

RELUCTANT RESTORATIONIST: THOMAS CAMPBELL'S
TRIAL AND ITS ROLE IN HIS LEGACY

by

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ABSTRACT

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In 1809, Thomas Campbell, with his son Alexander, founded an American religious movement that proposed the union of all Christians based upon the restoration of the New Testament church. The merging of this movement in 1832 with that of Barton W. Stone resulted in the formation of the Stone-Campbell Movement – a movement whose ideas for Christian unity were expressed by Thomas Campbell in his *Declaration and Address*, and which had the fundamental objective of achieving Christian unity based upon the teachings of the New Testament. Today, the Stone-Campbell Movement consists of three major American Protestant religious groups. The Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, and the Church of Christ had a combined membership in 2006 of approximately three million members; these three denominations all trace their roots to Campbell and the Restoration

Movement of the nineteenth century that he was instrumental in launching. This study of Thomas Campbell's legacy is significant in that it not only examines the ideas he championed in America but traces them back to his earlier ministry in Ireland. I argue that while Campbell was an activist in his quest for unity, he became a restorationist reluctantly. His decisions to write *The Declaration and Address* and to later leave the Presbyterian Church were, I believe, results of his libel trials before the Chartiers Presbytery and the Associate Synod of North America.

In 1951 Minton Batten, Professor of Church History at Vanderbilt University School of Religion, referred to the Disciples of Christ at that time as "...the largest religious body of American origin."¹ More recently, when Nathan Hatch speaks of "that most American of denominations," he is referring to the Disciples of Christ.²

Hatch states that there is a lack of "serious biographies of Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone."³ If that is true about the son, it is even more accurate concerning the father. Perhaps no major religious figure has been more ignored by church historians. Especially lacking has been any focused examination of one critical incident in the life of the man credited with authoring the document that guided the Restoration Movement. That pivotal incident was the trial conducted against Thomas Campbell by the Chartiers Presbytery.⁴ I argue it was the trial that triggered a reaction which thrust him to the

¹ J. Minton Batton, *Protestant Backgrounds in History* (New York: Abington Press, 1951), 136.

² Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 220.

³ *Ibid.* 220.

⁴ The Chartiers Presbytery of the Associate Synod was located near Washington in the southwestern corner of Pennsylvania. Several ministers and elders comprised the presbytery which conducted the work of the

forefront of a major movement to restore New Testament Christianity in America. In the aftermath of the trial, Thomas Campbell formed the Christian Association of Washington, Pennsylvania; wrote *The Declaration and Address*; left the Presbyterian Church; and initiated a legacy that today touches three million parishioners in three major American Protestant groups.

Synod and shared preaching duties throughout the area. It was to this presbytery that Thomas Campbell was assigned upon his immigration to America in 1807.

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CHAPTER 1

THOMAS CAMPBELL AND THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT: THE TRANSATLANTIC PERSPECTIVE

*Where the Bible speaks, we speak.
Where the Bible is silent, we have even more to say!*¹

Rick Atchley, April 2006

With his variation on a theme that was first attributed to restorationist Thomas Campbell (1763-1854) in 1809, Rick Atchley, a Texas minister in the early twenty-first century, has rekindled a controversy that has its historical roots in the Stone-Campbell religious movement of the early nineteenth century. The original statement, “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak. Where they are silent, we are silent,” was voiced by Campbell upon the occasion of his separation from Presbyterianism. The phrase became more than a motto for restoration-minded Christians. It became the very slogan by which the movement to restore New Testament Christianity was propelled. The mantra was heralded in the nineteenth century as the foundational principle upon which Christians of all denominational persuasions could agree and unite. In Campbell’s opinion, taking the Scriptures alone as

¹ Bobby Ross, Jr. “A.C.U. Lectures Promote ‘Spirit of Fellowship,’” *The Christian Chronicle*, (April, 2006), 1. Rick Atchley serves as senior minister for the Richland Hills Church of Christ in Richland Hills, TX. He is actively seeking to bring about the restoration of unity within the Christian Church and the Church of Christ factions of the Stone-Campbell religious tradition, which dates from the early nineteenth century. This observation is from a speech delivered by Rich Atchley at Abilene Christian University in February 2006 and quoted in the April 2006 issue of *The Christian Chronicle*.

religious authority provided the basis upon which all who claimed to follow Christ could agree.

Atchley, in his tongue-in-cheek assessment, was pointing out how divisive views can arise even among those sharing the viewpoint of *sola scriptura*. With his words, Atchley joins a growing number of voices who, two hundred years later, are concerned once more about the disparate and divided condition of the Christian religion in America and who state that it is often the differing views on how to interpret the silence of Scripture on certain issues that have contributed to the division. “Where the Bible speaks, we speak,” Atchley said, referring to *a cappella* churches. “And where the Bible is silent, *we have even more to say*.” Speaking in particular of the schism within the Christian Church / Church of Christ branch of the Stone-Campbell tradition, Atchley reminded his listeners, as did Thomas Campbell, the Scriptures alone are authoritative in religious matters and the Christian faith must not be based upon mortals presuming to speak where God has not. Although some of the conclusions Atchley has drawn are far from being universally accepted, especially among conservatives within the Churches of Christ, his affirmation of the authoritative nature of Scripture is without dispute within churches of the Restoration heritage.

I submit that Thomas Campbell’s trial was central to his role as an American restorationist. The purpose of this dissertation is to present the transatlantic influences in the life of Thomas Campbell leading up to the trial. I note the nature of the institutionalized religion that influenced him in Ulster, spurred his immigration to America, and plagued him during his brief association with the Chartiers Presbytery. In this study, I contend that Campbell left the Presbyterian Church *reluctantly* and only as a result of the trial experience.

In the development of this study, some of the most perplexing problems have been those relating to terminology. Carol Geary Schneider noted that Presbyterianism is “a rubric laden with difficulties.”² The difficulties stem from the frequently divided state of English, Scottish, and Irish Presbyterianism and from the various dissonant voices within the differing factions. Within the scope of this study, which has as its focus Irish Presbyterianism as an outgrowth of the Scottish church, labels such as *Seceder*, *Covenanter*, *Burgher*, *Anti-Burgher*, *Old Light*, and *New Light* reflect the complex nature of Irish Presbyterianism of the late eighteenth century – ambiguities which were often more about cultural and national identities than about clearly defined doctrinal issues. For example, designations such as *New Light* and *Old Light* were not limited to Presbyterians. The terms were common within the wider field of Protestantism and had different meanings, depending upon the time frame, the audience and occasion, as well as the particular doctrinal issue under consideration.

