, 38 (1978): 36.
44. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1837, p. 571.
45. For studies on Campbell and education see: Gustave Adolph Ferre, "A Concept of Higher Education and its Relation to the Christian Faith as Evidenced in the Writings of Alexander Campbell," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Vanderbilt Uni-

- versity, 1966, and Henry K. Shaw, "Alexander Campbell, Educator," (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Akron University), 1942.
46. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1855, pp. 225–231.
 47. I checked college catalogues for Harvard 1841, 1851; Yale 1841, 1851, 1870; Princeton 1862–63, 68–69, 71–72; Columbia 1841; Cornell 1841; and University of Michigan 1843, 1851, 1856, in Widener Library, Harvard University.
 48. Power, *Main Currents*, p. 607. See also, Robert V. Bruce, *The Launching of Modern American Science* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987).
 49. Sloan, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 29ff.
 50. Anand C. Chitnis, *The Scottish Enlightenment A Social History* (London: Croom Helm, 1976) pp. 124–194.
 51. Woolery, *Bethany Years*, pp. 69f.
 52. Elizabeth Flower and Murray G. Murphey, *A History of Philosophy in America* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1977) Volume I, pp. 203–318. Campbell expressed his high regard for Stewart and Brown in his lecture titled, "Introductory Lecture", in *Introductory Addresses Delivered At the Organization of Bethany College November 2d, 1841* (Bethany: A. Campbell, 1841) p. 81.
 53. Alexander Campbell, *Introductory Addresses*, p. 82.
 54. In *Popular Lectures*, p. 99.
 55. For a study of Campbell's views on moral education see: John Lowell Morrison, "Alexander Campbell and Moral Education" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University), 1966.
 56. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1832, p. 409.
 57. *Millennial Harbinger*, pp. 409f.
 58. *Popular Lectures*, p. 121.
 59. For Campbell on natural religion, see: West, Robert Frederick, *Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948).
 60. D. H. Meyer, *The Instructed Conscience The Shaping of the American National Ethic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972) has done an excellent job of documenting these presuppositions.
 61. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1840, p. 179.
 62. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1839, p. 448.
 63. "Address. The Corner-stone of Bethany College" delivered May 31, 1858, in *Popular Lectures*, pp. 485f.
 64. In checking the catalogues of the colleges listed above no course in Scripture is listed in the curricula of any of these colleges. On the early morning chapels at Harvard see Samuel

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Eliot Morrison, *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936).

65. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1842, p. 34.
66. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1860, p. 512.
67. *Millennial Harbinger*, 1860, pp. 510f.
68. Alexander Campbell, "The Primary Facts of Christianity", *Millennial Harbinger*, 1861, pp. 561–564. M. Eugene Boring, "The Formation of a Tradition: Alexander Campbell and the New Testament," *The Disciples Theological Journal*, 1987, pp. 6f. See his bibliography for twentieth century discussion of this view.

Lecture 6

Alexander Campbell as an Advocate of Christian Union

William J. Richardson, Professor of Church History at Emmanuel School of Religion.

I am a Baptist, a Presbyterian, an Episcopalian, a Congregationalist, a Methodist, a Catholic, in the proper unappropriated sense of these words. But not one of them, nor all of them, express my views, my profession, or my practice as a disciple of Christ.¹

Alexander Campbell penned these words in 1839, in an article explaining his preference for “Disciples” or “Christians” to identify the movement in which he played a leading role. However, they reflect his perspective that the quest for Christian union must address itself to all such parties as he named here. They also express his conviction that not only in name but in the other elements of Christian profession and practice only what was common to all could be the marks of a genuine union of the followers of Christ.

That same year, reflecting on nearly two decades of editorial endeavor, Campbell claimed that Christian union had always been for him a “darling theme”.² Many questions have been raised about this assertion. Did Campbell in fact always have this concern, or was there a shift in his aims in the 1830s and beyond?³ Was his vision of unity flawed by his insistence upon restoration of the apostolic order?⁴ Were his aims so incompatible as to justify the assertion, direct or implied, that there were two Campbells?⁵ Do these allegations arise from ambiguity in his thinking, from lack of clarity in his statement of his aims, or should the possibility be consid-

ered that while he retained the same basic commitment, a refinement of his understanding of the meaning and implications of that commitment resulted in differences in his description of the project? Our task then is twofold: to examine his activities in the interest of Christian union and to analyze his understanding of the nature of union and the means of its realization.

The most crucial questions arise from the examination of the *Christian Baptist*. His acerbity in the early issues makes it difficult to see his concern for unity and mission. Nevertheless, expressions of this concern do appear. In Volume II he advocated a catholic basis for unity, asserting that nothing post-apostolic "should be made an article of faith, a rule of practice, or a term of communion among Christians."⁶ Very early he displayed a readiness to utilize catholic scholarship in scripture translation.⁷ In 1825 he was invoking the "one Lord, the one faith, the one hope, the one baptism" of Ephesians 4:4–6 as all that "can legitimately be required" as "essential to Christian union." Also significant—in Volume I of the *Christian Baptist* he set forth what throughout his career he would advocate as the foundation of union: "the belief of one fact [Jesus is the Christ]," "submission to one institution [baptism] expressive of it" and "deportment" in accordance with "the morality and virtue taught by the great prophet."⁸

These latitudinarian proposals evoked a spirited response from a reader identified as an "Independent Baptist," who challenged Campbell's consistency in claiming to be in "full communion" with the Baptists. How, he asked, could Campbell be in full communion with the Regular Baptists when he disagreed with them in so many particulars? Nor could "Independent Baptist" see the consistency of Campbell's stance as a reformer and his earlier charitable remarks about Pedo-Baptists. Campbell reiterated that for him full communion meant confessing "the one Lord, the one faith, the one hope, and the one baptism," provided that believers "piously and morally conform to their profession." Moreover, he wrote, if unity consists in agreement on everything else it would be impossible to achieve. Campbell rejected separatism—the principle that one can "neither pray nor sing praises with anyone not as perfect" as himself—for in such a case "there could never be a congregation or church on earth." History affords no instance, he added, of persons "reforming or restoring, enlightening, or comforting the society from which

they had separated.”⁹ Finally, without retreating from the church membership implications of his understanding of Biblical baptism he strongly urged the distinction between misunderstanding a command and conscious disobedience of it.

In the last volume of the *Christian Baptist* Campbell reprinted a 1786 address by James Madison, then President of William and Mary College. In it the future Bishop of Virginia made proposals which to Campbell resembled his own. Madison “urged the necessity of union,” called attention to the “injurious tendency of creeds,” and appealed to Christians to “revert to the Gospel,” that is, “to embrace the scriptures alone, as the rule of worship, faith, and conduct,” and therefore as the way to union.¹⁰ Printing of such overtures for union from a source outside his own tradition was to become a typical editorial policy in the next three decades.

A union activity that directly touched his own movement was the meeting of Barton W. Stone, John Smith, John Rogers, and John T. Johnson at Georgetown and Lexington in early 1832, seeking to unite congregations of “Christians” and Reformers. Campbell had reservations about this project,¹¹ fearing that any resultant union would be just another sect and that it would be open to being branded Unitarian. Also, he viewed the substance of Stone’s reforms as consisting mainly in his anti-creedalism and not in positive commitment to the “ancient order of things.” While he bid godspeed to continuing efforts to unite congregations of the two movements he was not as sanguine in expectations as later events proved he should have been.

The mid 1830s onward were marked by a number of episodes in which Campbell either responded to initiatives by others, made overtures of his own for the union of believers, or otherwise expressed concern for unity. In 1837 Campbell took notice of the failure of the Plan of Union existing since 1801 between the Congregational and Presbyterian churches and also of the split between Old School and New School Presbyterians. He expressed sadness that these parties, despite their commitment to the same confessional standard, should divide for “reasons of expediency.”¹²

In 1838 Samuel S. Schmucker issued his *Fraternal Appeal to the American Churches*. While Campbell, like Schmucker, favored a “catholic unity on apostolic principles” there is no evidence that he took notice of the Schmucker plan. He chose rather to respond to a Christian union convention held in Syracuse, N.Y., August, 1838 and at Cazenovia,

N.Y., January, 1839, which set forth five resolutions as the basis of union of believers. These meetings were reported in the *Union Herald* of Oswego, N.Y. The *Millennial Harbinger* devoted over twenty pages to the proceedings of these two meetings.¹³ Thomas Campbell wrote two reviews of the convention, noting that its analyses of the nature of division and of the need for unity and its proposal for union were similar to those of his own *Declaration and Address*. The younger Campbell followed with three articles entitled "Plan of Union." He proposed a congress, to include all religious bodies, at which "whatever in faith, in piety, and morality is catholic, as universally admitted by all parties, shall be adopted as the basis of union."¹⁴ He cited the Apostles Creed as an example of what he meant by catholic, because it is a recital of the facts of the Gospel. "Where," he asked, "is the Christian sect that does not admit these fourteen articles."¹⁵ The probable reason for Campbell's interest in the Christian union convention was that its proposals were more in keeping with the *Declaration and Address*. The Schmucker consensus, on the other hand, embodied much of the confessional statements of the major denominations and was in fact a proposal for a federative union, neither an attractive option to Campbell.

His commitment to a Christology predicated on the facts asserted in the Gospel led to Campbell's vehement rejection of the Pennsylvania Conference's 1845 proposal to unite Disciples, Winebrennarians, and Unitarians. In Campbell's view, the definition of a Christian proposed by the Pennsylvania Conference, while it emphasized obedience to Jesus' teaching, seemed content to see him only as a "great and good man" and did not address the question of His "*person, mission, and character*." This was an unfortunate development, since it is not clear that J. J. Harvey, framer of the proposal, had intended the meaning conveyed in its wording.¹⁶

In 1841, Campbell participated in a convention held in Lexington, KY, in an effort to reunite Kentucky Disciples and Baptists. Campbell gave one of the major addresses of the convention, putting forward this proposition:

That the union of Christians is to be scripturally effected by requiring a practical acknowledgement of such articles of belief and such articles of piety and morality as are admitted by all denominations.

The third day of the convention was given over to discussion of this and other addresses. While some Baptists partici-

pated, at least one of their more prominent ministers, William F. Broaddus, declined the invitation to speak.¹⁷

One of Campbell's most significant manifestations of concern for unity was his response to the constituting convention of the Evangelical Alliance in 1846. The call for such an organization stemmed from an address by Merle D'Aubigne in St. Gall, Switzerland, in 1845. That same year a preliminary meeting at Liverpool set forth a ninefold statement of doctrine to define the spiritual union of Evangelicals. The call for the convention was printed in the *Millennial Harbinger* for May, 1846. Although Campbell could not attend, he nevertheless expressed his interest and sympathies toward the convention.

Campbell's initial reaction to the Evangelical Alliance was negative. Despite high regard for D'Aubigne, he believed the latter's view of unity fell short of "apostolic Christianity."¹⁸ Moreover, unity must be based on more than political opposition to Rome. He objected to the doctrinal basis of the Alliance. He saw the Alliance as a "union of sects . . . founded on certain tenets" with the object of "triumph over popery" and the "aggrandizement of Protestantism." Contrary to Campbell's earlier understanding, however, the Alliance was an organization of individuals and not of denominations.

The *Millennial Harbinger* published the proceedings of the thirteen-day convention, including its constitution.¹⁹ His reflections on these proceedings led Campbell to adopt a congratulatory tone in the next few months, praising the maturity of the scheme and the "piety and decorum" of the convention.²⁰ He recognized the Alliance as an organization of individuals²¹ not unlike his father's Christian Association of Washington, Pa. He also recognized some of the principles of the *Declaration and Address* in its views of Christianity. Still, however, he was critical. The Alliance conception lacked the proper basis for the church, which, said Campbell, is built on Christ, not upon creeds. He took up each of the nine articles of faith, seeking to make his case for or against each on the basis of its approximation to New Testament nomenclature. Despite his misgivings he wished the Alliance god-speed, expressed gratitude for its efforts, and promised to cooperate "as far as they please to permit me."²²

In 1853 Campbell printed a proposal by the *Presbyterian Banner* for convening a "General Council of the American churches" to resist Roman Catholic imperialism and to devise means for the "conversion of Romanists." Campbell endorsed

the proposal but suggested an additional item to the agenda: all matters taken up should proceed on "broad catholic and evangelical principles."²³

In 1857, the House of Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church issued a resolution calling for establishment of a Commission on Church Unity, to consist of five bishops, to serve as an "organ of communication or conference with other Christian bodies in the interest of union." This resolution was published in the *New York Observer*,²⁴ accompanied by four articles by "a presbyter of the Episcopal Church." The writer asserted the necessity of unity for mission, then analyzed the obstacles to union. Among these are what we call non-theological factors, "characteristic peculiarities, not of doctrine, but of manner, habits, taste, style of thinking and expression—a certain *ethos* belonging to each denomination."²⁵ He went on to propose a basis for Christian union which anticipated in many respects the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (1870). He then set forth the principle that each Christian body defer to others in matters "not held as a matter of conscience towards God."²⁶ Hence, in regard to the two most critical issues in Twentieth Century Faith and Order discussions he proposed that Episcopalians could adopt immersion without violating their conscience and that non-episcopally ordained ministers accept ordination by a bishop; the latter, he wrote, could "receive it hypothetically" so as not to deny any validity in their earlier ordination.

The attitude and approach of this writer resemble that of William Augustus Muhlenberg, leader of an "Evangelical Catholic" movement in the Episcopal Church. In 1853 Muhlenberg had addressed to the House of Bishops a "memorial" containing proposals similar to those stated in these articles.²⁷

The *Millennial Harbinger* gave nearly twenty pages to the reprinting of these articles. Campbell's only other response was a prefatory reference to the Protestant Episcopal Church as "one of the most respectable sections of Protestant Christendom."²⁸

Campbell's readiness to share this overture with his readers may seem puzzling. There is no evidence to suggest that he had changed his views on episcopacy set forth earlier. In 1835, while a guest of James H. Otey, Bishop of Tennessee, he had received a copy of Henry U. Onderdonk's *Episcopacy Tested by Scripture* (1833). Campbell had addressed eight open letters to the bishop in refutation of Onderdonk.²⁹ In

1842, when Campbell was doing a series on church organization, he was challenged by an Episcopalian, identified by the initials "AC—N," to consider the threefold order of ministry as a means of resolving problems of organization. There followed a series of exchanges extending into the next year. The *Millennial Harbinger* published ten reviews in which AC—N set forth the case for episcopacy; Campbell appended his rejoinder to each. Both writers were forthright in stating their positions and in criticizing the other, yet were conciliatory in tone. These exchanges between Campbell and Episcopalian representatives make clear that both recognized the issues of ministry and sacraments as most crucial in unity discussions. Campbell's responses show clearly what would have been his attitude toward the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral.³⁰

Despite these disagreements, of all denominations except the Baptists Campbell probably had highest regard for Episcopalians. The reason for this, I believe, is that like the Episcopalians, he took a basically catholic approach toward the church and its unity. This similarity meant that he felt the necessity of coming to grips with Episcopalian views at variance with his own even while finding satisfaction in their high view of the church.

It is fair to say that throughout his whole editorial career Campbell retained an undiminished interest in the union of Christians. There were differences between the Campbell of early years and the later Campbell. He had a heightened sense of urgency about Christian union in the later period, probably from the realization that the goal was more elusive than he had earlier thought. He also changed his rhetoric, adapting it to his conception of the proper strategy to use in confronting the Christian community with the ideal of preserving the integrity of the church for the sake of unity and mission. Looking back on *Christian Baptist* days he acknowledged that his early essays were the "most severe, sarcastic, and ironical he ever wrote." He defended them on the grounds that the Christian community had become like a "plethoric paralytic" needing "desperate remedies." Since then he had "changed his course . . . adjusting his *modus medendi* to the indications of the disease."³¹ He continued, however, to encourage thinking, talking, and writing on the subject of union—as the means of understanding the evils, causes, and cure of division and of cultivating the "Christian and catholic spirit that must precede the union of Christians."³²

He also admitted to changes of views arising from new understanding of Scripture, although of no change in his commitment to its grammatico-historical interpretation. Terms hitherto unused, such as *catholic* and *kerygma*, appeared in his nomenclature. What may seem unusual are his frequent affirmations of the Apostles Creed, the reason being, I believe, that all its terms could be subsumed under the “seven unities” of Ephesians 4.

Throughout these years Campbell never lost his sensitivity toward the tension that must inevitably arise from attempts to serve the canon of truth and his concern for union. Even in *Christian Baptist* days, while he would not deny in practice the implications his view of New Testament baptism, he refused to regard Pedo-baptists as aliens to the kingdom. This had been a personal problem for him in 1812 when he decided that despite the implication that he would be “un-churching” himself, he must obey what he understood the New Testament to command. As early as the 1820s he struggled over the question of open communion.³³

Campbell’s approach in the 1830s and beyond has been described as “constructive churchmanship.”³⁴ In his overtures to union he seemed to be speaking in behalf of one religious community addressing himself to other religious communities. It is a fact that there was a changed status of the movement in the 1830s. Now, although he had not wanted it so, they were separated from the Baptists,³⁵ and, with the increasing number of mergers of congregations of Christians and Reformers, becoming a more significant religious body. This circumstance alone forced him to speak as a leader of a community *vis a’ vis* other communities. He appears also to have had a greater sense of rapport with other communions, possibly arising from their generally hearty response to his debates with Robert Owen and Bishop Purcell.

While the 1830s onward saw greater variety in manifestations of concern for unity, he retained his commitment to the principle of appealing to the ancient order as the means of its realization. I believe a study of his concept of union supports this observation. What he meant by “ancient order” is of course crucial to forming this conclusion.

It is hardly surprising that Campbell like his father regarded union of Christians as both an identifying mark of the church and as a means of carrying out its mission. (1) Unity is essential to the relation into which Christians are brought by their faith in Christ. Commenting on St. Paul’s

statement: “We were all baptized into one Body” Campbell declared that Christians are “radically, essentially, spiritually one,” whose union ought to be “visible and manifest to all.”³⁶ (2) Likewise, the mission of the church, which is primarily evangelization of the world but which includes the amelioration of the conditions of human existence, requires the unity of the Body of Christ. Such, he wrote, is the import of Christ’s prayer on the eve of the crucifixion (John 17:20,21).³⁷ But the unity of the church could not be considered apart from its identity. The church, crippled by partyism, had “lost much of her converting, salutary and redeeming power in the world.” The solution lay in seeking “to restore the church to her ancient dignity, rather than to attempt to reform the world without her.”³⁸

At the same time that he used the term *spiritual* to describe Christian unity he also insisted that it must be *visible*. Campbell avoided the seeming incongruity between spiritual and visible unity by his understanding of the Christian community as a fellowship and by the meaning he attached to the term *spiritual*.