Additionally, it is often difficult to untangle the intertwined threads that comprise the Scottish and Irish Presbyterian churches. This is especially challenging when considering the American brands of Presbyterianism. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Associate Synod of North America was the American wing of the Scotch/Irish Seceder church. As such, it was a distinct faction within the Presbyterian denomination. Burghers and Anti-Burghers were separate factions in Scotland, where Presbyterianism was the state church and local magistrates – or, burghers – pledged an oath of allegiance to the church as well as the state. In Ireland, on the other hand, the Presbyterian Church was a *dissenting*

² Carol Geary Schneider, “Godly Order in a Church Half-Reformed: The Disciplinary Legacy, 1570–1641” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1986), 23.

church. There were no town burghers and no oath of allegiance to Presbyterianism to be pledged. Nevertheless, the factions existed in Irish Presbyterianism as two distinct branches. Thomas Campbell's role in Ulster as an *Anti-Burgher – Seceder Presbyterian* is explored within the larger connection of the social and political environments within the institutionalized Presbyterian religion of his time. Campbell's role in the political and religious permutations of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Ulster is compared and contrasted to the roles of his ministerial contemporaries.

Old Light and *New Light* are also terms that have a variety of applications within Protestantism. Amid Presbyterian controversies, *Old* and *New Lights* distinguished established (orthodox) teachings from newer, non-traditional ones. They may refer to new *approaches* regarding church doctrines, organizational structures, or new versus old methods of administering examinations for ministerial candidates. Given the multiplicity of possible meanings, the labels *Old Light* and *New Light* can be confusing and must be interpreted within the context of the statement in which they are found.

Furthermore, the very term *Restoration* is often ambiguous. While it has been used to refer to the nineteenth-century American movement to “restore” New Testament Christianity, church historians frequently refer to an earlier restoration in Britain among Evangelicals, which included Presbyterian and Independent movements. Secular historians also speak politically of the restoration of the British monarchy following the Cromwellian protectorate. Paul Conkin has labeled as problematic the term *Restoration Movement* due to

its inexactness.³ A major difficulty with the term is its generality and its vagueness, since nearly all new Christian movements have claimed their intent to return to an earlier, purer New Testament Church. Reformation churches certainly made this assertion. Groups arising from within the Protestant tradition have also applied the term to their efforts at returning to the Scriptures as the final word in doctrinal matters. In American religious history, a few scattered reform movements of the early nineteenth century eventually acquired a monopoly on the use of the label *Restoration Movement*. The distinct bodies shared enough common beliefs to have some unity between them, and by 1810 there were three regional groupings of churches, all of which referred to themselves simply as “Christians.”⁴ This formed the first American Restoration movement. In 1832 the churches in the Barton W. Stone “Christian Church” movement merged with the Thomas and Alexander Campbell “Disciples of Christ” movement. The merged restoration churches referred to themselves as Churches of Christ, Disciples of Christ, and Christian Churches. Often these terms were used interchangeably in referring to churches that became known as churches of the Restoration Movement.

In the year 2000, there were no less than forty-nine Protestant denominations in America, each of which had a membership of at least 100,000.⁵ Three of the forty-nine religious groups – Christian Churches/Disciples of Christ (879,436), Christian Churches/Churches of Christ (1,071,616), and Churches of Christ (1,500,000) – originated

³ Paul K. Conkin, *American Originals: Homemade Varieties of Christianity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 1.

⁴ Conkin, 3.

⁵ Mark A. Noll, *The Work We Have to Do: A History of Protestants in America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), xi, 135.

in the first half of the nineteenth century and owe their existence to the unity theme espoused and propagated by Thomas Campbell in 1809.⁶ Each group traces its origin to the nineteenth-century religious movement which Thomas Campbell was instrumental in launching.⁷ Each faction also acknowledges divisions that have occurred over the last century and a half, divisions that have been ironic developments in the plea for unity upon which the American Restoration Movement was initiated.

In 1951 Minton Batten, Professor of Church History at the Vanderbilt University School of Religion, referred to the Disciples of Christ as "...the largest religious body of American origin."⁸ More recently, Nathan Hatch speaks of the Disciples of Christ as "that most American of denominations."⁹ The fact that in 2007 Thomas Campbell continues to be quoted in reference to Christian unity is evidence of his prominence in the heritage of the American Restoration Movement. This dissertation traces the transatlantic influences

⁶ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) was similarly founded in America in the early nineteenth century. Established by Joseph Smith, the Mormon message attracted key leaders from within the Campbell branch of the Restoration Movement – namely, Sidney Rigdon and Parley P. Pratt. This religion, while based upon a "Restoration" message, does not hold to the Campbell view that religious authority is based upon the Scriptures being alone sufficient and the Scriptures being all-sufficient.

⁷ The American Restoration Movement, with its goal of restoring ancient Christian practices within the nineteenth-century practice of Christianity, differed from the earlier Protestant Reformation Movement, which had as its purpose the reform of what were perceived as corrupt practices within the Roman Catholic Church. This may be a difference without a distinction as each reform movement appealed to the New Testament as the authoritative voice. Many staunch adherents of the Restoration Movement view the restoration of New Testament Christianity as a continuing process.

⁸ J. Minton Batton, *Protestant Backgrounds in History* (New York: Abington Press, 1951), 136. Note: During the second half of the twentieth century, the Church of Latter Day Saints experienced a rapid and worldwide growth in membership, while Disciples of Christ / Christian Churches / Church of Christ churches have declined in membership and adherents.

⁹ Hatch, 220.

shaping his legacy and points to his emergence as a Restorationist in the wake of his being brought to trial by the Chartiers Presbytery.¹⁰

Due to the numerical strength of the Christian Churches/Disciples of Christ, Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, and the Churches of Christ and their role in American religious history since the nineteenth century, it is appropriate to discuss the man who was central to their establishment and subsequent expansion. Thomas Campbell clearly falls within the ranks of “restorationists” – reformers who aimed at restoring New Testament Christianity in its purity. Yet, unlike most of his predecessors in the role, Campbell’s function as a “restorer” came reluctantly and unexpectedly.

Although Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell are the better known leaders of the American Restoration Movement, it was Thomas Campbell who articulated its initial plea. To discover how and why this man came to exert such far-reaching influence within a movement that dramatically shaped religious thinking in America is the purpose of this dissertation. Hatch correctly notes there has been a lack of “serious biographies of Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone.”¹¹ This void is surprising, given the inestimable impact

¹⁰ The Chartiers Presbytery of the Associate Synod was located near Washington in the southwestern corner of Pennsylvania. Several ministers and elders comprised the presbytery which conducted the work of the Synod and shared preaching duties throughout the area. It was to this presbytery that Thomas Campbell was assigned upon his immigration to America in 1807.