Unity must be visible because Christianity is by nature a “social religion” whose “ordinances, duties, and privileges partake essentially of the social character.” It is not normal to live in the Christian status outside the community of faith. When asked, “Cannot a person be a Christian and live outside of all Christian fellowship?” Campbell replied, “Yes, if banished to Patmos or bound in a prison.”³⁹ Equally important was the conviction that the Gospel must be exhibited as well as proclaimed. Only in its character as a social religion could Christianity demonstrate its illuminative and reformatory power.⁴⁰

At the same time, notwithstanding his efforts to develop what he called “responsible organization” Campbell rejected the notion of visible unity being a matter of polity. We do not, he said,

undervalue church organization. . . . But to make the mere *polity*, or etiquette of church institutions, rather than Christ himself . . . the test of Christian character, or the *bond* of Christian fellowship, is to lay a new foundation for Christ’s church.⁴¹

He used the Isle of Guernsey as a hypothetical model of how churches in a region should cooperate in matters of common concern, but made clear that he did not regard such an

organization as giving some necessary dimension to the church or its unity. The organization had to do with “circumstantial” and “contingent” matters, “not directly and positively enjoined.” The churches were “one body” in virtue of their relation to Christ. Their organization, while an appropriate means of cooperation in “public duties,” did not create this unity.⁴²

The key to his understanding how unity could be both spiritual and visible lay in his use of *personal* to define what he meant by *spiritual*. He saw the “model” for unity in “the union of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in one understanding, volition, and effort.”⁴³ Hence the term *spiritual* describes personal bonds both vertical and lateral—a union of believers to God and to each other. In whatever image the church is considered, whether Body, Kingdom, or family, its relationships are spiritual because they are personal.

Christianity . . . is essentially a personal affair—subject, object, intercourse, communion, all is personal. . . . It is *union with him* that constitutes eternal union between man and man . . . ⁴⁴

Hence for Campbell whatever brings them into relation to God binds Christians to each other. Since their unity is personal, faith is that bond and not the extent of their understanding of the doctrines of the Christian system. In 1836, writing to William Jones of London and recalling the penchant of Scotch Baptists for insisting upon agreement in statements of doctrine, Campbell asked: Shall we say “that every truth is alike important and must be perceived and received prior to united action?” If so, there could never be union on earth! Rather, he wrote, it is the truth “which reconciles a sinner to God” that in turn reconciles him “to his fellows” and thus serves as the “bond of union in the family of God.” And that truth is that “JESUS THE NAZARENE IS THE MESSIAH THE SON OF GOD.”⁴⁵ Nor was this conception of unity a late development; he took the same position in the first volume of the *Christian Baptist*.⁴⁶ This stance was considered “liberal” in the 1820’s; N. L. Rice made the same charge in debate with Campbell in 1843.⁴⁷

All the means to Christian union, therefore, focus upon Jesus Christ as the object of faith. In one instance Campbell described the process as a “move to the center.”⁴⁸ The Church, said Campbell, is founded not “on theology, polity, or on any speculative dogmata whatever. It is founded upon a

Christology," It is built "upon the acts, the precepts, and the promises of Jesus as the Christ."⁴⁹

For Campbell faith as personal affirmation of Jesus as the Christ was linked to belief of the facts narrated concerning him.⁵⁰ This emphasis upon fact—something said and done—was basic to Campbell's understanding of the nature of revelation. The Bible, he declared, does not argue God's existence; it states facts, "and these are left to speak for God."⁵¹ Likewise, "the Christian facts" are "the basis of the Christian religion." Hence, if the bond of union is personal affirmation of Jesus as the Christ its foundation is the facts that comprise the Gospel.⁵²

Throughout his career Campbell distinguished between Gospel and doctrine. They differ in content. The Gospel has to do with facts (What Jesus said and did);⁵³ teaching has to do with the meaning of those facts for the individual and corporate life of believers.⁵⁴ They differ also in function. Preaching Christ is the means of conversion. On the other hand, he wrote, we do not preach morality; we teach it. In other words, "The preacher gathers pupils—the teacher instructs them."⁵⁵

In later years Campbell expressed this distinction between preaching and teaching by the use of the terms *Kerygma* and *Didache*,⁵⁶ and continued to insist that it is by their relation to God through response of faith to the *Kerygma* that Christians find their unity with one another. Achievement of doctrinal understanding could not be a mark of the church or a test of its unity, because attainment of such understanding belonged to the life of believers within the community and therefore could not be a condition of admission to it.⁵⁷

Campbell did not minimize the role of Christian doctrine. He never hesitated to present his own exposition of Biblical teaching. However, doctrinal formulations put into the form of creeds were open to objection on two counts. Too often they consisted in philosophical "speculations."⁵⁸ More serious still, they made agreement in doctrine a bond of union. This, he explained, is what he meant by his assertion in the debate with Rice that creeds are "heretical," not in the sense of "false teaching" as in popular usage, but as signs of adherence to a party. He saw examples in the nine schisms among adherents to the Westminster Confession of Faith, five or six among Methodists, and over a dozen among Baptists.⁵⁹

Such a unity, with Christ at the center, must consist in what is catholic. The use of this term appears in Camp-

bell's writings as early as 1832 and with great frequency thereafter.⁶⁰ The concept itself, however, is in his earliest writings.⁶¹

Campbell used the term *catholic* to distinguish the church of all ages, "the congregation of saints on earth and in heaven" from the congregation "in one place."⁶² But even more important was the concept of catholic as the mark of universality itself, which should be present to the church wherever it is found. By this concept of catholic he meant things "commonly believed," "held in common," or "what is universally admitted by all denominations."⁶³ The term *catholic*, he said, describes "truths or propositions" that "are not merely fundamental, but of universal acceptation and acceptability." A sect, on the other hand, is "a section or party" that is "founded on some peculiar or distinctive theory, tenet, or interest, which is not catholic or universal." The particularity might be doctrinal or politico-ecclesiastical. The real contrast, therefore, was not between universal and local but between universality and particularity.⁶⁴ The sect consists in building on "what is peculiar and thus undervalues what is common to them all."⁶⁵ It must be remembered that he did not give to the term *sect* the meaning associated with later typologies such as those of Ernst Troeltsch and H. R. Niebuhr; for Campbell *sect* was synonymous with denomination.⁶⁶

Appeal to the catholic formed the basis of his overtures to union and response to the overtures of others, as for example at the Christian union meeting at Lexington in 1841,⁶⁷ and in his positive response to the proposed General Council of American Churches in 1853,⁶⁸ both noted above.

Don Herbert Yoder seems to have missed this aspect of Campbell's thought. He avers that the "Campbellite position" called for people to "'come out' from the denominations and unite on the Bible,"⁶⁹ while Episcopalian William Reed Huntington, on the other hand, "based his union plan upon Catholic Tradition." While their programs differed in details it cannot be said that Campbell had less concern than Huntington for catholicity. It would have been unusual indeed for him to urge people to "break with their denominations" in the light of his own reluctance to break with the Baptists. Urging the followers of Christ to "bring the Christianity and the Church of the present day up to the New Testament Standard,"⁷⁰ as Campbell did in 1824, is very different from urging them to come out of their respective denominations.

There was then for Campbell a catholic basis for union:

things “held in common, or agreed to, by all evangelical parties.”⁷¹ At times he described these agreements as the “great facts, precepts, and promises of the New Institution.”⁷² On one occasion he referred to Christian faith, worship, morality as catholic.⁷³ He called attention to the fact that all Romanists and almost all Protestants believe that “‘Christ died for our sins’ and that ‘he was buried’ and that ‘he rose again the third day.’”⁷⁴ There is, he believed, universal acknowledgement of immersion.⁷⁵ Most often he appealed to Ephesians 4:4–6: the one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father. “It is a remarkable fact,” he wrote in reference to this text, “that when Paul preaches Christian union he lays a broad catholic basis for it.”⁷⁶ He saw these seven unities as equivalent to faith, precept, and promise.⁷⁷

This use of Ephesians 4, was not a late development in his thinking. It formed the substance of his response to “Independent Baptist,” in 1825.⁷⁸ Again, in 1830, replying to Robert Semple’s fear that differences between Baptists and Reformers were too great to permit continued fellowship, Campbell listed these “seven unities” as points on which the two groups were in complete agreement, despite other tensions existing between them.⁷⁹

Campbell’s 1824 statement that nothing post-apostolic “should be made an article of faith, a rule of practice, or a Term of Communion amongst Christians,”⁸⁰ has been cited as an example of Christian primitivism. Campbell would see it rather as a statement of the catholic principle. Can anything claim universality that was not present to the first-century church?

Hence, for Campbell, to be catholic is to be apostolic.⁸¹ Only what is apostolic could be universally admitted and serve the church of all ages. His oft-stated purpose was to “build on purely catholic and apostolic principles.” From *Christian Baptist* days Campbell had realized that understanding the nature of the apostolic office was critical to his program for Christian union. Because the Gospel is the proclamation of a series of saving events, the apostles as commissioned eye-witnesses stood in a unique relation to Christ and the church.⁸² Their ministry was unique also in that they delivered to the church the one Lord, the one faith, the one baptism, etc. as the foundation of the church and the catholic basis of union.⁸³ In neither of these functions, being eye-witnesses and laying the foundation of the church, could they

have successors.⁸⁴ Therefore, said Campbell, we plead for “the restoration of . . . the apostles to the thrones” Christ gave them.⁸⁵

It was this understanding of apostleship that led Campbell to oppose missionary societies in the 1820s. The term *missionary* derives from the Latin translation of *apostolos*; hence to call oneself a missionary was to claim apostolic prerogatives. Not until his study of scripture disclosed another category of apostleship, “apostles [messengers] of the churches,” did he find the doctrinal basis for his change of views on missionary methods.⁸⁶

Nor was Campbell unaware that the relation of apostolicity to authority was the crucial issue in his discussions with Episcopalians. Could the apostolic office be conveyed by succession, or was it of such a character as not to render succession possible? Could one affirm the Apostles Creed and yet claim succession to the qualification (the witnessing and teaching office) on which that creed is grounded? If the one Lord, one faith, one baptism, etc., are permanent marks of the church, does not the same teaching authority that gave them to the church of the first century serve also the church of the present century?⁸⁷

This view of the apostolic office served to delineate between apostolic and later tradition. Restoration of the apostolic order never meant for Campbell that the church had disappeared in history; reform did not mean annihilation.⁸⁸ He was neither ignorant nor disdainful of the history of the church between New Testament times and his own and often referred to that history as affording examples of common understanding of the meaning of Scripture.⁸⁹ But development in the life of the church could not be accorded normative value. On one occasion, alluding to the creed of Pius IV (Council of Trent) which contained the oath: “Nor will I ever take or interpret it [the Sacred scriptures] otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers,” Campbell quoted a number of the Fathers, from Clement to Augustine, whose views he interpreted as follows: “If there be any consent at all among the Fathers, it is in recommending upon all, and to all, the necessity, utility, and importance of reading the sacred Scriptures as the true and only faithful source of faith and morals.”⁹⁰

A telling example of Campbell’s attitude toward tradition was the exchange with AC—N referred to above. AC—N employed the “germ” theory to establish episcopacy as a proper

development in the second century. He argued that in “ascending the stream” of history to find the proper order of ministry one was “liable to mistake a tributary for the main current.” Only by starting “at the fountain” and following the stream down could one find the true development that led to the “church fully organized.”⁹¹

Campbell responded that the rationale for “descending the stream of tradition rather than ascending it” was “arbitrary and insufficient.” Might not one, he declared, “in coming down the stream, just as likely mistake a diverging branch for the main current.” Moreover, he insisted, we have no “authentic map . . . on which is distinctly laid down this stream of traditionary fact on which the church can rely.” He reasserted his belief in the existence of “the ancient order of things in the New Testament, so far as it is essential to the perfection of church organization.” Anything thought to be lacking in Scripture “is to be supplied, not by the traditions of the Fathers,” but by the “dictates of human prudence, varying its arrangements according to the ever-varying circumstances of society.”⁹²

In the light of the foregoing I believe that greater attention needs to be given to the definitive role Campbell’s understanding of the *Kerygma* had in the formation of his theology, especially in regard to the nature of the church—its catholicity, apostolicity, and unity. The church is a community of persons formed on the basis of their response to the apostles’ narrative of the acts of God in Christ. The catholic consists in those elements in the structure of the church which either embody or are predicated upon the *Kerygma*.

At this juncture we are better prepared to understand what he meant by “restoration of the ancient order.” It is evident in his early essays on this subject that he saw “restoration of the ancient order” as equivalent to acknowledgement of the role assigned the apostles in John 17:20–21—in securing the faith and hence the unity of believers.⁹³ Others have a different view of what he meant and would regard George G. Beazeley’s phrase “written code Restorationism” as characteristic of Campbell’s views.⁹⁴ They would cite statements like the following: “every individual” and “every congregation” should “discard from their faith and practice everything that is not found written in the New Testament . . . and to believe and practice whatever is there enjoined.”⁹⁵

Campbell would not have seen “written code restoration” as a fair representation of his views. In the first place, he

had no illusions of the written New Testament itself preceding and producing the church and was generally careful in his wording on this point. Moreover, at this time he was using *faith* to mean primarily personal belief and trust in Jesus as the Christ, as a response to the *Kerygma*, and not belief of doctrinal formulations; *practice* meant obedience to the positive commands of the Gospel institution.⁹⁶

Furthermore, the matters he took up in the series on the "Ancient Order," in which the above statement appears, are issues that have come to the forefront in the modern Faith and Order movement: faith, sacrament, ministry, worship, discipline. Hence what Campbell was saying is that on such matters of order churches must bring their faith and practice to the judgment of Scripture. Such is not the same as "legal code" restorationism. This conclusion is strengthened by a later article contrasting the Christian Age and the Jewish Age. In the Jewish system the "book which contained their worship was a ritual, a manual of religion and moral duties, accurately defined to the utmost conceivable minutia." But, said he, "there is nothing like this in the New Institution." The Christian Age deals more in terms of principles and leaves details to the "sense of propriety" of the church. There are matters of basic order given to the church, but they are not "accompanied with directions for the mode of celebration as were . . . the institutions of the Jewish Age."⁹⁷ Campbell explicitly rejected converting the New Testament into a ritual like the book of Leviticus⁹⁸ or the notion that doing things "according to the pattern exhibited in the law" is incumbent upon Christians.⁹⁹

Finally, it must be remembered that at the time of this writing he was a member of the Baptist Church and that he addressed this appeal to the "church of the present day."¹⁰⁰ Reformation was needed, but there was a church to be reformed. It was no late development for Campbell to acknowledge Christians among the sects. His own experience taught him the difference between mistaking an ordinance and refusal to obey it.¹⁰¹ Despite his insistence upon believers baptism he would still regard the person who mistook the ordinance as "*my Paido-Baptist christian brother.*"¹⁰² Restoration of the ancient order did not mean that the church had been lost. Campbell's preferred model of restoration was that of the Old Testament prophets calling Israel back to the covenant as the true basis of her national life.¹⁰³ So now, the saints might be in Babylon, but they were still saints.

Hence Campbell's emphasis upon what is or is not "found written" in the New Testament must be seen in this perspective. He was dealing with matters of fundamental order—faith, sacraments, ministry, worship, discipline. He was appealing to the churches of his day to reform by setting aside their particularities and taking the apostolic order given in the New Testament as their basis.

A word must also be said of Campbell's use of *constitution* in reference to the New Testament. *Constitution* was his preferred translation of *berith* and *diathēkē*.¹⁰⁴ Biblical covenants, he declared, cannot be compared to modern national compacts, because in the former the parties were of a "nature and relation essentially different"—creator and creatures.¹⁰⁵ Once he alluded to the British and American constitutions to show that similarity in content does not make them the same constitution; likewise, he wrote, it is fallacious to equate the old covenant and the new covenant on the basis of similarities between them. His use of this example led some to conclude that modern constitutions served as models for his reference to the New Testament as a constitution.¹⁰⁶

The law was the constitution, the fundamental order, of Israel; all other laws and institutions were developments and applications of its principles. Likewise the new covenant is the constitution for the church. But there was a basic difference. Campbell totally rejected two key features of Puritan covenant theology: the pre-lapsarian covenant of works and the concept of only one covenant of grace in the Bible under both testaments. There were indeed separate dispensations, but a separate covenant for each.¹⁰⁷ This concern to distinguish the new covenant from the old is the proper context for understanding Campbell's reference to the New Testament as a constitution.

I am convinced that over the years Campbell's commitment to both Christian union and the ancient order did not change. Emphasis upon the apostolic order did not supplant emphasis upon unity in *Christian Baptist* days, nor did concern for union supplant restoration from 1830 onward. He continued to speak of reform of the church according to the model given in its origins, for the sake of mission.¹⁰⁸

For Campbell, then, union among Christians centers in Christ, hence is based upon the apostolic witness of Christ and his will, which brought into being the community of faith and remains of permanent and normative significance to its life. This view of unity did not call for members of other

bodies to leave their denominations and come over to his. Neither did he see union in terms of interdenominational structure, whether federative, organic, or conciliar. In many respects Campbell's approach resembles that of Winfred E. Garrison,¹⁰⁹ as expressed in the latter's 1964 address, "A Fork in the Road." In it Garrison suggested "that the Disciples should be, as nearly as possible, a pilot project for a completely united church," depending neither upon an "integrated ecclesiastical structure or on a formulation of theological doctrine, *since the whole church cannot conceivably be united in these ways.*" Rather they should "rely upon a basis of unity which can be universal." He concluded: "the bond and test of the church's unity originally was, and can never be anything other than, the professed acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus by its members and their attitudes of mutual love and concern as brothers in one faith and partners in a common cause."¹¹⁰

Campbell would also have found his views described at the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, Montreal (1963). Two years earlier at New Delhi, unity had been defined as being both local ("in each place") and catholic ("in all places and in all ages"). In its elaboration upon that definition the Montreal report stated: "Each congregation is a manifestation of the church universal." Thus, each "congregation is related to others not by participation in some higher structure or organization but rather by an identity of existence in Christ."¹¹¹ Likewise for Campbell the presence of the catholic in each church was sufficient ground for its reception by sister churches and for their cooperation in the mission of Christ.

Moreover, he would have found encouragement in the proposal made at Evanston (1954) that we

listen together to our Lord speaking to us through Holy Scripture . . . whenever we are prepared to undertake together the study of the Word of God and are resolved to be obedient to what we are told, we are on the way toward realizing the oneness of the Church of Christ in the actual state of our dividedness on earth.¹¹²

Footnotes

1. *Millennial Harbinger*, (hereafter, MH), (1839), p. 339
2. *Ibid.*, 211-212.

3. Richard T. Hughes, "From Primitive Church to Civil Religion: The Millennial Odyssey of Alexander Campbell", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, XLIV, 1 (March, 1976), 88–97; Harold L. Lunger, *Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell* (1954), p. 115.
4. Roland Bainton, *Alexander Campbell and Church Union* (1956), pp. 4–5; George G. Beazley, Jr., "The Disciples Theology of Baptism", *Mid-Stream*, XII, 2,3,4 (1973), 126; Bill J. Humble, *Story of the Restoration* (1969), 22; Oliver Read Whiteley, *Trumpet Call of Reformation* (1959), 58–60; Ralph G. Wilburn, "A Critique of the Restoration Principle, Its Place in Contemporary Life and Thought," *Encounter*, 20, 3 (1959), 333.
5. A. T. DeGroot, *Disciple Thought: A History* (1960), 141; Hughes, 95; Winfred E. Garrison, *Heritage and Destiny of the Disciples of Christ* (1961), 35. Robert Frederick West, *Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion* (1948), 163, claims the changes Campbell made were functional; "he did not depart from his basic principles."
6. *Christian Baptist*, (hereafter, CB), II, 36.
7. His use of McKnight, Dodderidge, and Campbell is well known. However in MH (1834), 199, he alluded to over a dozen British and Continental scholars, including Michaelis, Vittinga, Griesbach and Ernesti.
8. CB, I, 176–178; cf. *Christian System*, 101–102.
9. CB, III, 202–203.
10. *Ibid.*, VII, 27–32.
11. See Paul A. Crow, Jr., "The Anatomy of a Nineteenth Century United Church," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* (October, 1983), 1–53, for a full discussion of Campbell's reservations.
12. MH (1837), 369–371.
13. MH (1839), 19–25, 60–65, 134–144, 153–164. The following suggest that Campbell's proposed "congress" was in response to Schmucker's plan: Harold L. Lunger, 119; Paul A. Crow, Jr., 8; George G. Beazeley, Jr., ed., *The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) An Interpretative Examination in the Cultural Context* (1973), 259; A. T. DeGroot, 234.
14. MH (1839), 212.
15. *Ibid.*, 338–339.
16. MH (1846), 222.
17. *Ibid.* (1841), 258–267.
18. *Ibid.* (1846), 383.
19. *Ibid.* (1846), 624–630; 673–683.
20. *Ibid.* (1847), 31.

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21. *Ibid.* (1847), 33.
22. *Ibid.* (1847), 255. See also his remark on p. 253.
23. *Ibid.* (1853), 562–564.
24. *The New York Observer* was an orthodox Presbyterian journal, but published articles covering other denominations.
25. MH (1857), 213–214. Also fascinating to Campbell was this priest's assertion that clergy are a greater hindrance to union than are the laity.
26. *Ibid.*, 259–264.
27. Don Herbert Yoder, "Christian Unity in Nineteenth-Century America," S. Neill and R. Rouse, eds., *History of the Ecumenical Movement* (1954), 249–250.
28. MH (1857), 91.
29. In this series he also noted briefly George Chapman's, *Sermons Upon the Ministry, Worship, and Doctrine of the Protestant Episcopal Church and other Subjects* (1828).
30. Campbell had his own proposal, which could be called a Trilateral: "I. The Christian Scriptures, the only rule and measure of faith and learning. II. The Christian Confession, the foundation of Christian union and communion. III. The Christian ordinances—baptism, the Lord's day, and the Lord's supper,—as taught and observed by the Apostles." *Christian Baptism*, (1853), 18.
31. *Ibid.* (1831), 419–420. He claimed never to use a polemic style when addressing a congregation of worshippers.
32. *Ibid.* (1839), 212.
33. CB, III, 202–204; VI, 192–193.
34. West, 164. Lunger, 18, 265, attributes this new stance to Campbell's making the transition "from the radical sect position to a more denominational point of view." Such categorization may be helpful for later analysis; but Campbell himself made no differentiation between sect and denomination. For nearly twenty years he had remained in the Baptist denomination.
35. Campbell had not wanted to leave the Baptists, MH (1837), 147–150, and had urged the lifting of the Dover decree, *Ibid.* (1842), 110ff, 149ff, 209ff. He continued to view the Baptists as "cousins."
36. MH (1840), 484.
37. *Ibid.* (1836), 27; (1837), 193; cf. *Christian System*, 87.
38. MH (1837), 273.
39. *Ibid.* (1832), 365.
40. CB, I, 43.
41. MH (1855), 365.
42. *Ibid.* (1843), 82–86.

43. *Ibid.* (1846), 445.
44. *Ibid.* (1855), 364. Cf. (1837), 318.
45. *Ibid.* (1836), 28–29.
46. CB, III, 201; *Ibid.*, I, 177. Cf. *Christianity Restored*, 9.
47. Campbell's reply: "The gentleman complains that our foundation is too broad—too liberal. It is indeed broad, liberal and strong. If it were not so, it would not be a Christian institution." A. Campbell, N. L. Rice, *Debate on Christian Baptism*, (1843), 808.
48. MH (1850), 210. This phrasing is reminiscent of W. A. Visser 'T Hooft, *Renewal of the Church* (1956), 91–93.
49. MH (1855), 448.
50. *Ibid.* (1832), 5.
51. *Ibid.* (1835), 351.
52. See the chapter: "Foundation of Christian Union," *Christian System*, 85ff.
53. *Christian System*, 90–91.
54. *Ibid.*, 6. See also MH (1846), 350.
55. "The teacher *develops* dogmata, ideas, elements of learning, science, art, etc. The preacher declares, announces, or proclaims facts, events, or their consequences." MH (1854), 272–275.
56. "Address at the Annual Meeting of the Christian Missionary Society 1857," *Popular Lectures and Addresses*, 536–537.
57. This conclusion was strengthened by the recognition, shared with his father, that the family of God contains both the mature and the young in the faith, who could not be expected to have the same level of understanding but who were nevertheless members of the family by virtue of having put on Christ.
58. In *Christian System*, 103–104, he cited over three dozen examples, such as "Three persons of one substance, power, and eternity," "co-essential, co-substantial, co-equal," "The Son eternally begotten of the Father."
59. *Ibid.*, 88–89.
60. Thomas Campbell had used the term three times in *The Declaration and Address*, following the lead of the Westminster Confession of Faith.
61. In their characterizations of the Stone-Campbell movement both Paul A. Crow, Jr., 44–45, and A. T. DeGroot, 270ff., use the term "catholic." Crow uses *frontier catholicism*; DeGroot, *free church catholics*.
62. *Ibid.* (1832), 351. He also found in the New Testament reference to the congregations of a province or kingdom as the "church of that province or kingdom." *Ibid.* (1853), 304.

63. *Ibid.* (1850), 292. He also used *catholic* to describe cooperative movements that crossed denominational lines, such as the American and Foreign Bible Society and the Sunday School Union. *Ibid.* (1847), 7–8; (1854), 369.
64. *Ibid.* (1851), 521–525.
65. *Ibid.* (1847), 484–486.
66. In one instance, when contrasting universality and particularity he used the term *sect*. Not long after, in making the same point, he used the term *denomination*. *Ibid.* (1851), 522; (1852), 20; on another occasion he referred to “branches of the Christian profession.” *Ibid.* (1842), 433.
67. *Ibid.* (1841), 259.
68. *Ibid.* (1853), 564.
69. Yoder, 239.
70. CB, II, 133. In 1855, still disappointed over the excommunication of the Reformers by the Baptists twenty-five years earlier, wrote: “You make us a sect for cherishing catholic principles.” MH (1855), 618–619.
71. What may seem surprising is that Campbell could accept the Apostles Creed as catholic. Unlike the Nicene Creed which is “philosophical” it states facts attested in the New Testament and acknowledged by all believers. MH (1832), 602; (1839), 338. Campbell now noted that it contains affirmations of sixteen facts; he would have added nine more such affirmations *Ibid.* (1856), 702.
72. *Ibid.* (1837), 196.
73. *Christian System*, 103.
74. MH (1847), 486.
75. *Ibid.* (1837), 112. “Even on the subject of baptism,” he wrote, “I am perfectly *catholic*—I contend only for that baptism which the Greek, Roman and English churches equally admit as apostolic and divine.”
76. *Ibid.* (1852), 21.
77. *Ibid.* (1856), 4. Campbell seemed never to run out of ways to describe these seven items; they were the seven unities, the seven facts, the seven-fold star spangled banner, the mystic seven, the seven institutions delivered to us by apostles, the seven pillars.
78. CB, III, 201.
79. MH (1830), 135.
80. CB, II, 36.
81. It is very clear that Campbell viewed catholicity as apostolicity. In 1839 in his proposal for a congress on Christian union the

- “rule of union” would be whatever is catholic in faith, piety, and morality. The *Christian Palladium* editorialized that this proposal was reductionistic and would result in a “union *without principle*.” In reply Campbell clarified what catholic meant to him by citing the Apostles Creed, which is a recital of facts proclaimed by the apostles. MH (1839), 211–212, 238–239.
82. *Ibid.* (1843), 135.
 83. *Ibid.* (1856), 4–5.
 84. *Ibid.* (1835), 396–397, 501.
 85. *Ibid.* (1831), 202.
 86. From about 1830 onward Campbell recognized three orders of apostleship in the New Testament: (1) Christ as the apostle of God, (2) the Twelve and Paul as apostles of Christ, (3) apostles (messengers) of churches. Only the latter could have successors. *Ibid.* (1832), 196–199; (1835), 243–244.
 87. Campbell’s awareness of this issue shows in his response to the works of Henry U. Onderdonk, George T. Chapman, and AC—N. Both Onderdonk and Chapman sought to establish episcopacy within Scripture, while AC—N used the “germ” theory, seeing diocesan episcopacy as a Spirit-guided development rooted in the New Testament but coming to fruition in the second century. See the series of letters, “To James H. Otey, Bishop of Tennessee,” MH (1835–1836) and Campbell’s exchanges with AC—N in “Nature of the Christian Organization,” (numbers VII–XV), MH (1842–1843).
 88. Franklin Littell, “The Periodization of History,” F. Forrester Church and Timothy George, eds. *Continuity and Discontinuity in History*, 21, singles out “Campbell’s ‘Restoration Movement’” as a modern counterpart of the sixteenth century Radical Reformers in contending that a “rupture of continuity” had occurred in the church as a consequence of the “Constantinian compromise.” There is no question that Campbell decried the effects of that compromise; it had paganized the church by bringing into its membership persons born of the flesh but not of the Spirit. Yet Campbell adamantly refused to accept the implication that the gates of Hades had prevailed against the church; see MH, (1837), 411. We have already noted his disclaimer of separatism. His understanding of restoration as an appeal to bring the present-day church “up to the New Testament standard” suggests that he was seeking to keep together Reformist and Restorationist motifs, an outlook that reflects the “reciprocity” between these concepts that Z. K. Zeman finds in certain streams of late medieval dissent.

- See Z. K. Zeman, "Restitution and Dissent in the Late Medieval Renewal Movements: The Waldensians, The Hussites and The Bohemian Brethren," *Journal of The American Academy of Religion*, XLIV, 1, (March, 1976), 26.
89. This concept is similar to Heiko A. Oberman's "exegetical tradition of interpreted scripture." See "Quo Vadis. Tradition from Irenaeus to Humani Generis," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 16, 3 (September, 1963), 238.
 90. *Ibid.* (1837), 19–23; cf. CB, III, 273.
 91. MH (1843), 30.
 92. *Ibid.*, 34–35; cf. (1842), 549.
 93. "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things—No. II," CB, II, 155–157; "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things—No. III," *Ibid.*, 172.
 94. George G. Beazeley, Jr., "Accusation, Debate, and Dialogue and the Future of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ)," *Mid-Stream*. III, 4 (June, 1964), 182–183. Others, such as the following share a similar, though not necessarily identical, understanding of Campbell: Winfred E. Garrison, *Christian Unity and the Disciples of Christ* (1955), 102–106; David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *Quest for a Christian America* (1966) 27–32; Richard T. Hughes, 88, uses the phrase, "radical restoration" to describe Campbell's position; D. Ray Lindley, 182; Ralph G. Wilburn, 333; Oliver Read Whiteley, 59–60.
 95. CB, II, 152.
 96. CB, I, 176–178; See also *Ibid.*, III, 162–167.
 97. CB, VII, 287–291.
 98. *Ibid.*, III, 167; V, 263–266.
 99. *Ibid.*, VII, 287–292.
 100. *Ibid.*, II, 133. Sometime later Campbell declared that reformation does not mean "annihilation." MH (1849), 272. The same could be said of his attitude in the 1820s.
 101. CB, III, 251–252.
 102. *Ibid.*, 252.
 103. *Ibid.*, 44–45. He alluded to this same model when articulating his understanding of restoration to James Wallis in 1837. MH (1837), 319–320.
 104. CB, VI, 30; VII, 15–17; MH (1832), 68; (1834), 392; (1846), 253–256.
 105. CB, VII, 15–17.
 106. See Beazeley, 30; Ronald E. Osborn, "Doctrinally Absolute, Historically Relative," Ronald E. Osborn, ed., *Reformation of Tradition*, Vol. I. (1963), 269–270.
 107. CB, VII, 187.

108. References are too numerous to list completely. See the series, "Letters to England," especially numbers I, II, III, VIII. MH (1837).
109. Differences in their views, although not to be minimized, are not as great as often thought. Both held a concept of unity based upon the relation of believers to Christ and sought reform of the church. While Garrison disliked the term *restoration* he still appealed to the faith, fellowship, and authority of the first-century as criteria for evaluating developments in the church, and complained that Protestant reformers "did not go back far enough" in search of models. See Garrison, "Response to Amsterdam" and Garrison and De Groot, *Disciples of Christ, A History* (1948), Chs. I, II.
110. Winfred E. Garrison, "A Fork in the Road," an address given at the Pension Fund Ministers Breakfast, Detroit, MI, (1964).
111. P. C. Rodger and Lukas Vischer, eds., *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*, (1964), 80–81.
112. *World Council of Churches, Second Assembly* (Evanston, 1954), 90.

Lecture 7

The Gospel as the Power of God to Salvation: Alexander Campbell and Experimental Religion

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Alexander Campbell was frequently charged by evangelicals with denying experimental religion. Evangelicals were that great host of Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, and Presbyterians who were spiritual descendants of the eighteenth century evangelical revivals in Great Britain and North America. Experimental religion was the term used by evangelicals for what twentieth century North Americans might call personal religious experience. Evangelicals taught that personal religious experience was the means of becoming religious and that only persons who become religious can be happy. The nineteenth century Methodist itinerant, Peter Cartwright, warned the readers of his autobiography of the danger of accepting Campbell's views regarding experimental religion in his story of a former Baptist preacher whom he encountered at a Camp Meeting.

... there was ... an ... intelligent old gentleman, who had ... been a Baptist preacher, but had got his mind confused with Alexander Campbell's dogmas about experimental religion ...

On Sunday night a most tremendous power fell on the assembly, and a general shout went up to heaven from hundreds of Christians. Among the crowd of happy

and shouting Christians this gentleman's wife and daughter were exceedingly happy, and shouted aloud. The old gentleman could not stand it; he fled behind the tent, lighted his pipe, and tried to smoke away his bad feelings . . . I stepped up to him . . . and said, "Come, Mr.——, go with me, and I will show you more happy Christians than you ever saw among the Campbellites all your life."

"Sir", said he, "it is all delusion; they are not happy."

"But", said I, "your wife and daughter are among the foremost shouters in the crowd. Come . . . with me to the altar; I want to pray for you there, that you may get religion, and be happy too . . ." I took him by the arm . . . but he drew back . . . Poor man, he was so confused by fishing in the muddy waters of Campbellism, that he lost his mental balance . . . He became more and more flighty in his mind, till at length, in a paroxysm of insanity, he shot himself. (Cartwright, pp. 234–235)

Not all of Campbell's critics warned that adoption of Campbell's views on experimental religion could result in suicide. Nevertheless, the charge that Campbell denied experimental religion—at the very least—raises the question of whether Campbell can be identified as an evangelical.

The thesis of this paper is that Campbell taught the reality and desirability of personal religious experience, while rejecting the standard nineteenth century evangelical views of how that experience is obtained. I shall also suggest that Campbell's understanding of how persons become religious, far from denying personal religious experience, might help to promote a revival of personal religious experience in contemporary North America.

To understand Campbell's views on experimental religion one must understand the context in which they were advanced. For nineteenth century evangelicals experimental religion was classically described in the writings of Jonathan Edwards, the leader of the eighteenth century Great Awakening in New England, and John Wesley, a leader of the eighteenth century Evangelical Revival in Great Britain and the founder of Methodism. Edwards' views on experimental religion were mediated to nineteenth century Americans by Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians who valued

Edwards' writings and through the writings of the self-styled Edwardseans, Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins. Nineteenth century Americans also encountered views similar to Edwards' views in the works of Andrew Fuller, a theologian popular among the Baptists. (*Christian Baptist* I:VIII, p. 187) Wesley's views on experimental religion were communicated to nineteenth century Americans by the legion of Methodist preachers who accepted Wesley's *Fifty-Three Sermons* as their standard of doctrine. Hence, to understand Campbell's views on experimental religion one must first understand the views of experimental religion taught by Edwards and Wesley.

Edwards and Wesley generally agreed on the character, end, means of obtaining, and typical sequence of stages of experimental religion. They both described experimental religion as a conscious experience of the divine transformation of the will or affections. Evangelicals also referred to the will or affections, which they understood to be the seat of human action, as the heart. The term experimental was used to underscore personal consciousness of the divine transformation of the will. In other words, both Edwards and Wesley taught that subjects of experimental religion are conscious of being divinely converted.

The end of experimental religion, according to both Edwards and Wesley, is love to God and neighbor. The major burden of Edwards' two major works on experimental religion, *A Treatise On Religious Affections* and *Life And Diary of the Rev. David Brainerd* is that the divine transformation of the will or affections, as distinguished from all manner of false conversions, is expressed in the practice of love to God and neighbor. (Edwards II: 450–453) The view that divinely transformed affections are expressed in the practice of love to God and neighbor is stated by Wesley in his famous response to the question, "Who is a Methodist?" Wesley writes:

5 . . . A Methodist is one who has "the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him"; one who "loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength." God is the joy of his heart, and the desire of his soul; which is constantly crying out "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee! My God and my all! Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever!" . . .

9. And while he thus always exercises his love to God, by praying without ceasing, rejoicing evermore, and in everything giving thanks, this commandment is written in his heart, "That he who loveth God, loves his brother also." And he accordingly loves his neighbour as himself; he loves every man as his own soul. His heart is full of love to all mankind, to every child of "the Father of the spirits of all flesh." That a man is not personally known to him, is no bar to his love; no, nor that he is known to be such as he approves not, that he repays hatred for his good-will. For he "loves his enemies"; yea, and the enemies of God, "the evil and the unthankful." . . .

10. For he is "pure in heart." The love of God has purified his heart from all revengeful passions, from envy, malice, and wrath, from every unkind temper or malign affection. (Heitzenrater, pp. 153–154)

Both Edwards and Wesley advised persons who desired to become religious to use the means of grace; that is, to pray, meditate, read the scriptures, and attend church services. They asserted that it is God's pleasure to bless the use of means. Nevertheless, they insisted that persons who desire to become religious should understand that they will not be converted because of their use of means, or on their own schedule, but only when God determines to transform their hearts by the immediate work of the Spirit. Immediate here means apart from the means of grace, such as prayer, meditation, reading the scriptures, and church attendance. (Edwards I:352–353, 657–659; Wesley, pp. 170–178, 183) In other words, Edwards and Wesley taught that persons are converted by the immediate work of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, one should use the means of grace, since God often uses the means of grace in converting persons.