¹¹ Hatch, 220. For additional details on Barton W. Stone (1772-1844), see Stone’s autobiography, *The Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone written by Himself with Additions and Reflections* (Cincinnati: 1847). See also Earl Ervin West, *The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement 1849-1906, vol. I* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1964). Stone was among the first Presbyterian ministers to see the need of restoring primitive Christianity. He was preaching for the Cane Ridge and Concord churches, northeast of Lexington, Kentucky, in 1801 and was instrumental in planning the Cane Ridge Revival. Over 30,000 people attended the meeting, which featured preachers from various denominations. Stone’s followers, who called themselves “The Christian Connection” and referred to themselves as “Christians,” united with Campbell’s reformers or “Disciples” on April 24, 1831. The historic union formed what would become in time one of the largest American Protestant churches. During the nineteenth century, the terms “Disciples of Christ” and “Christian Church” would be used interchangeably to refer to the church.

these men made upon the American religious scene. If that is true about Alexander Campbell, it is even more accurate concerning his father, Thomas Campbell. Perhaps no major religious figure has been more ignored by church historians.

As the nineteenth century opened, American Protestant groups encountered a variety of influences that altered the religious fabric of the new republic. James O' Kelley arose from among the Methodists. Abner Jones and Elias Smith were at work among the Baptists. From the Presbyterians came Barton W. Stone, Thomas Campbell, and Thomas' son, Alexander. These men shared a simple plea: the rejection of all human creeds and doctrines and the return to the New Testament pattern for church teachings and practices. In time, their combined efforts were known as the Restoration Movement, and Thomas Campbell was regarded as the chief architect. His *Declaration and Address* (1809), a pamphlet of fifty-six pages in which he set forth principles for achieving and maintaining Christian unity, became the first and single most important document of the nineteenth-century Restoration Movement in America.

Historians typically have studied Thomas Campbell's life and the *Declaration and Address* as biographical subjects. However, the *Declaration and Address* and Campbell's separation from the Associate Synod and Chartiers Presbytery have not been previously evaluated within the context of his trial before those two bodies. As a result, the significance of the trial has not been adequately assessed. In October 1807 the Chartiers Presbytery accused Campbell of teaching and acting in ways that were inconsistent with the Presbytery. In January 1808 he was tried before the Presbytery on charges of libel. It is important to note that Campbell is nowhere charged with *heresy*, contrary to what has been assumed by many

historians. Campbell appealed the Presbytery's verdict to the Associate Synod of North America and underwent a second trial before that body. I submit that it was those trial proceedings and the reaction of the Presbytery to the Synod's decision toward Campbell that triggered his reaction – a reaction which thrust him to the forefront of a major movement to restore New Testament Christianity in America and that spawned a legacy touching three major American Protestant groups.

Campbell's trial before the Chartiers Presbytery of western Pennsylvania has been predominantly viewed by historians of the nineteenth-century American Restoration Movement as an event that was incidental to his legacy. In as much as others have written of Campbell's legacy within the Restoration Movement, this dissertation offers a revisionist interpretation that considers the *process* by which Campbell came to forge his distinctive plea of "speaking where the Bible speaks and being silent where it is silent." This dissertation establishes the trial as the defining experience that resulted in Campbell forming the Christian Association of Washington, setting down his views in the *Declaration and Address*, and eventually breaking with the Presbyterian Church. This assessment of Thomas Campbell's profession of a restorationist faith apart from the Presbyterian Church is significant in that it scrutinizes Campbell's emergence as a reluctant Restorationist.

Thomas Campbell's trial figures prominently within the broader subject of transatlantic history. The ideas he championed here in America are, in fact, traceable back to his earlier ministry in Ireland. This dissertation acknowledges the transatlantic significance of the American Restoration Movement, noting the influences of Irish Protestantism upon Campbell and subsequently upon the movement he launched. The British political and

religious context of the eighteenth century is observed as the environment in which Thomas Campbell lived before his emigration from Ireland. The Scottish and Irish reformers and Independents during the latter half of the eighteenth century are highlighted, as well as their influences upon Campbell. I argue the principles set forth by Campbell, which he had previously held while in Ireland and which he set forth in the *Declaration and Address*, were combined with distinctively American social and political issues to create the first uniquely American Protestant denomination.

Until recently, scant attention has been given to examining the transatlantic nature of the American Restoration Movement. As an Old Light – Anti-Burgher – Seceder Presbyterian, Campbell brought with him to America those divisive appellations of the Scottish church which, for the Associate Synod, both identified and legitimized him as a Presbyterian minister. Based upon those credentials, the Synod assigned him to the Chartiers Presbytery. But, as I demonstrate, the Seceder Presbyterianism being practiced on the western frontier of Pennsylvania in 1807 was very different from the Ulster Seceder Presbyterianism that Campbell had known in his Irish homeland.

The religious tensions in Ireland – and, more broadly, in Britain – were tied irrevocably to the political schematics within the kingdom. Church and state in Ireland, as throughout Europe, were considered two representations of the same national community.¹² I.R. McBride offers compelling research demonstrating the link that existed between religion and politics in eighteenth-century Ulster. Thomas Campbell's development within the

¹² I.R. McBride, *Scripture Politics: Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 19.

broader context of the Irish political and religious environment contributes to my interpretation of Campbell's role.

The Irish Catholics, while comprising the most populous group on the island, were subordinate to the English and also subject to harsh penal codes. The Church of Ireland was an offshoot of the Church of England, and although its members comprised only about one-eighth of the Irish population, the Anglicans dominated land ownership, social prestige, and political power.¹³ Unlike most European kingdoms, the Kingdom of Ireland was of relatively recent origin, being formed in the sixteenth century as a subordinate possession of the English king. The English viewed the "otherness" of the Catholic majority as barbarity and deemed them to be subordinate to the Protestant minority. The Church of Ireland served only the New English, and had no process for integrating the Irish Catholic population into a larger British identity, or even bringing that subordinate group into the narrower concept of a common Irish identity.¹⁴

Unlike the situation it enjoyed in Scotland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland existed in "the middle ground." On one hand, Presbyterians were not subjected to the scorn that was endured by Catholics; on the other hand, they did not share in the privileges enjoyed by Anglicans. In the province of Ulster, by the end of the eighteenth century, Presbyterians comprised the majority of the population, yet Presbyterianism remained a dissenting church. The history of Presbyterianism is marked by dissent, disagreement, and divisions. Much of the debate had to do with defining the 'kingdom of God', how it was to be governed, and its

¹³ Ibid., 14.

¹⁴ Tony Claydon and Ian McBride, *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650–c. 1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 23.

relation to kingdoms of this world. The primary Presbyterian ecclesiastical body, the General Synod of Ulster, was founded in 1690; however, by the eighteenth century, the Presbyterians were fractured into at least six major factions. It was within this controversial climate that Thomas Campbell began his ministry. To understand his life, we will address the most significant divisions and note the characteristics within the denomination that were in contrast to the nature of Catholicism and Anglicanism and that made divisions common, if not inevitable. Thomas Campbell responded to the tensions within the larger political and religious environment of late eighteenth - century Northern Ireland by compartmentalizing his ministry into a dichotomy. For Campbell, worldly political systems were not the equivalents of the kingdom of God. With that mindset, Campbell sought to minister in the midst of political turmoil without being drawn into the firestorm of the political fights.

Proponents in various Presbyterian factions of Ulster, including the Seceder Burghers and Anti-Burghers, saw the wisdom and expediency of maintaining a degree of interrelations between their differing churches. Even though the Associate Synod of North America was the American offshoot of the Seceders, the American Presbyteries and Synod did not share the more lenient ecumenical attitude of their Irish brethren. Not only were they unwilling to permit their members to visit other Presbyterian churches or to hear other ministers, they were not hesitant to discipline any of their ministers who suggested such heterodox teachings. This dissertation's research into the minutes of the Chartiers Presbytery reveals numerous accounts of such proceedings. This study will document Campbell's trial and its role in his ultimate decision to pen his *Declaration and Address* and begin a

movement in southwestern Pennsylvania that would eventually result in the formation of three major American denominations.

The proceedings of Campbell's trial before the Chartiers Presbytery and his appeal and trial before the Associate Synod do not exist in published form. The only printed record of a part of the proceedings is in William Herbert Hanna's 1935 work, *Thomas Campbell, Seceder and Christian Union Advocate*.¹⁵ Hanna's book is no longer in print; therefore, an examination of the lengthy proceedings is justified and is of value, not only for a close review within this dissertation, but as a record for any evaluation of the proceedings by other, future scholars.

The political, social, and religious climate in Ireland was not duplicated in the American colonies. In this study, I note how the steady flow of immigrants to America – and their persistent westerly migration – created a cultural landscape that was uniquely American. In her discussion of the transatlantic nature of the Great Awakening, Susan O'Brien describes how the development of a transatlantic community of Christians became an evangelical "network" for the sharing of information and the circulation of ideas. She relates how the exchange of religious and political concepts helped in shaping thoughts and feelings on both sides of the Atlantic.¹⁶

Later in the eighteenth century, the transatlantic interrelations assumed a decidedly political nature as ideas relating to American independence from England fanned the flames

¹⁵ Hanna's book was reprinted for the 1987 President's Meeting at Ozark Christian College. The title was changed to *Biography of Thomas Campbell, Advocate of Christian Union* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1987).

¹⁶ O'Brien, Susan. "A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735 – 1755." *The American Historical Review*, 91, 4. (Oct. 1986): 811 – 832.

of civil discontent in both France and Ireland during the 1790s and emboldened the United Irishmen in the Rebellion of 1798. The role of Thomas Campbell within the religious/political caldron that was Ulster is examined with a view to understanding his efforts to restore unity between the fractured Burgher and Anti-Burgher sects, and how those efforts shaped his later American experience. His refusal to become politically supportive of the United Irishmen put him at odds with some of his countrymen, while his involvement in the ecumenical Evangelical Society of Ulster eventually provoked censure from his synod. These incidents which Campbell experienced are examined within the larger context of Ulster's religious and political landscape.

Regarding Thomas Campbell's son, Alexander, Hatch has said, "Whatever views he may have brought to America of his Scottish and Presbyterian heritage, he discarded much of it for an explicitly American theology."¹⁷ This dissertation disagrees with Hatch's interpretation and demonstrates that many of the principles inherent in the American Restoration Movement had their origins in the Scottish Restoration Movement and in the teachings of Independents in Northern Ireland prior to the nineteenth century. Specifically, my critique affirms that Thomas Campbell was influenced by Scottish and Irish reformers. Upon being transplanted in America, he openly stated his views for Christian unity based upon some of those principles. The proceedings of the trial as well as the fundamental vision cast in the *Declaration and Address* indicate Campbell held views he had publicly defended in Ireland only a few years earlier. Hence, the transatlantic aspect of the trial can be

¹⁷ Hatch, 71.

identified within his arguments before the Presbytery and Synod as well as within the principles he articulated in the *Declaration and Address*.

According to Hatch, the various Protestant religious groups formed a motley assortment that lacked structure and any central authority.¹⁸ He argues the actions of restorationist leaders such as Thomas Campbell are best understood within the framework which typified the American frontier of the early 1800s and the impact of the American Revolution. Hatch asserts that Thomas Campbell withdrew from the Presbyterian Church when his orthodox colleagues restricted his freedom of inquiry in regards to Presbyterian standards.¹⁹ Campbell's declaration of independence from the Associate Synod of North America (the American counterpart of Seceder, Anti-Burgher Presbyterianism of Scotland and Ireland) and from the Chartiers Presbytery should be understood, so Hatch believes, within the context of the new American spirit of independence, and as a challenge to traditional hierarchal structures of authority. I contend that Campbell held these views *prior* to immigrating to America, and it was the experience of the trial and not the frontier that led to his reluctant decision to become a Restorationist. Similarly, Mark Noll believes that it was a "feeling of disillusionment with traditional churches" that led the son, Alexander Campbell, to break from Presbyterianism in an effort to restore New Testament Christianity.²⁰ I examine that within the context of Thomas Campbell's trial and note the

¹⁸ Ibid., 208.

¹⁹ Ibid., 73.

²⁰ Mark a. Noll, *The Work We Have to Do: A History of Protestants in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 57, 58.

sequence of incremental steps that were taken within the Campbell - Stone tradition of the American Restoration Movement.

The European Enlightenment is held by some as a major force behind the American Restoration Movement. The views of Enlightenment thinkers have been cited as principles which launched and sustained the nineteenth-century evangelical awakening. Hatch, for example, refers to Elias Smith as brazenly holding the Enlightenment conviction that truth is self-evident.²¹ Michael W. Casey argues that Thomas and Alexander Campbell were each heavily influenced by John Locke.²²

Although the Scottish Enlightenment had some influence upon Thomas Campbell, it was not the decisive force leading him to become a restorationist.²³ Enlightenment principles, frustration with existing denominational frameworks, and American notions of democracy and freedom were each important influences; nevertheless, in and of themselves, they do not take into account the complex issues involved in Campbell's inner struggle with old ideas in a new land. They do not provide, therefore, an acceptable reason as to *why* Campbell chose to break with his church within the relatively short time following his

²¹ Hatch, 129.

²² Michael W. Casey, *The Battle Over Hermeneutics in the Stone-Campbell Movement, 1800-1870*, vol. 67, Studies in American Religion (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellon Press, 1998), 35-40.

²³ The most comprehensive study of Scottish influences upon the American Restoration Movement is Lynn A. McMillon, "The Quest for the Apostolic Church: A Study of Scottish Origins of American Restorationism" (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 1972). See also McMillon, *Restoration Roots* (Dallas: Gospel Teachers Publications, 1983) and "Alexander Campbell's Early Exposure to Scottish Restorationism, 1808-1809," *Restoration Quarterly* 30, Numbers 2 and 3 (Second and Third Quarters 1988):105-110. See also James C.V. Emond, "A Consideration of the Thesis: There was a Scottish 'Common Sense' Thought Influence Relative to Alexander Campbell" (M.A. thesis, Emmanuel School of Religion, 1974) for a discussion of the Lockean influences that Thomas Campbell was subjected to and which were passed along to his son, Alexander. The most thorough examination of the influence of Scottish Common Sense Realism upon both Thomas and Alexander Campbell is Michael W. Casey, *The Battle Over Hermeneutics in the Stone-Campbell Movement, 1800-1870*. vol. 67, Studies in American Religion (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellon Press, 1998).

immigration to America. Additionally, the commonly accepted views do not offer a plausible explanation as to why at that particular time he decided to write and publish the *Declaration and Address*.