Edwards and Wesley both allowed that there is great variety in the manner by which the Spirit transforms the will of individuals. Nevertheless they taught that a basic sequence of stages is generally evident: awakening, distress/conviction, and deliverance. That sequence of stages may be outlined as follows. First, individuals are *awakened* with a sense of not being in right relationship with God and the danger of perishing eternally. This leads them to seek right relationship with God; that is, to seek religion. The period of seeking is characterized by *distress* over the knowledge of their perish-

ing state and a growing *conviction* of their inability to achieve right relationship with God (that is, to transform the will or affections from alienation, or at best, a self-serving desire to win God's favor, to genuine love toward God). Although the conviction of their inability to change their own hearts may temporarily deepen their hatred of God, it ultimately results—in the case of persons who obtain right relationship with God—in a sense of resignation and humiliation before the judgement of God who sentences those who do not love God to eternal death. This sense of the justice of God in the damnation of sinners—in the case of persons who obtain right relationship with God—is followed by a sense of love toward the God who is described in the gospel: the God who graciously forgives and accepts sinners and transforms their will or affections so that they become lovers of God and humanity. The experience of love toward God is evidence or a witness that they have been forgiven and accepted by God and have experienced a transformation of their wills or affections toward God; that is, that they are in right relationship with God. (Edwards I:350–359) Evidence of being in right relationship with God, in turn, *delivers* individuals from distress over not being in right relationship with God. (Edwards I:273–274; Wesley, pp. 125–136)

Despite broad agreement regarding the character, end, means of obtaining, and typical sequence of stages of experimental religion, Edwards and Wesley differed on the fundamental matter of the location and importance of assurance of one's personal forgiveness and acceptance by God in the sequence of stages of experimental religion. Edwards taught that love to God and neighbor, what evangelicals also called "holiness," is the only authoritative witness or evidence that one has been personally forgiven and accepted by God. Consequently, for Edwards, assurance that one has been forgiven and accepted by God—that one is loved by God—follows holiness. Furthermore, it is a rather indifferent matter. One can be holy without being assured of having been forgiven and accepted by God. Wesley taught that one must know that one is forgiven and accepted by God before one can love God and neighbor; that is, before one can be holy. Thus, for Wesley, assurance of one's forgiveness and acceptance by God precedes holiness. And, it is not an indifferent matter! For Wesley, one cannot be holy without an assurance that one is personally forgiven and accepted by God.

Edwards and Wesley both argued their positions from

Romans 8:16, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Edwards interpreted the text to mean that the experience of one's own spirit's holiness or love to God and neighbor, which is produced by the immediate work of the Holy Spirit on one's spirit, is the Holy Spirit's witness that one is forgiven and accepted by God—that one is a child of God. (Edwards I:273–274) Wesley allowed that one's spirit's love of God and neighbor is an evidence, indeed the ultimate evidence that one has been forgiven and accepted by God. Nevertheless, he argued that the text speaks of two witnesses, not one, and that the witness of "The Spirit" as distinguished from the witness of "our spirit" refers to the testimony of the Holy Spirit to one's forgiveness and acceptance by God which must precede the witness of "our spirit's" love of God and neighbor. Wesley writes:

We must be holy . . . before we can be conscious that we are so; before we can have the testimony of our spirit, that we are . . . holy. But we must love God, before we can be holy at all; this being the root of all holiness. Now we cannot love God, till we know He loves us. "We love Him, because He first loved us." And we cannot know His pardoning love to us, till His Spirit witnesses it to our spirit. Since, therefore, this testimony of His Spirit must precede the love of God and all holiness, of consequence it must precede our inward consciouness thereof, or the testimony of our spirit . . . (Wesley, pp. 146–148)

At the heart of the issue of whether persons must love God and neighbor, that is, be holy in order to be assured of their forgiveness and acceptance by God, or must be assured of their forgiveness and acceptance by God before they can be holy, was the character of assurance; in particular, the status of voices, visions, scripture texts impressed upon the mind, and inexplicable feelings of God's forgiveness and acceptance which many evangelicals believed affirm that one has been forgiven and accepted by God. Edwards allowed that the Spirit may testify to one's forgiveness and acceptance by God through such experiences, but refused to grant authority to such experiences, arguing that they could as easily come from Satan or one's own imagination as from God. (Edwards I:267–271) Wesley admitted that persons had been deceived by such experiences. (Wesley, pp. 142–143) Nevertheless, He insisted on the value of such experiences. (Wesley, pp. 649–

650) Furthermore, he urged that any supposed experience of the Spirit's witness can be tested against the witness of one's own spirit. That is, allowing for fluctuations in the degree of one's holiness, or love to God and neighbor, if one does not love God and neighbor, if one is not holy, one has not received the Spirit's witness that one is forgiven and accepted by God, no matter how striking the supposed experience of the Spirit's witness may have been. (Wesley, pp. 650–651, 658–659, 148–154)

Campbell affirmed with Edwards and Wesley the reality and desirability of a conscious experience of the divine transformation of the will. Like Edwards and Wesley he affirmed that the end of such experience is holiness or love to God and neighbor. Campbell describes the life of a person who has consciously experienced divine transformation of the heart or will in his essay on "Regeneration," published in *The Christian System*:

A new spirit, a new heart, and an outward character, corresponding to this change, are the effects of the regenerating process . . . Every pulsation of the new heart is the impulse of the spirit of love . . . The Christian, or new man, is then a philanthropist to the utmost meaning of the word. Truth and love have made him free from all the tyrannies of passion, from guilt and fear and shame; have filled him with courage, active and passive. Therefore, his enterprise, his capital enterprise, to which all others minister, is to take part with our Saviour in the salvation of the world. "If by any means I may save some" are not the words of Paul only, but of every *new man*. (*System*, p. 234)

In response to the charge that he denied experimental religion, Campbell wrote in March of 1824, that if by experimental religion one meant that the Holy Spirit "like precious ointment . . . diffuses in his [the believer's] heart heavenly odours, and the sweetness of its perfume exhales in his life, in the work of faith, the labors of love, and the patience of hope . . . I never denied it; yea, I have always taught it." (*CHRISTIAN BAPTIST* I:VIII, pp. 181–183)

Despite Campbell's statement that if allowed to define the term experimental religion he had not denied it, but had always taught it, he did oppose the popular use of the term experimental religion. He charged that "popular beliefs" con-

nected with the term are not taught in scripture. The popular beliefs which he opposed were taught by both Edwards and Wesley, (1) that transformation of the affections is effected by the immediate work of the Spirit and (2) that normally one must pass through the stages of awakening, conviction/distress, and deliverance in order to become religious. In other words, despite Campbell's general agreement with Edwards and Wesley regarding the character and end of experimental religion, he differed from them regarding the means of obtaining and typical sequence of stages of experimental religion.

In distinction to Edwards and Wesley, Campbell taught that divine transformation of the affections is accomplished not by the immediate work of the Spirit, but by the Spirit working through the gospel. Campbell defined the gospel as the "testimony of the Apostles." What did he mean by this phrase? He did not mean everything said by the Apostles that is recorded in Scripture, such as their instructions regarding church order. Rather, he defines the testimony of the Apostles as their witness to the "facts" about Jesus Christ. Campbell defines fact as "something done" or "deed." Facts or deeds disclose, (Campbell's terms are "prove," "illustrate," "argue," "demonstrate," and "display") the character of the doer. In the case of Jesus Christ the doer is God. What are the deeds of God in Jesus Christ? Campbell answers that to enumerate the deeds of God in Jesus Christ or "the gospel facts" would be "to narrate all that is recorded of the sayings and doings of Jesus Christ from his birth to his coronation in the heavens." Nevertheless, the deeds of God in Jesus Christ may be grouped under a few prominent ones: "He died for our sins—he was buried in the grave—he rose from the dead for our justification—and is ascended to the skies to prepare mansions for his disciples." What do these acts disclose regarding the character of God? Campbell answers that they "display his moral majesty and glory;" that is, they demonstrate the proposition that "God is love." (*System*, 87–89, 221) Campbell also referred to the gospel as the Word of God and the testimony of God.

Campbell did not deny the existence or activity of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, he defined the Holy Spirit as a Spirit or being. (*System*, pp. 11–12) He insisted, however, that the affections are effected by "allurements"—arguments or motives—addressed to the understanding and affections. Thus, the Holy Spirit transforms the affections not immedi-

ately, that is “without means,” but by the means of allurements addressed to the understanding and affections.

Campbell suggests the analogy of human power, which is both physical and moral, to explain how the Spirit effects transformation of the affections. By physical power persons operate on matter; by moral power they operate on mind. To operate or influence minds persons use arguments or motives—“allurements”—addressed to the understanding and affections. Arguments or motives addressed to the mind are called moral because they have a tendency to form or change habits, manners, or actions. Campbell asserts that every spirit, including the Holy Spirit, puts forth its moral power in arguments and motives; that is, in “words,” which Campbell broadly defines as “significant signs” addressed to the mind. Campbell does not deny that God has physical power. He insists, however, that God uses moral power, allurements addressed to the understanding and affections, to achieve moral ends—the transformation of habits, manners, or actions. (*Connected*, pp. 346–351)

Campbell asserted that there is only one allurement that can transform the affections from alienation towards God to love of God and neighbor. That one allurement is the proposition that “God is love.” Campbell writes:

Man, in a state of alienation and rebellion, naturally suspects, that if he be a sinner, and if God hate sin, He must hate him. As love begets love, so hatred begets hatred; and if a sinner suspects that God hates him, he can not love God. He must know that God loves him, before he can begin to love God. “We,” says an Apostle, “love God because he first loved us.” While alienated in heart, through the native darkness of his understanding, the sinner misinterprets every restraint which God has placed in his way to prevent his total ruin as indications of the wrath of Heaven. His transgression of these restraints, and his consciousness of having defied the veracity and power of God, only increases his enmity, and urge him onward to his apostasy and wanderings from his Creator. The goodness of God, being misunderstood, furnishes to him no incentive to repentance and reformation. Guilt, and fear, and shame, the fruits of his apostasy, becloud his understanding, and veil from his eyes all the demonstrations of benevolence and goodness with which the creation abounds. (*System*, pp. 220–221)

Thus, for Campbell, the gospel, which discloses that God is love, is the means of transforming the affections from alienation towards God to love of God and neighbor. It is the power of God to salvation.

Advocates of the view that sinners are transformed by the immediate work of the Holy Spirit, be they followers of Edwards or Wesley, agreed that it is the proposition that God is love, disclosed in the gospel, that transforms the will or affections of the sinner. In the sequence of awakening, conviction/distress, and deliverance, it is the discovery of the moral beauty of the God disclosed in the gospel which overcomes the sinner's alienation of heart toward God. Nevertheless, advocates of the view that sinners are transformed by the immediate work of the Holy Spirit urged that sinners must be awakened to their perishing condition, led to repentance, reformation, and sorrow for sin, and convicted of their need of a Savior, that is, of their inability to make themselves acceptable to God, before they will see the moral beauty of the God disclosed in the gospel. Such experiences, they asserted, are effected by the immediate work of the Holy Spirit. Hence, the immediate work of the Holy Spirit must accompany the gospel if sinners are to discover the moral beauty of God disclosed in the gospel.

Campbell agreed that sinners must know that God hates sin and that sinners cannot make themselves acceptable to God before they can be morally transformed by the proposition that God is love. Nevertheless, he insists that knowledge that God hates sin and that sinners cannot make themselves acceptable to God, and the feelings appropriate to that knowledge, come not from the Spirit working without means, but from the Spirit working through the gospel. "It is by faith [in the gospel or testimony of God that] we discover our need of a Saviour; for if we did not first believe the testimony of God, we could not know that we had sinned against God. So that faith in the testimony must precede all conviction, repentance, reformation; all sorrow, all feeling of every sort." (*Connected*, p. 364)

Campbell's statement that it is by faith in the gospel that persons are transformed raised the question of how persons come to faith. Campbell answered that faith is based on the credibility of the testimony. For Campbell, persons do not choose to believe; persons believe because the testimony is credible. Why is the gospel credible? Campbell argued that in

the Apostolic age the gospel was credible because the Apostles, who proclaimed the gospel, performed miracles which "confirmed" their testimony. With the close of the Apostolic age, miracles ceased. (*System*, pp. 98–100, 150–151) Since the Apostolic age, the gospel has been rendered credible by its power to produce acts of love and courage in the lives of believers. Hence, Campbell asserts that even an isolated act of love and courage, which demonstrates the power of the gospel received in faith to transform persons, does more to bring others to faith than a year's worth of preaching. (*System*, pp. 223–224, 234–235, 256–257) Such acts were understood by Campbell as the work of the Spirit, or the Spirit's demonstration of the truth of the gospel. Thus, Campbell interpreted Romans 8:16, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God," to mean that it is the Spirit "which gives the testimony [that God is love] and *confirms* it in the disciples." (*System*, p. 91. Italics mine.)

Campbell's view that the gospel is made credible by the church's witness of love and courage means that all individuals who hear the gospel do not have the same opportunity for faith. The credibility of the gospel depends upon the strength of the church's witness of love and courage. Noting that as late as 1811 Campbell believed that persons come to faith by the immediate work of the Holy Spirit accompanying the gospel, Campbell's biographer, Robert Richardson, states that "though he always retained the idea of a Divine interposition [in bringing persons to faith], he came to regard this as a providential agency, rather than as a direct operation of the Spirit, as held by the popular parties [that is, denominations]." (Richardson I:377)

Campbell's view that persons become religious not by the immediate work of the Holy Spirit, but by the Spirit working through the gospel demanded a higher view of the "means of grace" than that taught by Edwards and Wesley. For Campbell, the means of grace, or Christian ordinances, are ways of "impressing" the proposition that God is love upon the understanding and affections. (*System*, p. 91) In contrast to Edwards and Wesley who advised persons who desired to be religious that they should use the means of grace, but that they would not be transformed as a result of their use of the means of grace, Campbell taught persons who desired to be religious that if they would use the means of grace they would be saved; that is, they would experience the divine

transformation of their affections from alienation towards God to love of God and neighbor. (*System*, pp. 148–149)

Campbell differed from Edwards and Wesley not only in regard to the value assigned to the means of grace, but also in regard to the specific means of grace recommended. Edwards and Wesley, who were both members of churches that practiced infant baptism, did not include baptism in the means of grace recommended to persons who desired to become religious. In the case of adults who had not been baptised, they taught that baptism should follow, rather than precede a person's becoming religious. Thus, in the case of unbaptised adults, the position of Edwards and Wesley was similar to that of the Baptists, who, having rejected infant baptism, taught that persons should be baptised only as a sign of their having become religious. Campbell who, like the Baptists rejected infant baptism, taught that baptism should be administered as a means of grace to persons who desire to become religious.

Campbell defined baptism as the specific means by which a penitent believer, that is, one who believes the gospel and desires to be in right relationship with God, may "enjoy the assurance of a personal and plenary remission of all his sins." (*System*, p. 154) To enjoy such an assurance is to experience "the renewal of the Holy Spirit;" that is, to love God and neighbor. (*System*, pp. 232–234) In other words, baptism was for Campbell what the witness of God's Spirit was for Wesley: an assurance that one has been forgiven and accepted by God that enables one to love God and neighbor.

Campbell knew that his position on baptism would be identified by critics as works-righteousness. Thus, he was careful to note that no one "merits," "purchases," or "procures" salvation by use of the means of grace. Rather, he insisted that the ordinances are means of "enjoying" or experiencing the moral transformation that God bestows through the proposition that God is love. (*System*, p. 233) He also suggested that it is significant that in the act of baptism the person baptised is passive. (*System*, p. 179)

In addition to supporting a higher value of the means of grace than that taught by Edwards and Wesley, Campbell's view that the Spirit works through the gospel carried a rejection of the view of both Edwards and Wesley that normally persons must pass through the stages of awakening, conviction/distress, and deliverance in order to become religious. As previously noted, Campbell acknowledged that persons must

know that they are sinners and that they cannot make themselves acceptable to God before they can be morally transformed by the proposition that God is love. Nevertheless, he insists that the proposition that God is love is disclosed in the same gospel that convicts one of sin and shows one the need of a Savior. Thus, there is no need for persons to experience distinct stages of awakening, conviction/distress, and deliverance before they can esteem themselves Christians. Stating that the gospel is defined in scripture as “glad tidings of great joy to all people,” he suggests that it is ludicrous for so-called preachers of the good news to teach “that a man must become a desponding, trembling infidel, before he can become a believer.” The word that brings conviction also brings deliverance! Campbell concludes, “the Gospel makes no provision for despondency, inasmuch, as it assures all who believe it, upon the the veracity of God, that they are forgiven and accepted in the Beloved.” (*Christian Baptist* I:VIII, pp. 185–186)

Campbell sought to show the relationship of his position that the Spirit works through the gospel to a larger understanding of the activity of God in the universe. Campbell argues that the universe is “composed of innumerable systems, which, in perfect concert, move forward in subordination to one supreme end. That one end of all things is the sovereign and infinite pleasure of Him who inhabits eternity and animates the universe with his presence.” (*System*, p. 1) Campbell states that within a single individual one finds “an animal system, an intellectual system, a moral system, running into each other, and connecting themselves with everything of a kindred nature in the whole universe of God.” He notes that within the body, alone, there is a system of solids, and a system of fluids which form themselves into a system of bones, a system of nerves, a system of arteries, and a system of veins. Campbell asserts that the character of the universe as “various systems, separate, though united; distinct, though amalgamated; heterogeneous, though homogeneous,” extends to “every organic and inorganic mass” of every planet in the seventy-five million solar systems “which fill up the already-discovered fields of etherial space” (*Ibid.*)

Within the context of the universe as system of systems animated by God, Campbell identifies Christianity as the “Christian System” or “Christian Institution.” The Christian System or Christian Institution consists of physical and moral means and ends designed by God to transform the af-

fections of persons from alienation towards God to delight in God and to provide them with eternal happiness. It includes such things as faith, repentance, the resurrection of the body, and the means of grace. (*Baptism*, pp. 247–248; *System*, pp. 12–17; Campbell sometimes uses the term moral means as relating to the understanding and the affections; at other times he uses the term spiritual means as relating to the understanding, and reserves the term moral means as relating to the affections. See *Connected*, p. 377)

At the heart of the Christian system is the gospel. As previously shown, the gospel, for Campbell, is the testimony of the Apostles, which narrates the deeds of God in Jesus Christ. It discloses the proposition that God is love, which alone has the power to overcome the alienation of the sinner's heart.

The gospel, though, is not the whole of the Christian system. If it is to transform the affections, it must be believed. (*System*, pp. 93–96) As previously shown, belief, for Campbell, is the result of evidence, not of choice. Since the close of the Apostolic age evidence for the credibility of the gospel has been provided by the Spirit through the moral transformation of believers.

But even the gospel received in faith is not the whole of the Christian system. Faith produces repentance, or a change of feeling, which results in reformation, or a change of life. Reformation, or a change of life, leads to baptism. (*System*, pp. 222–234)

Baptism is an act of obedience—the response to a command (Be baptized for the remission of your sins!). This does not mean, however, that baptism nullifies the grace of God; that is, that baptism represents some kind of works-righteousness. On the contrary, the command is an act of favor. It engages one's attention and makes it possible for one to have *assurance* of personal forgiveness and acceptance by God that one could not have without an act of obedience. (*System*, p. 166)

Baptism, through which one receives an assurance of forgiveness and acceptance by God, is not the end of the Christian system. Rather, it is a foundation for the Christian life of love, hope, and joy. Campbell asserts that the strongest arguments which the Apostles used with the first Christians to urge them forward in the Christian life were drawn from the meaning of their baptism.