A review of the timeline and the events surrounding the trial show the major role the trial played in precipitating his decision. While several factors contributed to his decision to leave his church, the trial was the ‘tipping-point’ for the Campbell reform movement. When he was brought to trial and censured by the Presbytery and Synod, that experience set in motion a great chain of events that transpired in a relatively short time to culminate in his decision to write the *Declaration and Address* and to reluctantly sever his ties with Presbyterianism. In a way reminiscent of Martin Luther (who wrote his Ninety-five Theses in 1517 and nailed them to the door of Wittenberg’s Cathedral in protest against the abuses within the Roman Catholic Church), so Campbell wrote his *Declaration and Address* in 1809 as a reaction to the rigid authoritarianism of his day. After submitting the document to the Presbyterian hierarchy, he stated he would no longer place himself under their authority. Within the century, Campbell’s principles – contained in the *Declaration and Address* and effectively presented, debated, and circulated by his son – stoked the fires for the restoration of New Testament Christianity not only in America but also in Ireland, Scotland, and England.

Unlike his more prominent son, Alexander, who was a prolific writer, the *Declaration and Address* stands alone as the major document produced by Thomas Campbell. Several of his letters were also published in *Memoirs of Thomas Campbell, Together with a Brief Memoir of Mrs. Jane Campbell* by Alexander Campbell and *Memoirs*

of *Alexander Campbell* by Robert Richardson. Other than these materials, there is a paucity of printed primary documents attributed to Thomas Campbell. Yet, it has been that solitary opus, the *Declaration and Address*, which has guided the American Restoration Movement for two centuries.

Numerous secondary sources are extant which trace the life and work of Campbell in relation to the Restoration Movement and the history of three major Protestant churches. Hatch presents the relationship between democracy and religion in the American experience. In *The Democratization of American Christianity* (1989), he shows how the passion for equality challenged the status quo of religious authority, and ushered in new forms of religious expression. Within this milieu, Hatch presents the shaping of an American democracy that is decidedly Christian. Among the many individuals he cites as influential in the process are Restoration leaders including Elias Smith, James O'Kelley, Abner Jones, Barton W. Stone, and Alexander Campbell. Unfortunately, Hatch gives only a few brief references to Thomas Campbell, referring to him only as "Alexander's father who preceded him to America,"²⁴ and makes no mention of the *Declaration and Address* by name, referring to it only as the "first manifesto of the Disciple movement."²⁵ This oversight has been common among historians and points to the reasons why this specific study of Thomas Campbell, his influence on American religion, and his legacy within the Restoration Movement is an important and relevant undertaking.

William Herbert Hanna's *Thomas Campbell: Seceder and Christian Union Advocate*

²⁴ Hatch, 73.

²⁵ Ibid., 185.

(1935) offers a biography based upon *The Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell* and *The Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*. Additionally, Hanna introduces the actual trial proceedings which he gleaned from the *Minutes of the Chartiers Presbytery* and *Minutes of the Associate Synod*, cross-referencing them with information contained within the two sources. Hanna does not, however, address in any depth the transatlantic aspects of the trial.

Lester McAllister draws upon each of the above sources in his more comprehensive biography, *Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book* (1954). McAllister is closely aligned with Hanna in his chronology, and he provides brief extracts of the trial within his broader field of study. McAllister places Campbell's trial in his chapter on *Experiences on the Frontier*. These studies, although valuable in the overall understanding of Thomas Campbell's life, are limited in that they do not sufficiently examine the role of Campbell's trial and its role in his legacy.

In his foreword to Hanna's biography, Frederick Kershner offers his critique as to the reliability of Alexander Campbell's *Memoirs*, stating when he undertook to write his father's biography, Alexander was past his prime, aging rapidly, and beset by a faltering memory. Other than the memoirs of Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Kershner's book, *The Christian Union Overture, An Interpretation of the Declaration and Address of Thomas Campbell* (1923), offers one of the earliest commentaries on the document.

The major tendencies of religious and secular historians thus far has been to produce studies on Thomas Campbell that have been essentially biographical in format, presenting details from his early life and ministry until his death in Bethany, West Virginia, on January 4, 1854, one month before his ninety-first birthday. Campbell's trial is mentioned in most

biographies, yet the proceedings of the trial, the charges by the Chartiers Presbytery, and Campbell's defense before the Presbytery and the Synod have been thoroughly presented only by Hanna.

While several scholars have researched Campbell's ministry in Ireland, no one has written anything concerning how the political and social events occurring in Ireland during the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century may have shaped his later American experiences.²⁶ Nor have there been any serious studies of the dominant/subordinate relationship that existed between the Scottish and American Seceder Presbyterian Synods and how that relationship factored into Thomas Campbell's trial. How is this to be explained? One reason is that until I authorized and acquired the production of microfilm copies, the record of the trial existed only in the minute books of the Associated Synod and the Chartiers Presbytery, which are now archived in the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Another likely explanation for the lack of serious examinations of the trial is that Hanna has come to be relied upon as the sole authority in the documentation and transmission of the trial's proceedings. Because the trial itself has not been analyzed beyond Hanna's record, it has been relegated to the margins of Restoration history and has typically come to be viewed by researchers more as an incident than as the major event it was.

²⁶ Alfred Russell Scott, "Thomas Campbell's Ministry at Ahorey." *Restoration Quarterly* 29, no.4 (1987): 229-234; From 1951 until 1983, Dr. Scott was minister for the Ahorey Church. David M. Thompson, "The Irish Background to Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address*." *Discipliana* 46, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 23-27. Hiram J. Lester, "An Irish Precursor for Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address*." *Encounter* 50, no. 3 (Summer 1989): 247 – 267.

To understand Thomas Campbell's legacy, one must first understand the times in which he lived and interpret his actions within the context of the nineteenth-century transatlantic world, his Presbyterian roots, and the political and religious influences of Northern Ireland. One must also see his legacy in light of the trial he underwent at the hands of the Chartiers Presbytery. This dissertation evaluates the transatlantic elements of Campbell's role in the American Restoration Movement and shows the trial to be the *defining moment* which triggered the events launching the Campbell reform and propelling both father and son to the forefront of a movement that has survived into the twenty-first century and whose adherents number in the millions.