Because forgiven, they should forgive, because justified, they should live righteously, because sanctified, they should live holy and unblamably; because reconciled to God, they should cultivate peace with all . . . and act benevolently towards all; because adopted, they should walk in . . . dignity and purity . . . because saved, they should abound in thanksgiving, praises, and rejoicings, living soberly, righteously, and godly, looking forward to the blessed hope.“ (*System*, p. 160)

Baptism, with all its significance, however, is not the only support of the Christian life. Prayer, meditation, the Lord's Day, the Lord's Supper, fasting, confession of sins, and praise are all distinctive means by which the transforming proposition disclosed in the gospel—that God is love—triumphs in the believer's heart and life. (*Baptism*, pp. 247–248; *System*, pp. 149, 298; *Lectures*, pp. 290, 298)

The moral regeneration of individuals does not exhaust the Christian system of physical and moral means and ends. The Christian system also includes the eventual establishment of the millennium (a thousand year reign of peace and justice), which will be but the prelude to God's regeneration of the heavens and the earth. (*System*, pp. 256–257)

Campbell describes how God bestows blessings on persons by reference to two terms: antecedents and consequents. Antecedents are all those blessings bestowed on persons to prepare them for action and to induce them to action. Consequents are those blessings that God bestows on persons through a course of action correspondent to the antecedent blessings. Applied to the Christian system, the antecedent blessings are the gospel; that is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus *for sinners*, which discloses the proposition that God is love, and the means of grace that apply that proposition to the understanding and affections. The consequent blessings, which result from faith in the gospel and use of the means of grace, are transformation of the will from alienation towards God to love of God and neighbor and eternal happiness.

Does Campbell's understanding of how God bestows salvation give humanity the credit for salvation? Campbell employs his description of how God works to call people to faith in the gospel and to use of the means of grace. (*System*, pp. 148–150) Nevertheless, Campbell stresses that God “is the

author of the *facts* [the things done for sinners by Jesus Christ] and of the *testimony* which declares them; and being the author of these, he is the author of all the effects produced by these facts." (*System*, p. 222) Thus, Campbell's understanding of the Christian system, though it denies an *overriding* divine initiative in human salvation, does not give humans credit for their own salvation. Rather, Campbell offers a way of describing the divine initiative in human salvation which recognizes the significance of human action and lays the responsibility for sin squarely at the door of humanity, while giving to God, alone, the glory for human salvation.

Why did Campbell challenge typically nineteenth century evangelical views of how people become religious? Campbell challenged "popular beliefs" regarding how persons become religious because he believed those beliefs were keeping people from experiencing the transformation of their affections which results in love to God and neighbor. That is to say, Campbell believed that "popular beliefs" related to the term experimental religion were preventing the progress of experimental religion!

He asserted that the teaching that persons are transformed by the immediate work of the Holy Spirit, even if it were true, can have no good effect. He suggested that preachers who preach such doctrines resemble a physician who, instead of administering a remedy to the patient, delivers a lecture to the patient on the nature of the disease. Such preachers have "no glad tidings of great joy to all people." Instead, they teach persons who desire to become religious that their Creator could transform their hearts, if it pleased their Creator, but that it is not certain that their Creator will do so. Thus, they obscure the gospel message of God's love for sinners which, alone, has the power to bring persons to salvation! (*Christian Baptist*, I:VIII, pp. 185–186) In response to the charge of Baptist, Andrew Broaddus, that Campbell undervalued the exercises of the heart, Campbell wrote, "a more unjust representation of my views was never penned! . . . How often have we said that the greatest objection we have against the whole system we oppose is because of its impotency on the heart." (Richardson II: 358–359)

Campbell believed that the teaching that persons are transformed by the immediate operations of the Spirit also led to delusions and fanaticism, what nineteenth century people called "enthusiasm," in the place of religion or a genuine

change of heart. With tongue in cheek Campbell reported the experiences of persons who taught that God transforms sinners by an immediate work of the Spirit:

This man was regenerated when asleep, by a vision of the night. That man heard a voice in the woods, saying, "Your sins be forgiven you." A third saw the Saviour descending to the tops of the trees at noonday. (*Christian Baptist* I:VIII, p. 187)

Edwards' cautions regarding the dubious authority of such experiences notwithstanding, Campbell charged that congregations and preachers who believe that God transforms sinners by the immediate work of the Spirit lay themselves open to such experiences: "Like the phoenix in the fable, they [the people] and the preacher have gathered a bundle of dry sticks, and they set about clapping their wings with one accord, that they may fan them into a flame—which sometimes actually happens, if our faith could be so strong as to believe." (Ibid.)

Finally, Campbell believed that the teaching that persons must pass through the stages of awakening, distress/conviction, and deliverance in order to become religious and that conversion is the result of the immediate work of the Holy Spirit encouraged a type of preaching that drove thinking people away from the church, and hence, from the gospel. He identifies this type of preaching as declamation. Rather than addressing the understanding and affections with a narrative of the wonderful works of God in Jesus Christ—which discloses the proposition that God is love—"declaimers" address themselves to the passions, using "the strength of their descriptions, the flexions of their voices, the violence of their gestures, and their touching anecdotes" to horrify their hearers with the terrors of hell and allure them with the joys of heaven. (*System*, p. 259) Urging his position that the Spirit works through the gospel, Campbell writes; "No wonder that atheists and sceptics scoff at our religion. Such an army of lilliputians in reason, and giants in noise, verbosity, declamation and shouting, never stood forth the advocates of christianity in any age or country, as the preaching corps of these United States." (*Connected*, p. 369)

Campbell did not believe that it was necessary to accept his theory of regeneration, that is, his understanding of how one becomes religious, to become religious. On the contrary,

he argued that no one is saved by believing any theory of regeneration: "We might as reasonably deliver a theory of digestion to a dyspeptic, to cure his stomach—or a theory of vegetation to a scion [that is, a twig or shoot used for planting or grafting onto another plant], to hasten its growth—as to preach any view of regeneration to a sinner to make him a Christian." (*System*, p. 237) The only value of a theory of regeneration was to assist persons who are engaged in the work of regenerating others, that is, Christians, to effectively perform their task.

Campbell suggested that acceptance of his theory of regeneration would require reform of Christian practice at six points.

(1) Greater knowledge of the scriptures than was common even among the churches of what he called "the reformation now in progress." The scriptural knowledge to which he referred was not simply knowledge of what is written, but knowledge that transforms heart and life; presumably, knowledge of God's love for sinners received in faith. Campbell stated that this second type of knowledge would result from what he called "devotional" study of the Bible. Standing on his theory of divine regeneration by faith in the gospel, he promises that the person who engages in devotional study of the scriptures "will have communion with God all the day, and ever rejoice in his salvation." (*System*, pp. 239–242)

(2) Greater attention to rearing children in the Christian faith. "Most saints, in this generation," Campbell charged, "appear more zealous that their children should shine on earth, than in heaven . . . They labor to make them rich and genteel, rather than pure and holy: and spend more time in fashioning them to the foolish and wicked taste of 'polished' society, than in teaching them by precept and example the word that is better than gold, and more precious than rubies." (*System*, pp. 242–243) Referring to his own followers, he laments, "we are sorry to see this great duty [rearing children in the faith], to which nature, reason, revelation alike direct, so much neglected by many of our brethren—to find among their children those who are no better acquainted with the Scriptures than the children of their neighbors, who believe in miraculous conversions, or think it is a sin to attempt what they imagine to be the work of God alone—never suspecting that God works by human means, and employs human agency in his works of providence and redemption." (*System*, pp. 242–244)

(3) “A more elevated piety,” by which Campbell meant a greater expression of love to God than he commonly witnessed. Identifying eternal life as the eternal enjoyment and service of God, he writes:

A Christian is not one who is pious by fits and starts, who is religious or devout one day of the week, or for one hour of the day. It is the whole bent of his soul—it is the beginning, middle, and end of every day . . . His mind rests only in God. He places the Lord always before him. This is his joy and delight. He would not for the world have it otherwise. He would not enjoy eternal life, if he had it at his option, in any other way than that which God himself has proposed. (*System*, p. 244)

Campbell promises that “In the same ratio as Christians . . . rise to a more elevated piety . . . will [they] increase their influence in the great and heavenly work of regenerating the world.” (*Ibid.*)

(4) Greater attention to the Christian’s relationship to the neighbor than was common. He writes:

Were all the common (nowadays rather uncommon) virtues of justice, truth, fidelity, honesty, practiced by all Christians, how many mouths would be stopped, and how many new arguments in favor of Jesus Christ could all parties [that is, denominations] find! But, even were these common virtues as general as the Christian profession, there are the other finer virtues of benevolence, goodness, mercy, sympathy, which belong to the profession, expressed in taking care of the sick, the orphan, the widow—in alleviating all the afflictions of our fellow creatures. Add these virtues . . . to the others, and then how irresistible the argument for the divine authenticity of the gospel! (*System*, pp. 244–245).

(5) Greater attention to what is communicated in the public assemblies of the church than Campbell had observed. Not only was there a need to reform preaching, so that the sermon would better display to the understanding and affections the proposition that God is love, but the messages communicated by every aspect of the church’s public assemblies should be considered. He advises:

In the public assembly the whole order of worship ought to do justice to what is passing in the minds of all

the worshippers. That joy in the Lord, that peace and serenity of mind, that affection for the brethren, that reverence for the institutions of God's house, which all feel, should be manifest in all the business of the day. Nothing that would do injustice to all or any of these ought ever to appear in the congregation of Jesus Christ our Lord. No levity, irreverence, no gloom, no sadness, no pride, no unkindness, no severity of behavior towards any, no coldness, nothing but love, and peace, and joy, and humility, and reverence, should appear in the face, in the word or action, of any disciple. (*System*, pp. 248–249)

(6) Greater attention to church discipline, and “a due regard to decorum in the management of such cases as occur,” than he observed in some congregations. If the credibility of the gospel rests on the lives of believers, resoluteness joined with the greatest sensitivity and prudence must be exercised in cases of discipline. Campbell admonishes, “More strictness, more firmness, and more tenderness in such cases would add greatly to the moral influence of every society. A few persons walking together in the bonds of Christian affection, and under the discipline of Christ, is better than the largest assembly in which there are visibly and manifestly many who fear not God and keep not his commandments.” (*System*, pp. 253–254)

Was Campbell an evangelical? The answer to this question depends upon how one defines the term evangelical. If evangelical means one who affirmed that God transforms the will by immediate operations of the Holy Spirit which produce the stages of awakening, distress/conviction, and deliverance, Campbell was not an evangelical. Although he affirmed the reality and desirability of a conscious experience of divine transformation of the heart that is expressed in the practice of love to God and neighbor, he denied that this experience is the result of the *immediate* work of the Spirit and rejected the idea that it is necessary to pass through the stages of awakening, distress/conviction, and deliverance in order to become religious. The fact that Campbell rejected the idea that God has an *overriding* initiative in the work of human salvation, is not relevant to the issue of whether he can be identified as an evangelical. Many evangelicals, the most prominent of whom was John Wesley, rejected the idea that God exercises an overriding initiative in saving sinners.

On the other hand, if the term evangelical relates to the affirmation of the spiritual importance of the evangel—the good news of God's forgiveness and acceptance of sinners—the term would seem to fit no one better than Alexander Campbell. For Campbell, the sole purpose of the church and its institutions—preaching, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Day, prayer, meditation, fasting—is to communicate the good news of God's forgiveness and acceptance of sinners. Campbell taught that the gospel discloses (displays, illustrates, proves, argues, demonstrates) the proposition that God is love, which, alone, has the power to transform sinners from alienation towards God and neighbor to love of God and neighbor. For Campbell, the gospel is nothing less than the power of God to salvation. Not surprisingly, Campbell affirmed Luther's position that a church's teaching of the doctrine of justification or forgiveness is the test of its standing or falling. (*System*, p. 153). Thus, it may be most accurate to identify Campbell as he might have identified himself, as an evangelical reformer of nineteenth century evangelicalism.

Campbell's understanding of how persons become religious might help to promote a revival of personal religious experience in contemporary North America. Although Campbell stated that no one is saved by believing any theory of regeneration, he understood that personal religious experience is hindered by views of how one becomes religious which obscure the message of God's love disclosed in the gospel. In recent years, it has become common to lament a famine of spirituality among North Americans. Church members complain of boring, lifeless services of worship and of congregations that seem to be little more than clubs for the socially compatible. To be sure, there are persons who speak of their experience of the Holy Spirit. But to many persons the experiences reported by these individuals seem to be nothing but delusion and fanaticism. Can it be that the message of God's love disclosed in the gospel has been obscured in North American congregations? Or, is it that the lives of contemporary North American Christians do not lend credibility to the gospel? In either case, the way to a revival of personal religious experience may be by re-focusing on the message of God's love disclosed in the gospel in every aspect of the church's life; recognizing that the gospel is the power of God to salvation. To undertake such a program, would be to begin the reformation of the twentieth century!

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Lecture 8

Campbell: Marx to Jackson

*Eva Jean Wrather, Author and Prominent Biographer of
Alexander Campbell, Nashville, Tennessee.*

A guidebook to Ulster published in the 1930's included Alexander Campbell among "famous" native sons of County Antrim. A brief sketch of his life concedes that he founded a college and a new American religious sect called "Campbellites"; but, the account concludes, "Farmers of the New World possibly thank him more for introducing the fine-wooled sheep."¹ Fortunately for us the author of the guidebook to North Ireland was not an equally reliable guide through the field of church history. Else we would not be celebrating the bicentennial of the birth of Alexander Campbell on the shores of Lough Neagh in the year 1788.

Campbell himself has a few words to say on the art of biography. In writing the life of his father he commented, rather ruefully, "The public life of a Christian minister is not generally a life of thrilling incidents and bold adventure."² But what may have been true for the father is not so applicable to the son. Fortunately for those biographers and historians who in this anniversary year are seeking to take a fresh look at the man and his times. For with some men an element of drama is inherent in their very nature and personality. They may bring to the exploration of ideas, to a duel of minds, that sense of adventure which others may discover in searching out a pathway to the planets or descending twenty thousand leagues under the sea. And sometimes events in the life of such an adventurer in ideas so coalesce at a given point in time that these events appear, in retrospect, as a watershed marking dramatic change between what came before and what came after.

Such a time for Alexander Campbell was the year 1829. A year when in the spring, upon a debating platform in Cincinnati, he crossed swords with the foremost socialist reformer of the British Isles. And when in the fall he sat as delegate in a constitutional convention in Richmond where he crossed swords with some of the best political minds in the American republic.

Before this year 1829 Campbell was known as an emerging religious reformer whose voice as editor, writer, and preacher was being heard on a limited stage that extended from the Alleghanies westward to the Mississippi, and from the Western Reserve of Ohio in the north to Middle Tennessee in the south. But after 1829 his voice would be known from the Eastern seaboard to his native North Ireland and the universities of Scotland.

The first of these dramatic events of 1829 began quietly enough when Robert Owen, industrialist and philanthropist of New Lanark, Scotland, founded a communal utopia at New Harmony, Indiana. Then once his New World socialist experiment was well under way, Owen issued a challenge to the American clergy to debate the proposition: "that all the religions of the world have been founded upon the ignorance of mankind; . . . that they have been . . . the real source of vice, disunion and misery . . . [and] are now the only real bar to the formation of a society of virtue, of intelligence, of charity . . . among the whole human family."³

Soon after his challenge was accepted by the editor-theologian at Bethany, Owen visited Campbell to make arrangements for the debate. Quickly they discovered a mutual respect and warm personal regard. Not surprisingly. For both men were educators and reformers pursuing—by however disparate means—a millennial view of, to use Owen's words, a "new moral world". Both men were children of the English Enlightenment, finding their intellectual roots in Bacon and Newton, in John Locke and the Scottish School of Common Sense. Both also were children of the Industrial Revolution, alert to the failure of the church to meet the challenge of this revolution and its new order of society; for they alike knew firsthand the squalid slums of Glasgow and the hypocrisy and greed of those new cotton lords who sat in front pews of the kirk on Sunday while children of six years old or younger

labored in their mills under the lash of overseers for fourteen hours a day, seven days a week. But not so in Owen's cooperative mills at New Lanark which drew visitors from throughout Europe to observe there a model of profitable capitalism operated without exploitation—mills where workmen lived in well-built houses along the sylvan upper reaches of the River Clyde and where all children under the age of ten went to school. Alexander Campbell—even while a student at Glasgow University in 1808—had become acquainted with the story of Owen's father-in-law, David Dale, who had founded New Lanark and who, like his son-in-law, was, as Campbell described him, both an "affluent" manufacturer and also a man of "charity and benevolence".⁴ This friendship forged at Bethany was quite evident when Campbell and Owen next met—at Cincinnati. One observer, the redoubtable Englishwoman, Frances Trollope, tartly remarked that the two disputants were to be seen "constantly dining together, and . . . [expressing] most cordially their mutual esteem. All this I think could only have happened in America. I am not quite sure that . . . it should have happened anywhere."⁵

Before these two friendly antagonists opened their discussion in mid-April one Cincinnati editor, no admirer of Campbellism, had commented that "if two blind men met to argue about colors, . . . no one would feel bound to lay aside his work and go."⁶ But the great majority of Cincinnatians were honored that their city was host to a discussion which was drawing notices in the *London Times* and the *Edinburgh Scotsman*; and along with visitors from throughout the country and several from abroad, they so crowded the meeting place for the two daily sessions of debate—which continued six hours or more a day for seven days—that the press expressed fear lest the balcony of the building would collapse.

To the astute observer it was evident from the beginning that at the heart of the discussion at Cincinnati lay the age-old question: What is man? what is his nature, his origin, his destiny?

For Owen the answers were summed up in what he called the "twelve fundamental laws of human nature" which defined his creed of materialism and determinism.⁷ More Lockian by far than Locke himself, he affirmed that man is a creature wholly circumscribed by his five senses, his mind at birth a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate on which his future is written by circumstance and environment. "The character of man," he never tired of repeating, "is formed *for*—not by

himself.”⁸ Therefore, “as men receive all their knowledge from without,” it followed that neither praise nor blame for his actions could be ascribed to the individual.⁹ But before society could be transformed through education in accord with these mathematical “laws,” Owen concluded, three institutions of present society must be abolished: religion, marriage, and private property.¹⁰ This done, the dawn of his millennial ideal of a cooperative, “communitarian” society would be at hand.

Quite to the contrary, replied Alexander Campbell. Owen’s social system was “at war with human nature” while his image of man in truth “lost sight of the creature man”, denuding him of his “rightful dignity and honor” and reducing him “wholly to earth”. “Every rational theory on the nature of man,” continued Campbell, “must be predicated . . . upon his spiritual, as well as his animal endowments, . . . [and] upon a strict analysis of the whole man, . . . soul, body, and spirit.”¹¹ And from this failure of Owen to perceive man-in-his-fullness proceeded other cardinal errors in his system: the denial to the individual of free will, free choice, and hence of responsibility for his own destiny; and the assumption that the perfectibility of human society, the eradication of evil, can be achieved from *without* through changes in the social and economic structure, rather than by transformation from *within* through reformation and discipline of the mind and spirit of individual man and woman. Here, in his repeated emphasis on the high “rank and dignity of man in the universe”, Campbell showed most clearly his indebtedness to Renaissance humanism—a humanism which he, of course, found rooted in the teachings of the Christ of the New Testament.

A humanism also quite evident when he turned to address Owen’s specific challenge to debate the destructive effects of religion. At this point Campbell could speak from a peculiar position of strength since no skeptic from antiquity to New Harmony had assailed the evils and failures of the church-in-history more vigorously than the Bethany editor had been doing through the pages of his little magazine for the past six years. At the outset, therefore, Campbell expressed his sympathetic understanding of Owen’s disillusionment and disgust aroused by the “conflicting dogmas and rancors of sectarian pride and jealousy.” The problem, stated Campbell, was that Owen and his fellow skeptics confused true religion with “the abuses of it. . . . [They] mistake the dross of mere human doctrines and dogmas for the pure gold

of Christianity.”¹² This was as near suggesting his own ideas of religious reform as he would come in the debate; and when questions were sent up from the floor, he declined comment.

Instead—returning to the philosophical question, What is man?—Campbell said to Owen as Benjamin Franklin had said to Thomas Paine that he “calculates too largely upon the natural virtues of man.” Again recalling Franklin’s argument to Paine, Campbell contended that “Mr. Owen’s system, as far as it has any peculiar benevolence proposed in it, . . . is a plagiarism from christian society; in other words, . . . it was derived from models furnished by christian enterprise and christian sympathy.” Indeed, to Campbell’s mind, the great central irony in Owen’s position was the fact that in eliminating from his social system the regenerating power of religion—a power that could “produce love” and “*make a wicked man good*”—Owen was eliminating the most potent force for a true reformation of both man and society.¹³

Mrs. Trollope remarked that at times these solemn proceedings were interrupted by a “roar of laughter”.¹⁴ Certainly, in his attacks on what he considered the weaknesses and the illogic in Owen’s system Campbell made good use not only of his powers of logic but also of his considerable gifts for wit and fine raillery. One occasion—particularly enjoyed by both the audience and Owen himself—arose when Campbell suggested that Owen’s conception of man as a creature devoid of free will, forever fettered by circumstance and environment, was dramatically proven false by the example of Owen’s own remarkable life and career. “Mr. Owen,” observed Campbell, “was himself educated in a family of Episcopalians; is he now an *Episcopalian*? We see that the circumstances of his education could not shackle his active mind. We see that he has broken his chains, and that his emancipated mind now walks abroad as if it had never known a fetter.”¹⁵

The debate spanning an eight-day period, Campbell by invitation preached at the Methodist Church on the intervening Sunday. Most attentive in the audience was Robert Owen, who afterwards remarked, “Never did I see so much fine talent so miserably misdirected. Never did I see human beings so ready to receive poison under the supposition that it was good and wholesome food.”¹⁶ Nevertheless, a few weeks later Owen was again a guest at Bethany—a visit the Campbell family would ever after recall with special pleasure. Campbell had bought the publication rights to their debate, and Owen remained several weeks to correct the stenographic report.

Some seventeen years later, in 1847, Campbell would spend the summer on a lecture tour of Great Britain. Though the Cincinnati debate was still a favorite work on "Evidences of Christianity" being read by both the general public and young gentlemen at the universities, Campbell did not have the opportunity to meet with his old friend and antagonist. The aged, Owen, however, was continuing to promote his socialist philosophy—a philosophy which was, in fact, on the eve of renaissance in form and scope more revolutionary than ever envisioned at New Harmony or New Lanark. Five years earlier, in 1842, a young German named Fredrick Engels had come to sit at the feet of "The Father of British Socialism" and had remained to assist Owen in preparing for publication his major work, *The Book of the New Moral World*.¹⁷ Two years later Engels had joined another young German, Karl Marx, in Paris where they became friends and collaborators; and when in 1847 Campbell crossed the channel to visit the French capital, only a few miles to the north Engels and Marx were refining the ideas which a few months later would be published to the world as the *Communist Manifesto*. There is no indication that Alexander Campbell read or even knew of the document. But if so he would have recognized that certain essential elements in the dogma which the *Manifesto* would impress as a new world view had, in fact, been argued out on a debating platform in Cincinnati in 1829.

Certainly he would say to socialists, old or new, as he had said to Owen, that in proposing their vaunted "new order" they were in truth but "dressing up anew the long exploded doctrines of fate and materialism" and the "crude notions of . . . philosophic necessity".¹⁸ Another issue of their thinking was of even deeper concern to the master of Bethany who would proclaim: "I call no man master upon the earth."¹⁹ However humanitarian the intent of socialist reformers, their mechanical myths and "external philanthropy" were merely dressing up in new rhetoric the spectre of age-old tyrannies over the mind and spirit of man.

To the mind of Alexander Campbell the truly new, truly revolutionary, was the experiment in democracy and freedom being undertaken in the young American republic which had been only a little over three decades old when he had come to her shores at age twenty-one. Even while he was seeing the

Cincinnati debate through the press in this summer of 1829, he was preparing to engage in searching examination of his democratic faith in its multiple aspects—social and economic, ethical and political.

1829 was a good year for democracy. Andrew Jackson was in the White House. The first president from West of the Alleghanies, the president who had boldly changed the name of Jefferson's party from "Republican" to "Democrat"—the latter a name which had not been in good repute in 1776. A president, moreover, with whom Campbell could claim personal acquaintance. For on his first trip to Nashville, Tennessee, in 1827 a mutual friend had taken him to visit General Jackson. Unhappily, no record has surfaced concerning the conversation of these two democrats, both seeking to make democratic principles operative—one in the arena of religion, the other in that of politics. But Campbell, the sheepbreeder, did privately note that an orphan lamb lay swaddled before the open fire in the parlor of the Hermitage where he and Jackson sat talking.²⁰

In 1829, in the West of Campbell and Jackson, the lines of old political struggles in the nation were being drawn anew: liberty versus power, the people versus an elite. Indeed as the trans-mountain states came into the union, all were coming with constitutions which guaranteed manhood suffrage. But not so in Virginia whose constitution, drawn in 1776, restricted suffrage to that minority who possessed the bulk of the state's wealth in land and slaves. All demands for reform, beginning with Jefferson, had gone unheeded until the election of President Jackson. As soon as the call for a constitutional convention went out, with ninety-six delegates to be chosen, Alexander Campbell had found himself besieged. Both friends and foes of his religious views were equally convinced that a man who had attacked the pretensions-to-power of the clergy with such satisfactory proportions of logic and sarcasm could be trusted to deal in like fashion with the aristocratical assumptions of the planters of the Tidewater and the Piedmont.

On October 4th, wearily astride his spirited mare, "Miss Fanny", Campbell rode into Richmond—to find himself in the midst of a great throng. If no one would describe the arriving delegates there as "an assembly of demigods"—as Jefferson had described the Philadelphia convention which wrote the American constitution of 1787—visitors from almost every state and ministries from foreign powers were crowding into

Richmond, eager to see and hear men whose names had been written large in the history of the nation. Though Thomas Jefferson—the Virginian whom Campbell would have most liked to meet and whose name he seldom spoke without the prefix “immortal”—had lain buried the past three years at Monticello, two venerable former presidents of the United States were there: James Monroe, who would be elected president of the 1829 assembly; and James Madison, the only surviving member of the Virginia convention of 1776 and the “Father of the Constitution” of 1787, whose bicentennial was celebrated only last year. And there sat a future president, John Tyler, with several future members of his cabinet; and Chief Justice John Marshall; and a distinguished array of jurists, members of Congress, and American ambassadors to foreign courts. Alone and apart in this assembly sat the editor-preacher from the banks of the Buffaloe, the sole clergyman to serve as a delegate to the convention.

But to connoisseurs of dramatic contrasts and contest of wills it was soon apparent that this “Reverend gentleman from Brooke” County was emerging as the most radical democrat among the Western delegates and that his opposite number was John Randolph of Roanoke, the most uncompromising ultra-conservative among the Eastern gentry, who had come to Richmond dressed in black with crepe upon his hat and arm, being in “mourning”, he said, “for the old Constitution of Virginia . . . [as] in this Convention he expected to witness its death and burial.”²¹ For three decades on the floor of Congress Randolph had, by his gifts of vituperation and scathing wit, struck fear into hapless colleagues on whom he always did his homework well. Having also done his homework on Alexander Campbell, he knew that some three years previously the Bethany editor had published a new translation of the New Testament. At one point in the debate, it was said, Randolph became so outraged by one of Campbell’s proposals that he rose to his feet, shook his long forefinger—that “javelin of rhetoric”—in Campbell’s direction, and shouted: “That man is never satisfied! God Almighty could not satisfy him with the Bible which He gave, and Mr. Campbell went and wrote a Bible of his own.”²² Another sally which Campbell enjoyed relating to his family came when Randolph, in the midst of a “rambling, brilliant discourse”, turned scornfully on Campbell and declared: “Let that gentleman return to Western Virginia and take care of his sheep.”²³

Others, too—though in somewhat less hostile terms—were marking the “Reverend gentleman from Brooke” as “one of the most controversial figures in the convention.”²⁴ His name regularly made its way onto the pages of the *Richmond Enquirer*; the *Southern Literary Messenger* complimented his “vigor and originality of mind” and his “honorable fairness of conduct”, though also remarking that “Mr. Campbell, . . . like most reformers was too much a citizen of the world to be a perfectly safe counsellor for Virginia”;²⁵ and another Virginia historian listed him among the “most notable and distinguished members” of the assembly.²⁶

But for a particularly fresh and engaging portrait of Campbell at Richmond we are indebted to a young Tidewater conservative, Hugh Blair Grigsby. A quarter century later—when Alexander Campbell was by then a preceptor of young men at his own college—Grigsby was to write a history of *The Virginia Convention of 1829–30* in which he paid affectionate tribute to the forty-one year old delegate from the West who had so willingly spent hours of conversation with him, who at age twenty-two was the youngest delegate at Richmond. His presence there had come about by happenstance. The initial delegate from Grigsby’s Norfolk district had become so convinced of the “rightness” of the Western cause that rather, he said, than “violate my conscience” by voting with the Eastern block he had resigned his seat.²⁷ And angry constituents had sent young Grigsby in his stead. Being himself at this time, Grigsby later wrote, “fresh from my Latin and Greek,” he was delighted to discover in the gentleman from Brooke “a fine [classical] scholar” as well as a “bold, subtle, indefatigable controversialist”. Moreover, he reported, Campbell’s company in Richmond was especially sought out by “younger members of the body who relished his amusing thrusts, his pleasing address and social feelings,” and who found him “in his dress and manners, in his style of speaking, . . . [to be] a man of the world”.²⁸ Also, though the young conservative and the Western democrat voted on opposing sides of the political issues at Richmond, Grigsby, even decades later, recalled with relish that Campbell could claim a rare distinction: he had on occasion come off the victor in a battle of wits with Randolph of Roanoke. Especially remembered was Campbell’s rejoinder to Randolph concerning a maxim of Francis Bacon. Randolph had quoted a phrase from the first part of the maxim to sustain his argument for the

status quo. Campbell smoothly rejoined by quoting entire the Latin maxim, which turned its thrust in favor of the Western argument for change. "I heard the gentleman," he said, "... [allude] to ... the great innovator, Time. I did wish to hear him quote the whole sentence, and apply it. Lord Bacon said (I think I give it in his own words)—'*Maximus innovator tempus; Quidni igitur tempus imitemur?*' Why then, says he, can we not imitate Time, the greatest of all innovators?"²⁹

The convention was beginning its fourth week in session when Campbell arose to make his first formal address—an address on the "basis of representation". The issue in conflict: rule based on property versus majority rule [a limited majority, that is, since only white males could be presumed "created free and equal"]. As Campbell presented his argument, it would be quite evident to the learned audience before him that much of his thinking was derived from liberal political theories of the Enlightenment—reinforced, of course, by his own twenty years experience of the American frontier. First, he argued from the theory of "natural rights," reminding the gentlemen of the Tidewater and Piedmont that the Bill of Rights "has been our ... only bulwark against the demolition of our republican citadel" and reminding them also that the "legitimate father" of its first article was John Locke, the philosopher to whom, he observed, "more than [to] any other, these American States are indebted for all their civil and religious liberties". Secondly, he argued from the theory of the "social contract", positing a government whose function is to serve *pro bono publico*—for the good of all, not of the privileged few. Furthermore, having at Cincinnati in the spring marshalled his eloquence to assail Robert Owen's view of man and society, so he now warned the Eastern gentry that their position was "based upon views of society" both "anti-republican" and "unphilosophic". Anti-republican because, he said, all history is proof that after a "legalized *oligarchy* ... come the thirty tyrants; ... and last of all comes Julius Caesar." Unphilosophic because a majority "of men and money" cannot be proved "more useful to the state" than "majorities of talent, ... scientific skill and general literature. ... A Robert Fulton, a General Jackson, a Joseph Lancaster, a Benjamin Franklin are as useful to the state as a whole district of mere slave-holders."³⁰

As the weeks of debate lengthened and tempers grew shorter, Campbell and his colleagues were increasingly alarmed to find delegates to the East acting "as if they ap-

prehended from the West, an irruption of barbarians," and deriding Western lands as "unfit for human use and not desirable as haunts for wild beasts."³¹ These aspersions fell strangely on Western ears. President Jackson had ridden away to Washington from his gracious Hermitage where his study overlooked a garden laid out by a "regular bred english Gardner"; while Campbell's rich acres on the Buffaloe entitled him to a vote even in aristocratic Virginia, and visitors to Bethany Mansion would scarcely concede that the quality of hospitality and conversation there was second to that of any plantation house on the banks of the James. To the condescension and taunts of Eastern delegates Campbell replied in both sorrow and anger: "I am . . . very sorry to observe . . . on this floor, a tendency to treat us as aliens who have no common interest with the East." And for the East he posed a barbed conundrum. How could it be, he asked, that if "the wise men all come from the East, the march of the [American] empire was to the West?"³²

In these exchanges lay both grim portent and tragic irony. For the vast majority of Virginians, East and West alike, did indeed have, in Campbell's words, "common interest". They professed a common philosophy of Physiocratic liberalism, their ideal society a prosperous and secure agrarian state. But at Richmond this common interest was being obscured by a contest of special interests. In the West: the need for protection of domestic manufactures and for internal improvements as embodied in Henry Clay's "American System". In the East: concern for its doctrine of States Rights threatened by the encroachment of Federal power, and concern for its slave interests threatened by the rapid growth of the Trans-Alleghany. On this point Campbell again chided an Eastern opponent with barbed raillery: "Sir, it is not the increase in population in the West which this gentleman ought to fear. It is the energy which the mountain breeze and western habits impart to these emigrants. . . . They soon become *working politicians*; and the difference, Sir, between a *talking* and a *working* politician is immense. The Old Dominion has long been celebrated for producing great orators. . . . But at home, or when they return from Congress, they have negroes to fan them asleep. But a . . . Western Virginia Statesman has this advantage, that when he returns home he takes off his coat, and takes hold of the plough. This gives him bone and muscle, Sir, and preserves his Republican principles pure and uncontaminated."³³

When Campbell arose to make his second major address—on the right of suffrage—especially rankling in his mind was a speech which Randolph of Roanoke had delivered several days earlier. “I would not live under King Numbers,” Randolph had scornfully declared; rather, he would flee “this monstrous tyranny”. Alexander Campbell could have asked no better opening: “Whenever [this gentleman] . . . may please to expatriate himself, he will find beyond the dominion of King Numbers, there is no other monarch save . . . King Sword, or King Purse. And, Sir, permit me to add, . . . I love King Numbers; I wish to live, and . . . to die, under the government of this . . . [most] wise, benevolent . . . and powerful prince . . . under the canopy of Heaven.” At the heart of this passionate plea for universal suffrage lay a deeper issue—the concern for social and economic justice which Campbell so fully shared with Jefferson and Paine, Godwin and Rousseau. The great empires of history, he argued, had “all . . . gone to ruin . . . [because] they were not founded on a just regard of social rights.” And here again he returned to Randolph who, in a defense of the *status quo*, had pointed to “the great men, which the present system in Virginia had produced.” Campbell answered with a stinging rebuke: “We doubt it not, Sir. I have lived in a country in which there were many great men, many learned and powerful men, but how were they created, Sir? For one noble Lord, there were ten thousand ignoble paupers, and for one great scholar, there were ten thousand ignoramuses. That is the secret, Sir.”³⁴

During the election campaign for the convention a Baptist paper, *Columbian Star*, had sarcastically commented that “Mr. Campbell . . . is maturing the whole doctrine of Constitutions, and means to bring in Moses as the first Exemplar.” Years later historian Grigsby would remark that among the assemblage of gentlemen at Richmond there was nothing in the mien or appearance of the “gentleman from Brooke” to set him apart as a clergymen, except on a single occasion. In chiding Eastern delegates for their insistence on the antiquity and sanctity of the Virginia constitution Campbell drew on his “great fund of humor,” said Grigsby, to urge “that the East on its own principles might without self-abasement lay George Mason at the feet of Moses.” The occasion came when Campbell, in his address on the right of suffrage, treated the convention to a lesson in Biblical history: “Now, Sir, if gentlemen will look into the Exodus of Israel, they will find that the Virginia Constitution was not the first written Constitu-

tion, nor the General Suffrage the invention of Oliver Cromwell." Rather, he suggested, "The God of Israel first proposed a social compact . . . called in Hebrew Birith, . . . in Scotch Covenant, . . . [and] equivalent to our English word Constitution. . . . After it was written, it was submitted to every man upon the muster roll of Israel . . . [who] voted for its adoption as their national compact. So old, Sir, and so venerable is the origin of General Suffrage."³⁵

As the convention entered its third month of debate Campbell delivered the third and last of his major addresses—on judiciary reform. Here at Richmond would be restaged in miniature the struggle waged from the very beginnings of the nation when Jefferson had pitted his republican principles against the efforts of Hamilton and Marshall to mold the constitution and the courts into instruments of the propertied minority. As its first order of Business in October the Virginia convention had assigned the delegates to special committees, Campbell being named to the Judiciary Committee. Its chairman, of course, was John Marshall—the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States who had gone to the polls but twice in the past twenty-four years: in 1804 to vote against the reelection of Thomas Jefferson and in 1828 to vote against the election of Andrew Jackson. The Bethany editor who had not hesitated to question the authority of cardinals and archbishops would not be overawed by the magisterial assumptions of a Chief Justice; and Campbell had obviously emerged from stormy sessions of the Judiciary Committee as a leader of the opposition since he had brought the minority report of the committee to the convention floor. Certainly, both in this report of October and in his December address he honored well his pledge to the voters of his district to fight their state's self-perpetuating county court system which served as the bastion of minority power and privilege—a system amounting, said Campbell, to "a hereditary aristocracy". As a remedy he presented proposals for democratization of the judiciary—including a resolution for election of justices of the peace by direct vote of the people—which went further even than his Western colleagues were prepared to go.³⁶

These issues aside, the "Reverend gentleman from Brooke" had also come to Richmond with an agenda of his own. In his words: to lay "a foundation for the abolition of slavery" and for "a system of common school education."³⁷