Finally, in this dissertation, I show how the usage of the word 'heresy' by many scholars – in describing Thomas Campbell's trial – has dominated much of the scholarly discussion in Campbell biographies and historical accounts of the Restoration Movement. Several historians, college professors, scholars of the American Restoration Movement, and other interested individuals who have written on the trial aspect of Thomas Campbell's life, in their use of the term 'heresy' have mistakenly – and unconsciously, I might add – colored understandings of these events for generations. I show that the trial of Thomas Campbell was not one of heresy, but in Presbyterian terminology one of "libel" or, as stated regarding Campbell, "libels." The word 'heresy' was not used in the trial; therefore, one may rightfully conclude that the trial did not involve an accusation of heresy, popular and widely accepted views notwithstanding. The misleading and erroneous interpretations regarding the nature of the accusations against Thomas Campbell have propagated a historical church tradition that

does not reflect the historical reality. I analyze the primary documents meticulously and reach a conclusion that significantly adds to and corrects the historical record.

CHAPTER 2

THE MANY FACES OF PRESBYTERIANISM: THE RISE, ADVANCE, AND FRACTURING OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

We, the remainent members of the Presbytery at Market Hill, March 24th, A.D. 1807, do hereby certify that the bearer, and co-presbyter with us, during which time he has maintained an irreproachable moral character; and, in the discharge of the duties of his sacred functions has conducted himself as a faithful minister of Christ; and is now released from his pastoral charge over said congregation at his own request, upon good and sufficient reasons for his resignation of said charge, particularly his intention of going to America. Given under our hands at our presbyterial meeting, the day and year above written.

*The above, by order of Presbytery, is subscribed by,
DAVID ARROTT, Moderator¹*

In July 1807, Thomas Campbell attended his first meeting of the Chartiers Presbytery in western Pennsylvania and was given his preaching assignments for July, August, September, and October.² There is no indication either in the records of the Presbytery or otherwise that he ever failed to appear at any of his appointed places of worship or that he

¹ Alexander Campbell, *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell*. Together With a Brief Memoir of Mrs. Jane Campbell (Cincinnati: H.S. Bosworth, 1861), 20-21.

² *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, Mount Hope, October, 1807, 122. NOTE: See William Herbert Hanna, *Thomas Campbell: Seceder and Christian Union Advocate*. Hanna gives an excellent analysis of the proceedings as gleaned from the Minutes of the Chartiers Presbytery and the Minutes of the Associate Synod. Unfortunately, those minutes are not available in published form and researchers have typically had to rely upon Hanna's book that is no longer in print. Working from the primary sources, archived in the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, PA, I have transcribed the minutes and I include them in this research. Additionally, I have recently come into possession of the microfilm copies of the original minutes, and electronic copies of the minutes pages are now available. In this work, I will be including the relevant portions of the proceedings *in their entirety*. These sections include the charges brought against Thomas Campbell, and his statements of defense. Although the sections are lengthy, by citing rather than paraphrasing, future researchers will have access to documentation that has heretofore been lacking on this subject. [CFB]

was unable to fulfill any of his appointments during those four months. Ironically, a review of the Chartiers Presbytery minutes reveals it was one of the other ministers of the Presbytery who failed to keep an assignment, and it was *that* minister's failure which brought forth what Hanna refers to as the first *detailed* trial for heresy in the United States.³ Although he erroneously refers to the trial as a "trial for heresy," in what was the first – and up to now the only examination of Campbell's trial based upon the actual minutes of the proceedings that were conducted by the Chartiers Presbytery and the Associate Synod of North America – Hanna gives an orderly and detailed account of the events. In this study, we now interpret those proceedings within the distinctive transatlantic context that belonged to Campbell and his trial. The Chartiers Presbytery was subordinate to the Associate Synod of North America, which was itself subordinate to the General Associate Synod of Scotland. Decisions reached and actions taken by the Presbytery and the Associate Synod are more clearly understood when interpreted within that broad and historic transatlantic relationship and when viewed in comparison to similar corresponding events.

The religious concepts that Campbell brought with him to America were initially formed within his Ulster associations. He would either apply his beliefs within the existing system, or he would create a new system in which to affirm his convictions. The minutes of the trial and the events surrounding it give new meaning to Campbell's reluctant decision to

³ William Herbert Hanna, *Thomas Campbell: Seceder and Christian Union Advocate*, (Cincinnati, OH: The Standard Publishing Company, 1935), 32. (Reprinted for the 1987 President's Meeting of Ozark Christian College, *Biography of Thomas Campbell, Advocate of Christian Union*, Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, Inc.) The lengthy proceedings of this episode before the Chartiers Presbytery are documented in the Minutes for the Associate Presbytery Chartiers, Volume I, 1801 – 1828. The further proceedings before the Synod are in the Minutes for the Associate Synod of North America, Volume I, Presbytery of Pennsylvania and Associate Synod May 14, 1799 to May 17, 1809.

leave his Presbyterian Church. Many of the views he stated and elaborated upon in his *Declaration and Address* have their roots in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformation movements in Europe and the British Isles. His famous statement, “Where the Scriptures speak we speak. Where the Scriptures are silent we are silent,”⁴ echoed the sentiments of Luther:

Unless I am refuted and convicted by the testimonies of the Scriptures or by clear arguments (since I believe neither the Pope nor the councils alone; it being evident that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am conquered by the Holy Scriptures quoted by me, and my conscience is bound in the word of God: I can not and will not recant anything, since it is unsafe and dangerous to do any thing against the conscience.
– Martin Luther, April 18, 1521⁵

In order to appreciate the trial, the events leading up to it, and the participants, a survey of Scots-Irish roots is in order. In eighteenth-century Ireland, Ulster Presbyterians were unlike other nonconformist religious minorities in Britain and Ireland. They formed a disciplined group that was organized into one region. Ulster Presbyterians were also united in their common Scottish heritage, and maintained strong links with Scotland, where Presbyterianism was now the established religion. Most significantly, they represented the majority of the population in their north-eastern stronghold.⁶

⁴ Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell: Embracing a View of the Origin, Progress and Principles of the Religious Reformation Which He Advocated* (Indianapolis, IN: Religious Book Service, 1898; reprint, Indianapolis, IN: Religious Book Service, 1980), 235-236 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

⁵ Philip Schaff, “Luther’s Testimony before the Diet of Worms,” in *History of the Christian Church*, vol. VII, *Modern Christianity: The German Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 300 - 301.

⁶ I.R. McBride, *Scripture Politics: Ulster Politics and Irish Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 26.