Soon after his arrival in Richmond an informal caucus

had been called to discuss the question of gradual emancipation. There Campbell was pleased if somewhat surprised to discover that the Virginia slave-holders of 1829 were, he later reported, "as alive to this subject as we" and as ready to declare slavery "the greatest curse, the most unendurable incubus on the prosperity of Virginia". [Randolph, indeed, had already provided by terms of his will for the emancipation of his own three hundred slaves.] At the same time those present were but too well aware that as far as their "peculiar institution" was concerned they, in Jefferson's bitter phrase, had "the wolf by the ears"; and Campbell gradually came to agree that to embroil the present assembly in an attempt to resolve this complex and troubled question would be "impolitic and inexpedient", imperilling, in fact, the whole system of constitutional reform which he and other Western delegates had been elected to achieve—reforms which, if achieved, would make more possible the eventual attainment of the goal of emancipation. Therefore, in the end he had yielded to the "matured judgment" of the caucus. And he did so with tolerably good grace since those present were unanimously agreed "to guard against the insertion of a single word in the constitution recognizing the existence of this evil" so that at any time the state legislature might by simple majority vote remove the "incubus" of slavery from the commonwealth of Virginia.³⁸

Having yielded the first point of his special agenda, Campbell was all the more determined not to yield the second. Indeed, he brought to the floor the only resolution on public education to be presented at Richmond: "Whereas, . . . the blessings of free Government . . . must always depend upon, the intelligence, virtue and patriotism of the community, . . . it shall be always the duty of the Legislature . . . [to] encourage such a system of . . . common schools . . . as will . . . secure to the youth of this Commonwealth, such an education as may most promote the public good." In similar vein Jefferson and Madison had argued for public schools in the Virginia convention of 1776, and equally without success. Campbell's resolution was "ordered to be printed"; but on his presenting the resolution a second time, "the House refused to consider it."³⁹ Years later, however, when he made another effort in the same cause, one writer would express the opinion that Campbell's was "the strongest and clearest plea for common school education ever delivered in any state of the Union."⁴⁰

The arguments concerning another resolution presented at Richmond would tax to the fullest Campbell's robust sense of humor and appreciation of the ironic. By a substantial majority the delegates voted to retain in the new constitution the provision in the old which declared that "no minister . . . or priest of any denomination . . . [shall] be eligible [for election] to . . . the General Assembly" of Virginia.⁴¹ If, as the *Southern Literary Messenger* suggested, the presence of the "Reverend gentleman" who "possessed such radical notions and was so anxious to enforce them" strengthened the majority vote in the assembly,⁴² then here was irony indeed. For of all the delegates there Campbell argued most eloquently for separation of church and state, presenting a resolution concerning "religious establishments" more far-reaching than even Eastern conservatives would approve.⁴³ Years later, noting Campbell's heterodoxy—he was "equally at war" with "the doctrines of the church and with the constitution of the state"—historian Grigsby would comment with wry humor: "There was no danger to religious freedom from him. He needed it more than anybody else." But Campbell could glean one small grain of satisfaction: James Madison sided with him and the minority voting to strike the exclusion of ministers. And an even more significant expression of Madison's approbation was to come.

Campbell had not accepted election to the Virginia convention merely to advance his political convictions. Many of his evenings at Richmond were occupied in religious conversation. One such evening was spent with an Elder Judah of the Jewish Synagogue who, having read a copy of the Cincinnati debate just off the press, had requested an interview with Campbell to thank him for his defense of "the divine mission of Moses against the infidel Owen". Moreover, he sadly added, "you are the only Christian minister I have heard in a long life that does not abuse us poor Jews." In publishing an account of their conversation Campbell noted his own concern: "We Gentiles are debtors to the seed of Abraham for all that gives us elevation of character, . . . [and] glad would I be if your reproach among the nations was taken away."⁴⁴ Also, every Sunday found Campbell in the pulpit preaching to audiences which, he estimated, sometimes numbered up to three thousand. James Madison, by his own account, was "very often" in the congregation; and afterwards he remarked of the preacher, "I regard him as the . . . most original expounder of the Scriptures I have ever heard."⁴⁵

Madison made the remark at the home of his cousins, the Pendletons of Louisa County, who were among a number of Virginia Episcopalians beginning to discover much that was congenial to their minds in the Bethany theology; and their number was without doubt increased by Campbell's three-month ministry in Richmond.

Meanwhile, Christmas passed, and the New Year, until at last in mid-January the Virginia convention made its weary way to adjournment. Historians were to write of "the miracle at Philadelphia" in 1787—a miracle brought about, as Alister Cooke has suggested, by three instruments: "first, compromise; second, compromise; and third, compromise."⁴⁶ But there was little compromise at Richmond. And no miracle. Nevertheless, despite the pain of defeat, to a man of Campbell's confident temper it would appear evident that though the Virginia gentry of the East had won the battle, they would in the end lose their war against the democratic forces of the West. At Richmond the editor-theologian of Bethany had had the opportunity to define in detail his conception of that democracy which he had advanced at Cincinnati as the answer to Owen's communism; and in the years ahead he would proclaim—as eloquently as an Emerson or a Whitman—his faith in the "glorious destiny" of the American republic.

When after a four month absence, and again astride his mare, Miss Fanny, Campbell made his way home to Bethany through the snows of January, he resumed his editor's chair in full knowledge that he was now facing added responsibilities of leadership. For with the advent of the 1830's the reform movement he advocated found itself finally separated from the mainstream of Protestant orthodoxy, to be cast in the role of a new—and peculiarly American—religious communion. And, to herald the change, he began publication of his new magazine, *The Millennial Harbinger*—a name the utopians of New Harmony would have applauded.

Moreover, as Alexander Campbell entered this new phase of ministry, he would do so with recognition of his name enhanced—and with his own perceptions broadened and deepened—by the events of that extraordinary year, 1829.

Footnotes

1. *Ulster for Your Holidays* (Belfast: Ulster Tourist Development Association, Ltd., n.d.), 19-21.

2. Alexander Campbell, *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell* (Cincinnati: H. S. Bosworth, 1861), 120.
3. *New Harmony Gazette*, March 26, 1825, 169.
4. *The Millennial Harbinger*, ed. Alexander Campbell (Bethany, Va.: A. Campbell), 1858, 587. Hereafter cited as MH.
5. Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (New York: Alfred H. Knopf, 1939), 153.
6. *The Western Luminary* (Presbyterian journal pub. in Lexington, Ky.), Aug. 20, 1828; quoting J. L. Wilson, ed. of Cincinnati *Pandect*.
7. *Debate on the Evidences of Christianity: Containing an Examination of "The Social System" and of All the Systems of Scepticism of Ancient and Modern Times, . . . between Robert Owen and Alexander Campbell* (Cincinnati: Robinson and Fairband, 1829), I, 22–23. Hereafter cited as *Debate*.
8. *Robert Owen's American Legacy: Proceedings of the Robert Owen Bicentennial Conference*, New Harmony, Indiana, Oct. 15–16, 1971, ed. Donald E. Pitzer (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 38.
9. *Debate*, I., 83, 124; II, 224.
10. *Ibid.*, I, 112, 114, 120.
11. *Ibid.*, I, 17–18, 48–49; II, 136.
12. *Ibid.*, II, 108, 110, 165.
13. *Ibid.*, II, 131–132, 105, 112.
14. Trollope, *op. cit.*, 150.
15. *Debate*, I, 104.
16. *Ibid.*, II, 144.
17. George B. Lockwood, *The New Harmony Movement* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1905), 43; *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Eleventh Edition, 1910–11) XVII, 808.
18. *Debate*, I, 48; II, 131.
19. *The Christian Baptist*, ed. Alexander Campbell, Burnet one vol. edition (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Co., n.d.), April 3, 1826, 229. Hereafter cited as CB.
20. "Early Recollections of Alexander Campbell by His Tenth Daughter, Decima Campbell Barclay, in Collaboration with Samuel Pleasants Christian" (c. 1917), 6; ms. in author's Barclay papers.
21. John P. Little, *History of Richmond*. Reprinted from *The Southern Literary Messenger* (Richmond: Dietz Printing Co., 1933), 163–164.
22. Benjamin Lyon Smith, *Alexander Campbell* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1930), 172; no source cited.
23. Decima Barclay, "Early Recollections," *op. cit.*, 14.

24. William H. Gaines, Jr., "The Evening of Their Glory," *Virginia Cavalcade*, Summer, 1953, 21.
25. Little, op. cit., 159.
26. David L. Pulliam, *The Constitutional Conventions of Virginia from the Foundation of the Commonwealth to the Present Time* (Richmond: John T. West Publishers, 1901), 65.
27. *Proceedings and Debates of the Virginia State Convention of 1829–30* (Richmond: Printed by S. Shepherd & Co. for Ritchie & Cook, 1830), 49, 234. Hereafter cited as P&D.
28. Hugh Blair Grigsby, *The Virginia Convention of 1829–30. A Discourse Delivered before the Virginia Historical Society. At their Annual Meeting Held in the Athenaeum in the City of Richmond, December 15th, 1853. Published by the Society.* (Richmond: Macfarlane & Fergusson, 1854), 67–69.
29. P&D, 389. William Cabell Bruce, *John Randolph of Roanoke, 1773–1833* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1922), I, 619, singles out this passage as example of an opponent's "neat turn" to a remark by Randolph.
30. P&D, 116–124.
31. P&D, 200, 752.
32. P&D, 123, 119.
33. P&D, 119.
34. P&D, 383–391.
35. CB, Oct. 1829, 592; P&D, 388.
36. P&D, Judiciary Committee report, 42; address on county courts, 525–531.
37. Letter to William Tener of London in Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1897), II, 319; letter to Col. Charles S. Morgan, Aug. 12, 1829 (West Virginia Historical Library).
38. MH, 1832, 86; 1849, 243.
39. P&D, 750, 787.
40. G. L. Cranmer, "Alexander Campbell: Teacher, Preacher, & Statesman," *The West Virginia Historical Magazine*, Oct., 1902, 74.
41. P&D, 457.
42. Little, op. cit., 159.
43. P&D, 708.
44. MH, 1830, 561–562.
45. Frederick D. Power, *Life of William Kimbrough Pendleton* (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Company, 1902), 40.
46. J. D. Williams, "The Summer of '87: Getting a Constitution," *The Key Reporter*, Summer, 1987, 5.

Lecture 9

Alexander Campbell's View of Church and Ministry

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at Pacific School of Religion.*

As an outsider at this "in house celebration" of the work and influence of Alexander Campbell, I must begin by thanking you for inviting me to participate in this event. As a historian I rejoice when communities of faith take the time to mark important anniversaries and consider their roots. It is good for you to do this, and it is good for others to learn more about the Christian movement through these lectures.

I am especially grateful for this opportunity to be here this evening in view of the recent agreements which have been forged between Pacific School of Religion and the Disciples Seminary Foundation. When this is combined with my own commitment and enthusiasm for the common roots of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and our emerging ecumenical partnership, it seems fitting to be standing before you this evening. We are learning to walk together in educational and ecumenical fellowship.

In preparing for this lecture I have learned a great deal. I have discovered where the GTU library keeps its files of the *Christian Baptist* and the *Millennial Harbinger*. I have been forced to make more careful distinctions between Stoneite and Campbellite traditions. I have been overwhelmed by the amount of material written by and about Alexander Campbell. At times I feel like repeating a judgement made about a prolific journalist/writer in our times, "I don't believe he had an unprinted thought."

At the same time I stand before you this evening with a great sense of humility. I am a novice when it comes to working with Campbell materials. I have not been able to examine the secondary literature thoroughly, but I know that I have chosen a topic which has been worked over repeatedly by many scholars. Frankly I do not know if I have anything new to add to the interpretation of others, even some of you in this room.

I have discovered, however, that Alexander Campbell would not have expected me to produce anything significant. In his scorn of early Baptist and Congregational efforts at reform he calls them the “most disputatious, feeble, and factional people on earth.” This is because, he continues, the fierce democracy of these congregational movements must live under the “chances of *gunarchy*.” I think that he really meant *gynarchy*, but the word spelled with a “u” appears several times. Listen to this:

The majority of their churches, nine times in ten, is female—matrons and their daughters. Hence the vote on which hangs their disciplinary and congregational affairs and fortunes, is generally, or *may be*, the opinion or predilections of “the weaker vessels.” For this reason we have called their government a *gunarchy*, a name indeed not known in church history, nor in our dictionaries; but which . . . simply indicates that form of government in which females wear the diadem.¹

So, as you can see, Alexander Campbell puts me in my place at the very beginning. You need not take much of what this “weaker vessel” has produced very seriously.

I have to forgive the cultural biases of Mr. Campbell and move on. I confess that I chose this topic, in part, for selfish reasons. I am presently embarking upon a sabbatical leave project related to concepts of ministry in mainline protestant traditions. I have always been intrigued by the ambiguity surrounding the role of ordained ministers and lay leadership in the Disciples tradition, and this assignment has given me the opportunity to examine that issue. I am further motivated because I have recently accepted responsibility within the UCC to write up our official “response” to the COCU consensus document, “Covenanting Towards Unity.” Needless to say, issues of ministry are central to these ecumenical conversations.

Let me begin by saying three things about Alexander Campbell which I believe affect any treatment of his views on ministry: First, Alexander Campbell married well. Through his marriage he was able to attain a measure of economic security which enabled him to enjoy the luxury of separating questions of vocation from questions of livelihood. Unfortunately, because of his economic security, I do not believe that he ever appreciated how issues of ministry become entangled with the necessity to earn a living and support a family.

Second, Alexander Campbell was a very intense person. Although he usually made a good first impression and dazzled people with his outrageous critiques or theological reasoning, he did not wear well. In time he was awesome, formidable, and forbidding. His ideas and his movement depended upon his capacity to let others implement. I might even go so far as to say that I am not convinced that he “had the courage of his convictions.” However, I really do not know enough at this time to substantiate that judgement.

Finally, third, I am impressed at the capacity of the man to change. When I read the materials on the “clergy” which he penned in the 1820’s and then consider his pleas for an educated and ordered ministry ten or twenty years later, I am astonished. On issues of ministry Campbell uses words in the 1820’s, which he literally has to eat ten or twenty years later. I know that certain underlying principles do explain much of that diversity. I know that it is unfair to compare his later words about “educated elders” with “hireling clergy.” But I also believe that the man changed. In due season Campbell began to see that it was a variation of the system which he earlier condemned which was actually needed to sustain a healthy church. I have a keen respect for any leader who grows and openly reverses his or her opinion at a later date.

Now to the topic for the evening. In Sydney Mead’s important article entitled the “Rise of the Evangelical Conception of the Ministry in America,” he quotes Albert Barnes—distinguished Presbyterian minister—who wrote in 1840 that the “spirit of the age” was at variance with Episcopacy, it demanded “freedom of religion,” and each religious group wanted to be recognized as “parts of one holy catholic church.” Barnes continues:

There is a spirit in this land which requires that the gospel shall depend for its success not on solemn processions

and imposing rites; not on genuflections and ablutions; not on any virtue conveyed by the imposition of holy hands, and not on union with any particular church, but on solemn appeals to the reason, the conscience, the immortal hopes and fear of [people], attended by the holy influences of the Spirit of God. . . .²

Alexander Campbell is part of this spirit. Out of his frontier experience he develops strong opinions about what is wrong with church and society. In his earliest writings and in the *Christian Baptist*, the journal/newspaper he edits and publishes from 1823 to 1830, Campbell calls for reform by attacking what he views as a demonic “clergy system.” One can assume that the passion behind his attack is fueled by his personal dismay at the way in which his father had been treated by the clergy, and his distress that the clergy rejected the biblical mandate for reform which seemed so obvious.³

Campbell’s words in the first issue of the *Christian Baptist* drip with disdain. “No class or order of men that ever appeared on earth have obtained so much influence, or acquired so complete an ascendancy over the human mind, as the clergy. . . . Behold the arrogance of their claims! and the peerless haughtiness of their pretensions!” They say that they have “an exclusive right, an official right to affix the proper interpretation to the scriptures.” They say that they must “‘christen’ the newborn infant,” “catechise the tender stripling,” “celebrate the rites of matrimony,” “dispense all ordinances in religion,” “attend the corpse to its grave” and “consecrate the very ground on which it is laid.”⁴

How did they come to “invest themselves with such authority and dominion?” In two ways, writes Campbell. They claim to have a special call from God to the “work of the ministry,” and second, they insist that a “consociation” of clergy is necessary for healthy church government. Campbell acknowledges that there are many Christians who believe that they have a special call to God’s ministry, but such callings do not justify the current claims of the clergy. Furthermore, the ecclesiastical structures created by the clergy to protect their power are totally unbiblical.⁵

Campbell is not merely upset with a few individuals who have misused a legitimate pattern of authority, he is passionately angry with the whole “Kingdom of the Clergy.” He condemns the “hireling clergy” who prepare for the office of preacher, or minister “as a mechanic learns a trade.” This

hireling preacher learns the “art and mystery of making a sermon, or a prayer, as a [shoemaker] learns the art of making a boot or a shoe,” selling the work “to the highest bidder.”⁶ All of this, says Campbell, is unAmerican and un-Christian.

Initial insights into Campbell’s understanding of church and ministry, therefore, are found embedded in his attacks upon the clergy. He proclaims what ministry is not, and out of that condemnation his constructive theology of ministry begins to emerge. But it is not systematic. Authentic church leaders do not claim any special call to serve the church, they do not justify their authority with educational credentials, they do not receive monetary payment for preaching the gospel. They refuse to accept any outward marks of authority, such as titles or vestments. They reject “vain reliance on oratory,” and have no proprietary rights over the scripture. Furthermore, legitimate church leaders derive their power from the local congregation and they do not need associations to consolidate clerical authority.

Campbell argues that the church is a monarchy with Jesus Christ at its head. Any other structure erected to legislate over Christ’s church is in rebellion against Christ.

To suppose that two churches have more power than one, that one hundred have more power than one, or that the bishops of one hundred churches, with any other delegates sent from the churches, have more power than one church, is to place the power or authority in [humans], and not in the one King or head.⁷

The church exists, according to Campbell, wherever the people are called together. Christians do not need clergy in order to be the church.⁸ In due time each group of disciples decides to call one of their own number to be an “overseer” of that flock. But that person is

“neither priest, ambassador, minister of religion, clergyman, nor a reverend divine; but simply one that has the oversight of one voluntary society, who, [upon leaving] that society, has no office in any other in consequence of . . . being an officer. . . . To suppose the contrary is to constitute different orders of [people], or to divide the church into the common classes of clergy and laity . . . ”⁹

Campbell writes that when disciples are baptized into the faith *each* one receives the right to “break the loaf of

blessing,” and “consecrate the cup of salvation.” The early Christians came together on the first day of the week to do exactly that. Bishops were chosen later. And although “bishops and deacons are necessary to the *perfection* of the church, they are not necessary to its *existence*.”¹⁰

But Campbell also warns about the ways in which naming has adverse theological/ecclesiastical consequences. “When names are first assigned to offices, or even to orders of [humanity], there is commonly an association of ideas, favorable or unfavorable in some respect or other, which is derived from the more ancient to the more recent application of the term.” These associations, continues Campbell, “influence opinion, and opinion governs practice.” Therefore the division of [humanity] into clergy and laity heightens, in the minds of the populace, “the reverence for the sacred order.” The effect, he laments, “is perfectly astonishing.”¹¹

As the years go by, however, Campbell becomes less preoccupied with the wrongs of the “clergy system,” and seeks to describe what he calls the “Christian system.” In his 1839 book by that title he presents a more constructive analysis of ministry.

Campbell recognizes that although there was a time for the “extraordinary ministry” of the prophets and apostles in the formation of the early church, they had no successors in office. Since biblical times God has “conferred various gifts on the church for the effectual administration of its affairs.” This takes the form of the ordinary, but “standing and immutable” ministry of bishops, deacons and evangelists.¹²

Bishops are chosen “to preside over, to instruct, and to edify the community—to feed the church of the Lord with knowledge and understanding. . . .” Deacons or servants are “distinguished persons” who function as “treasurers, almoners, stewards, door-keepers, or messengers,” within the church. Finally there are the Evangelists, who do not serve the church directly, but are sent out into the world. They “are persons devoted to the preaching of the word, to the making of converts, and the planting of churches.”¹³

Some people may argue that preaching, baptizing, and even teaching are the obligations of all disciples. Campbell answers that although all citizens of the United States have equal rights, privileges, and immunities, all citizens are not legislators, magistrates, judges, and governors. This is because after a community is “organized,” the rights, duties or

privileges “conferred on particular persons, cannot of right belong to those who have transferred them. . . .” All Christians are by profession preachers of “truth and righteousness, both by precept and example.” This fact, however, does not “dispense with the necessity of having evangelists, bishops, and deacons; nor, having them, does it authorize any individual to assume to do what has been given in charge to them.”¹⁴ The Christian system

. . . establishes the necessary offices for its perpetuity and growth . . . selects the best-qualified persons for those offices . . . consecrates or sets those persons apart to those offices . . . commands them to give themselves wholly to the work, that their improvement may keep pace with the growth of the body, and be apparent to all.¹⁵

As the years go by Alexander Campbell recognizes that the Christian system is not as easy to maintain as it is to establish. His later writings in the *Millennial Harbinger* reflect valiant efforts to deal with misuses of the system and the practical developments of local church practice.

What are the lessons emerging from the efforts of Alexander Campbell to develop a biblical, logical and workable understanding of church and ministry? How do the diatribes of his earliest writings and the pragmatic concerns of his later years come together? The answer lies somewhere between the efforts of Campbell defenders, who argue that he is consistent throughout his writings on matters of church and ministry in spite of apparent contradictions; and an opposite judgement that he radically changes his views and retracts his early attacks and statements. I have concluded that there are some important principles which sustain Campbell’s understanding of church and ministry throughout his life. Although he is consistent in the larger sense, his specific thinking and writing is influenced by genuine efforts to live *with* certain tensions which have always plagued ecclesiastical history. I will highlight four:

First, there is a tension between the need to establish new churches and the needs of ongoing congregations. Campbell recognizes the differences, and his writings consistently seek to accommodate both. In his early attacks upon the “hireling clergy” he keenly resents the failure of the clergy to nurture and maintain the church. An established congregation has a right to be served, not used, by its leadership. Hence he

speaks out against stipends, the “special call,” itineracy, professional training, ministerial associations and clergy prerogatives. All of these practices divide clergy and laity, strengthen the clergy at the expense of the laity, and build unhealthy dependencies in the established Christian community.

Campbell, however, continues to believe that disciples are called to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some people have special gifts as evangelists and they must be allowed to move about the countryside establishing new Christian societies or congregations. Mature churches have a responsibility to send out talented young people to bring more people to Christ and to organize new churches. Raising up and controlling these evangelists is an important responsibility. The role of the evangelist remains distinct from what is needed to keep established congregations going.

In the twentieth century, we might comment, “So what else is new.” Every healthy organization or business knows that there are two groups of workers necessary for institutional health: the innovators, entrepreneurs and founders; and the managers, administrators and trustees. Within the church Campbell sees the same dynamics. The evangelists call the churches into being and create the Christian community; the bishops, overseers, elders, pastors (variously labeled in his writings) work with the deacons to keep the churches healthy. One group is called to preach and the other group is called to teach, officiate, and serve. In the modern context, we might say that the evangelists invent and sell, while the bishops and deacons manage and serve.

Unfortunately, this distinction does not always fit reality. Furthermore, it flies in the face of historic patterns of church leadership. It assumes that once a church is established, it will no longer need an evangelist. Yet, church members fall away from their commitments and promises. The work of evangelism is never done.

At the same time, a healthy church does need more than evangelism. It needs pastoral oversight. It needs leadership to administer its ongoing life. We all read about “Cinderella companies.” They soar to success on the ideas of some visionary founder, but they rarely make it beyond the start up years. Campbell understands this phenomenon. He mandates that those who are spiritually mature should be set apart by prayer and laying on of hands as elders and entrusted with the maintenance responsibilities of their churches. For the church to survive this is necessary.

*Second, there is a tension between the need of the church to be free from oppressive self-centered and self-serving leadership, and the need of the church for order which "gives harmony, beauty and grandeur to the universe."*¹⁶ Although Campbell's earliest writings on church order are very negative, his commitment to legitimate organization increases over the years. Throughout his writings he condemns "unholy and fleshly [clergy]" who seek to add temporal power to the spiritual, and "for filthy lucre's sake," "assume ecclesiastical offices to pervert them." At the same time Campbell cannot imagine a kingdom without "a constitution, an organization, a joint and common interest, and a constant co-operation in reference to its self-preservation and comfortable existence." The church needs to be a "community organized, united in common interests, in harmonious concert, and conservative of its own integrity and prosperity."¹⁷

For example, the "authority" to preside at the "breaking of the loaf," to set apart local leaders, to make covenants with other Christian societies is monitored by the local elders. At the table, one or more of those elders may oversee the "breaking of the loaf," a visiting evangelist might preside (if asked), or an ordinary lay person can be authorized. Any designated disciple, ordained or not, is a proper leader, because Jesus broke the loaf and gave it to *all* the disciples. If one is qualified to take part at all, as far as authority is concerned, one is qualified to officiate.¹⁸

Nevertheless, in his threefold system for ministry Campbell assumes that local churches are best led by a small group of mature leaders. Campbell insists that members of the church, like citizens in a republic, delegate specific functions to official persons. Once that has been done, it is improper for any lay person to usurp that authority.¹⁹

There is a big difference, however, between an entrenched organization that leaves disciples dependent or impotent, and an organization for the upbuilding of the faithful.

Nothing is more comely than when a number of unassociated disciples agree to come together, and to be built together as a church, having heartily and fully expressed their determination to walk together under the Lord, that in token of their determination they give to each other the right hand, and make it a matter of record.²⁰

This "making it a matter of record" means that the community chooses and sets apart "qualified persons" "necessary for

its own edification,” delegating to them certain responsibilities. The seniors or elders do this by “prayer and laying on of hands,” because they act for the whole community; but not necessarily because they themselves have been ordained. Indeed the act of ordination is only confirming the selection, it is not even essential.²¹

Third, there is a tension between the needs of local congregations and the needs of the church as part of the wider church and society. In his earliest writings Campbell is very skeptical about clergy associations and ecclesiastical networks. He charges that “ministerial communion” undermines the freedom of local societies to be faithful to the gospel.

Later he mellows. In the democratic enthusiasm of the American frontier, Campbell supports representative democracy, because it provides a balance between tyranny and chaos. He comes to see the need for “rational and scriptural organizations” beyond local congregations to help committed Christians distribute the Bible abroad, move into global missionary work, elevate the Christian ministry, check, restrain, and remove the misuse of Christian benevolence, and concentrate the action of the tens of thousands of Israel in Christian efforts.²²

In his ecclesiology Campbell moves from a preoccupation with the local congregation to greater concern for the wider church. As early as 1840 he writes “no community called a church is absolutely independent of *the* church of God, but amenable to the whole church for its administration of its affairs.” When a local congregation has any matter on hand which involves the peace and prosperity of other communities, it should seek out the advice and counsel of more “disinterested communities.”²³ Local congregational freedom is always tempered by its relationship to the whole church.

In his writings on Christian organization Campbell repeatedly states there are two classes of officers essential to the welfare and proper order for every Christian community, and in addition there are special missionaries for special occasions and evangelists for general ministries.²⁴ Elders or bishops are private officers, missionaries and evangelists are public officers. In actual practice, however, the line between evangelist and elder blurs.

Campbell continues to protect the freedom of local congregations to order their internal affairs of oversight, but he comes to the position that evangelists must be authorized in fellowship with other churches.

... in all cases where public officers, such as messengers of any general character, and especially Evangelists, who are to be regarded as officers of the whole body, a concurrence of a plurality of churches by their officers, [should] be regarded as necessary, if not to empower them to discharge official duties in a single congregation, at least necessary to give them general acceptance, and to constitute them public and responsible agents of the whole body.²⁵

Finally, fourth, there is a tension between each local community of faith developing its own leadership, and the reality that the churches need educated, paid, full-time leaders. Initially, Campbell does not envision congregational leadership focusing upon one person. He writes about a “plurality” of elders, pastors and bishops within each local church. These volunteer overseers work with the deacons to care for the needs of the faithful.

In actual practice, however, Campbell comes to realize that most congregations do not have a “plurality” of ordained leaders, they have one. That one is both teacher and preacher. That one is both private and public. That one needs a good education and adequate financial support. This raises important questions. Should that one be a young and charismatic preacher, or a mature and benevolent teacher? Should that one be expected to officiate at the “breaking of the loaf,” or does the pastor step aside and let an authorized body of part-time “lay” elders oversee the ordinances? How does the church protect itself from ill prepared preachers and teachers who are not grounded in the Bible?

Alexander Campbell remains forever critical of hiring leaders who serve the church in order to receive money. He is skeptical of theological seminaries because they reinforce clericalism. He does come to realize, however, that it is highly unlikely that someone will become a preacher merely for financial advantage and that a great deal of damage is done in the church by ignorant leaders.²⁶

By 1850 he states that it is a very “imprudent policy, on the part of the Christian community, to have its evangelists plowing, teaching school, making shoes or tents, when they ought to be every day working in Christ’s vineyard, and winning souls to God, or preparing themselves for this great work.” There is too much to be done to leave it to part-time leaders. Effective pastoral care is constant. A good shepherd

doesn't throw fodder in the rack once a week and take no care to see how the flock is doing. Furthermore, when someone holds two jobs, priority will necessarily go to the one that provides a living. The church is not well served by this pattern: if it can support a full-time servant, but insists on a part-time leader, it suffers; furthermore, such congregational irresponsibility cultivates "an illiberal, selfish, and rather churlish spirit" in the people.²⁷

These four tensions are vital to understanding Alexander Campbell's thinking and writing about the church and its ministry. (1) There is a difference between a new church and an established community of faith. (2) There is a creative tension between personal Christian freedom and ecclesiastical order. (3) There are important benefits found in local autonomy and in connectional accountability. And finally, (4) there is need for volunteer part-time leadership and also for paid, full-time, professionally trained clergy.

There is one more principle which needs to be added to the above four, and that is the recognition that Christians grow and change as they mature in the faith. To that point Campbell writes:

It is always more or less detrimental to the ascertainment of truth to allow our previous conclusions to assume the positions of fixed and fundamental truths, to which nothing is to be at any time added, either in the way of correction, or enlargement. On the contrary, we ought rather to act under the conviction that we may be wiser today than yesterday, and that whatever is true can suffer no hazard from a candid and careful reconsideration.²⁸

Alexander Campbell did change. But the more deeply one examines his work, the more one realizes how many things really stayed the same.

This is the extent of what I have to share concerning Campbell's understandings of church and ministry. I am indebted to many scholars for pointing me to the relevant sections of the *Christian Baptist*, the *Christian System*, and the *Millennial Harbinger*. I hope that my analysis has done Campbell justice.

As a United Church of Christ historian I wish to do one more thing in conclusion. I want to share some observations about the historical overlap between the understandings of ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and in

the United Church of Christ. Even as I say this I know that Campbell's views are not the same as Barton Stone's. Furthermore, you have a much longer formal institutional history which has built upon the works of various leaders and adjusted to ecclesiastical and social change.

I find that the understanding of ministry in the work of Alexander Campbell, especially in his early writings, has a great deal in common with my Congregational ancestors. The Cambridge Platform assumes that each congregation has several authorized leaders: a teacher, a pastor, and ruling elders. Church leadership is delegated to a small group of indigenous persons who are empowered through their election by congregational vote.

Congregationalism insists that a church comes into being when the "gathered saints" covenant together to walk in God's ways. The church does not need ordained leadership in order to be a church. In fact, in the earliest ordination services, hands are laid on the clergy by the congregational leaders. Visiting clergy from nearby churches merely extend the "right hand of fellowship."

Early Congregationalism, however, differs from the restoration movement, first, in its relationship to the political order and, second, in its "presbygational" tendencies. Congregational "parsons" are important "persons" in a New England town. They feel responsible for the magisterial and the ecclesiastical worlds. They compromise the independence of voluntary associations because they have an investment in maintaining the social and political order. Alexander Campbell, however, is free of such constraints. Even in his later more conservative years, Campbell still functions out of a sectarian, rather than an establishment stance.

Second, early Congregationalism is more charitable towards connectional networks of accountability with other churches, and among the clergy, than Alexander Campbell. The easy proximity of other congregations in colonial New England, the fact that there is usually only one pastor in any town, the common educational standards and assumptions among Congregationalists, and the shared experience that many clergy had from growing up in a parsonage, encourages Congregational "divines" to organize associations and associations for their mutual benefit. New England Congregationalists are never as suspicious and wary about their obligations to the wider church as Alexander Campbell.

In the Congregational Christian and Evangelical and

Reformed merger which created the United Church of Christ in 1957 two very different understandings of ministry find an interesting balance. On the one side, we have Congregational and Christian views of church and ministry which are very similar to those of Alexander Campbell. On the other side, we have the continental traditions of German Reformed life and Lutheran evangelical experience. I like to refer to these two very different approaches to ministry as “empowerment” and “embodiment.”

Alexander Campbell and early Congregationalism hold to an “empowerment” view of ordained ministry. The people raise up one of their number to be their leader. That person has functional authority, but no essential authority. Clergy are no better than any other Christians, they are simply set apart, empowered, to do a job. Sometimes empowered leaders seem very unlikely, but through God’s grace they rise to the challenge.

An “embodiment” understanding of ministry does not deny the need for “empowerment” actions to bind covenants of accountability; however, an “embodiment” view of ministry recognizes that in the human community there have always been certain persons who are gifted religious leaders. They are special persons who go about doing ministry, whether or not the community authorizes. They are called by God. In one sense the church does not need to “empower” these persons. Rather, the church is called to recognize the gifts for ministry which they already embody.

The Evangelical and Reformed presence in the United Church of Christ constantly reminds the UCC of a great legacy in the history of Christianity which insists that authorizing ministry is more than “empowerment.” Martin Luther once said, “where the pastor is, there is the church.” With those words he reminds us all that ministry is not only functional, it is incarnational.

Alexander Campbell, however, is rightly wary of the evils lurking in such “essential” definitions of ministry. Yet, I believe that Campbell also appreciates some “embodiment” perspectives on ministry. I choose to close this evening by reading paragraph 12 from the “Ministry” section of the Faith and Order statement on *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*. Listen to these contemporary efforts to speak about ministry in the ecumenical context. These words continue to search for a healthy balance between “embodiment” and “empowerment” which Campbell wrestles with, which the United

Church of Christ reflects and which the ecumenical movement embraces.

All members of the believing community, ordained and lay, are interrelated. On the one hand, the community needs ordained ministers. Their presence reminds the community of the divine initiative, and of the dependence of the Church on Jesus Christ, who is the source of its mission and the foundation of its unity. They serve to build up the community in Christ and to strengthen its witness. In them the Church seeks an example of holiness and loving concern. On the other hand, the ordained ministry has no existence apart from the community. Ordained ministers can fulfill their calling only in and for the community. They cannot dispense with the recognition, the support and the encouragement of the community.²⁹

Footnotes

1. *Millennial Harbinger* (1842), 62.
2. "The Position of the Evangelical Party in the Episcopal Church," in *Miscellaneous Essays and Reviews*, I (Chicago, 1855), 371–72, quoted in Sydney E. Mead, "The Rise of the Evangelical Conception of the Ministry in America (1607–1850)," in H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel Day Williams (eds.), *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 223.
3. In what follows I refer exclusively to original materials authored by Campbell. I have used a number of secondary resources to help me locate relevant passages in Campbell's writings. The following are the most helpful: D. Newell Williams, *Ministry Among Disciples: Past, Present, and Future* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1986); Robert L. Lemon, "Alexander Campbell's Doctrine of the Ministry," Th.D. dissertation (Pacific School of Religion, 1968); Dwight E. Stevenson, "Ordained Disciples Elders: A Brief Historical Review," *The Scroll*, LVIII (Autumn, 1966), 19–28; Robert L. Lemon, "Alexander Campbell's Views Concerning the Ordained Elder," *The Scroll*, LIX (Winter, 1967), 44–49; William Martin Smith, *Servants Without Hire: Emerging Concepts of the Christian Ministry in the Campbell-Stone Movement* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1968); Allen

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- R. Moore, *Alexander Campbell and the General Convention: A History of the Rise of Organization among the Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1914); Granville T. Walker, *Preaching in the Thought of Alexander Campbell* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1954).
4. Alexander Campbell, ed., *The Christian Baptist: Seven Volumes in One*, revised by D. S. Burnet, 13th ed. (n.p.: H. S. Bosworth, 1861), (1823), 18.
 5. *Christian Baptist* (1823), 19.
 6. *Christian Baptist* (1825), 233.
 7. *Christian Baptist* (1823), 25–26.
 8. *Christian Baptist* (1825), 231–32.
 9. *Christian Baptist* (1823), 21.
 10. *Millennial Harbinger* (1830), 368.
 11. *Christian Baptist* (1826), 299.
 12. Alexander Campbell, *Christian System in Reference to the Union of Christians and Restoration of Primitive Christianity as Pleaded by the Current Reformation*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1839), XXV, para. 2 & 3, 83.
 13. *Christian System*, XXV, para. 6 & 7, 84.
 14. *Christian System*, XXV, para. 12 & 13, 86–87.
 15. *Christian System*, XXV, para. 14, 86–87.
 16. *Millennial Harbinger* (1845), 483.
 17. *Millennial Harbinger* (1842), 59.
 18. *Millennial Harbinger* (1936), 78.
 19. *Christian System*, XXV, para. 3, 83.
 20. *Millennial Harbinger* (1842), 492.
 21. *Christian System*, XXV, para. 14–16, 87–88.
 22. *Millennial Harbinger* (1842), 523.
 23. *Millennial Harbinger* (1840), 503–504.
 24. *Millennial Harbinger* (1842), 133.
 25. *Millennial Harbinger* (1843), 85–86.
 26. *Millennial Harbinger* (1851), 261–262.
 27. *Millennial Harbinger* (1850), 486–487.
 28. *Millennial Harbinger* (1842), 327.
 29. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 21–22.

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