Europe's Reformation during the sixteenth century was neither confined to that continent nor limited to that century.⁷ On the contrary, the theological blows that were initially struck by the early reformers in Germany and Switzerland would eventually reverberate throughout the entirety of Christendom and be felt for the duration of the second millennium of the Christian era. Those reverberations were to shake the British Isles, ultimately extending northward into Scotland, where they would be examined and embraced by men such as John Glas, Robert Sandeman, and Robert and James Haldane. From Scotland the principles would be transplanted to Protestant Ireland, and eventually they would accompany the Scots-Irish emigrants to America.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PROTESTANT MOVEMENT

Protestant Origins

The Protestant Reformation was not simply *a* movement; it was a mixture of several movements. On October 31 (or November 1), 1517, Martin Luther (1483-1546) posted his Ninety-five Theses upon the Castle Church door in Wittenberg and began what is now referred to as the Reformation Movement. Although there were other Reformers who

⁷ From Latin *pro-testari*, "to affirm, bear witness to" (*testis*, to witness, as in 'testify'), a pro-active testifying to a wrong in order to bring about a change for the better. The term "Protestant" is a derivation of the "protestation" made at the meeting of the *Reichstag* at Speyer. On April 25, 1529, the leading German princes friendly to the Reformation united with fourteen cities of Germany against the decree of the Roman majority of the second Diet of Speyer. Adherents interpreted the term as a testimony to their steadfastness and courage. Historically and sociologically, Protestantism was the religious phase of the transition to the modern age as democracy, capitalism, and public education were the political, economic, and cultural aspects of that transition. (Arthur C. Hall, "Protestantism" in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1969], 290-302.) "Reformation" referred to the need to cleanse the church of abuses. Although "protesting" was not ongoing, *Ekklesia Semper Reformanda*, "The church must ever be reformed," identified reformation as a continual and perpetual need.

preceded him, Luther emerged as the pivotal figure in European Reformation history. Luther specifically denied the primacy of the Pope and the infallibility of the General Councils:

...weighty, important matters and disputations are being prepared about indulgences, purgatory, the mass, idolatry, faith, good works, and things like that, one should settle such things in Christian fashion, according to Holy Scripture, not in papal fashion and help the poor, simple man to know just where he stands and what should become of his soul.⁸

In the 1520s Luther defined scriptural authority, and in doing so he established a principle and a precedent that would be foundational for Protestant reformers. Having repudiated papal and church authority, he was left with the Bible alone as the source for his beliefs. “The Scripture,” said Luther, “[is] the womb from which were born theological truth and the church.”⁹ He rejected all human authorities and affirmed *sola Scriptura* (“only the Scriptures”) as the final word in religious matters, saying, “Scripture forbids one to follow reason...reason must first be grounded in Scripture.”¹⁰ That plea, “The Bible Only!” became the banner for the Reformation and the Restoration Movements.¹¹ Luther relentlessly lambasted the Pope for supplanting the scriptures:

What then will become of the Word of the apostle: “All Scripture inspired of God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction,” (II Timothy 3:16)? Nay, Paul, it is not profitable at all, but the things you attribute to Scripture

⁸ Martin Luther, “Against the Roman Papacy, an Institution of the Devil,” in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 41, *Church and Ministry, III*, ed. Eric W. Gritsch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 271. See also Thomas H. Olbricht, “Continental Reformation Backgrounds for the *Declaration and Address*” in *The Quest for Christian Unity, Peace, and Purity in Thomas Campbell’s Declaration and Address*, eds. Thomas H. Olbricht and Hans Rollmann (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2000), 160-161.

⁹ Martin Marty, *Martin Luther* (New York: Penguin Group, 2004), 83.

¹⁰ Martin Luther, “On the Papacy in Rome” in Gritsch, ed., *Luther’s Works*, vol. 39, *Church and Ministry, I* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 63-64.

¹¹ Marty, 84.

must be sought from the Fathers who have been approved for hundreds of years, and from the Roman See!¹²

He went so far as to say the Pope was also under the laws of God and under the authority of the Scriptures:

...first, I will not tolerate in that men establish new articles of faith and scold, slander, and judge as heretics, schismatics, and unbelievers all other Christians in the whole world only because they are not under the Pope...second, I shall accept whatever the Pope establishes and does, on condition that I judge it first on the basis of Holy Scripture. For my part, he must remain under Christ and let himself be judged by Holy Scripture. But the Roman knaves come along and put him above Christ, make him a judge over scripture and say he cannot err.¹³

Nearly three centuries later, and on another continent, Campbell made the same appeal as did Martin Luther; however, whereas Luther called for a return to the Scriptures and the reform of a Catholic church that had become corrupt, Campbell called for a restoration of Scriptural practices in the wake of what he perceived as Protestant departures.

In 1519 Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) also began attacking Catholic practices that, according to him, were not based upon the Scriptures. “The orthodox writers [i.e., church fathers and theologians] are not to be granted the same authority as Scripture.”¹⁴ As with Luther, *sola Scriptura* was his clarion call:

Those who model their teachings upon a pattern of the Scriptures cannot be said to teach according to the whims of their own feelings, but those who go

¹² Martin Luther, “Bondage of the Will,” in Philip S. Watkins, ed., *Luther’s Works*, vol. 33, *Career of the Reformer, III*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 271.

¹³ Martin Luther, “On the Papacy in Rome,” 101.

¹⁴ Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed. *Ulrich Zwingli: Early Writings*, originally published as vol. I of *The Latin Works and Correspondence of Huldreich Zwingli* (New York: Putnam’s Sons, 1912), 6.

to work without resting on the authority of the sacred writings, [are] contrary to Paul's directions to Timothy.¹⁵

In setting the stage for Protestant messages for centuries to come, Zwingli's sermons criticized purgatory, invocation of saints, monasticism, and transubstantiation.¹⁶ Although spoken in the sixteenth century, his words sound strikingly similar to the message of the nineteenth-century restorationists who contended the churches they were establishing were based upon the preaching and teaching of only the New Testament; they were not characterized as a *new* denomination but were, rather, the church of the first century *restored* to its original form, the one as first presented to the world by Christ and His apostles.

Initially, the most direct influence upon Campbell's theology originated from the Presbyterian Church and the tenets set forth by John Calvin (1509-1564). Calvin, favoring the presbyterial form of congregational government, opposed the episcopal form as was practiced by the Church of England. As a result of the efforts of Calvin and John Knox, Presbyterianism eventually became the religion of dissident churches in England and in Scotland.

After a conversion experience in about 1530, Calvin began considering reformation ideas in Switzerland. Whereas the Lutheran movement in Germany was called *Evangelical*, the followers of Zwingli and Calvin were termed *Reformed*. In keeping with Reformation ideals, Calvin insisted upon the supremacy of the Scriptures. Calvinism became popular in Scotland, the Netherlands, and portions of France. It was also influential in western Germany

¹⁵ Ibid., 270.

¹⁶ Thomas H. Olbricht, "Continental Reformation Backgrounds for the *Declaration and Address*," in Thomas H. Olbricht and Hans Rollmann, eds., *The Quest for Christian Unity, Peace, and Purity in Thomas Campbell's Declaration and Address* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2000), 164 - 165.

and the countries east of Germany, and this theology provided the background for Puritanism in England. In addition to these major movements, there were smaller groups that exerted considerable influence upon religious thought. The Anabaptists, for example, contributed greatly to the religious views that were taking shape among reformers in Britain and Scotland. Although fewer in number than the mainstream of the Reformation, the Anabaptists helped to shape Reformation and Restoration theology, especially on the subject of baptism. At least seven major groups of Anabaptists can be identified, yet the one common commitment held by each of the varying groups was that baptism should be administered only to adult believers and by immersion. They therefore opposed the baptism of infants and insisted that persons who had been so baptized be immersed as adults. The baptizing *again* of those who had been baptized as infants resulted in the designation *Anabaptists*. Owen Chadwick sums up the major predilections of the Anabaptists:

For the most part they rejected the baptism of infants. They believed that the true Church was called out of the world and therefore most of them repudiated the idea that the magistrate should uphold the true Church. The so-called Anabaptist Confession of Schleithem (1527), the document nearest to a confession by the early Anabaptists, proclaimed adult baptism and separation from the world, including everything popish, and from attendance at parish churches and taverns. It condemned the use of force, or going to law, or becoming a magistrate, or the taking of oaths.¹⁷

In the first half of the eighteenth century, the Protestant movement in Britain gave rise to evangelical religion. Not restricted to any single Christian denomination, evangelical Christianity possessed four primary characteristics: *conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard

¹⁷ Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 189.

for the Bible; and *crucicentrism*, an emphasis upon Christ's sacrifice on the cross.¹⁸ These priorities of evangelical thought influenced religious leaders throughout the British Isles as reformers in England and Scotland heard and heeded the clarion call for reformation. In eighteenth-century America, another term became popular as Campbell called for restoration. In light of the fact that Campbell emigrated from Ireland and was closely attached to the form of Presbyterianism practiced in Scotland and Ireland, the picture of him as an American restorationist becomes clearer with an understanding of the history of Presbyterianism in those countries.

The Establishment and Expansion of Presbyterianism

In sixteenth-century Scotland, ecclesiastical government was distributed between thirteen dioceses. Since 1472 the primacy had belonged to the Archbishop of St. Andrews, although in 1492, Glasgow was designated as another diocese.¹⁹ Protestantism came to Scotland in the 1540s when Protestant nobles, unhappy with the tendency of their queen-regent, Mary of Guise, to bind Scottish policy more closely to Catholic France, sought an alliance with England. Elizabeth of England, who had recently ascended to the throne after her Catholic half-sister Mary Tudor, intervened on behalf of John Knox and the Protestant nobles.

¹⁸ David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 1-3.

¹⁹ David George Mullan, *Episcopacy in Scotland: The History of an Idea 1560-1638* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1986), 1-2.

In a time when governments believed their divinely appointed role was to control their subjects and protect their hierarchical society from deteriorating into chaos, the episcopate formed an integral aspect of the mechanism of power and order. In keeping with that ideal, the Church of England was established by royal decree, first by King Henry VIII, then after a brief Catholic restoration, by Elizabeth. The existing church, which previously was Catholic, became Protestant, “complete with its church buildings, and legal rights, including its legal entitlement to the support of its clergy.”²⁰ From its beginning, the Presbyterian Church in Scotland was inextricably linked to the Scottish government. Unlike the Church of England, it had been established by an Act of Parliament. Its organizational structure, formed by Knox, was accepted and ratified by the nation which then conferred on it certain powers.²¹

In contrast to Henry’s decree for the Church of England, Knox insisted on establishing the Church of Scotland as an entirely new denomination. After having been actively involved in the reformation of the Church of England under Edward VI and having worked closely with Calvin in Geneva, Knox emerged as the leader of the Protestant rebels and returned to Scotland in 1555.²² The Church of Scotland was established by a parliament of dubious authority, as it was sitting in defiance of Mary of France, whom it acknowledged as its rightful sovereign.

²⁰ Peter Brooke, *Ulster Presbyterianism: The Historical Perspective 1610-1970*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 7.

²¹ Viscount Wolmer, *The Freedom of the Kirk: A Record of the Legal Steps by which the Established Church of Scotland Attained to its Present Position of Liberty* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1938), 24.

²² Brooke, 6.

Knox, the first architect of the Church of Scotland, labored in 1560 to produce the First Book of Discipline. Adopted in an Act by the Scottish Parliament, it abolished the authority and jurisdiction of the Pope and forbade bishops to act in the Pope's name.²³ The First Book of Discipline also rescinded all acts of Parliament that were contrary to the Scriptures and to the Confession, and explicitly rejected the observance of Christmas and the superstitious consequences of the Lord's Supper at Easter. The Book of Discipline stipulated that baptisms were to be accompanied by preaching, and repudiated the notion that children were damned without the rite of baptism. Additionally, the Confession of 1560 prohibited the saying of Mass and the adoration of sacraments.²⁴ These teachings were understandably difficult to enforce under the Catholic monarch.

After the monarchy returned to Protestants under James VI, bishops were introduced as a manner of bringing the Church of Scotland under the same form of structural authority as the Church of England. This produced a Presbyterian reaction that climaxed in 1580-1581 when the General Assembly voted to abolish bishops and adopted the Second Book of Discipline.²⁵ Until the settlement of 1690, Protestantism in Scotland continued to alternate between conflict and compromise among Presbyterians and Episcopalians.²⁶

Still worried about the infringement of papal authority in Scotland, the King's Confession (also known as the Negative Confession of 1581) was "issued by royal authority

²³ Wolmer, 15.

²⁴ Mullan, 156.

²⁵ Brooke, 8.

²⁶ Richard Brown, *Church and State in Modern Britain 1700–1850* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 107.

in a time of pronounced anti-Catholic passion.”²⁷ The purpose of the Confession, which affirmed full agreement with the 1560 Confession, was to secure universal subscription to the Protestant faith at a time when it was under attack by Rome and also “to drive recusants out of hiding.”²⁸

In 1636 Charles I issued the *Book of Canons and Constitution of the Church* which was designed to pattern the *Kirk* after the model of the Church of England and to enforce a new Anglican liturgy. This provoked a Presbyterian revolt which led to the signing of the National Covenant. The National Covenant was first subscribed to on February 28, 1638, and was an observance of “the glorious marriage day of the kingdom with God.”²⁹ Written in response to the riots resulting from the imposition of *Laud’s Liturgy*³⁰ and the king’s refusal to receive the petitions of supplicants for redress, the National Covenant was an appeal to the people for support. It began by repeating the King’s Confession of 1581 with its condemnation of Roman Catholic errors and the tyrannies of the Stuarts. The Covenant went on to detail numerous Acts of Parliament which had established the Reform faith and church government. Thereafter, the subscribers bound themselves to maintain the freedom of the church from civil control, to defend the true Reformed religion, and to decline the recent innovations in worship decreed by Charles until the General Assembly had ruled on them.

²⁷ Mullan, 156.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Note: William Laud was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1633 and held responsible for Laud’s Liturgy which in 1637 attempted to suppress Calvinistic preaching and polemic and to bring the *Book of Common Prayer* and its ceremonies to Scotland.

Although not specifically condemning the Episcopacy, it was interpreted by Charles and the Anglican bishops as “an assertion by the Kirk of freedom from royal or state control.”³¹

The primary contention of the National Covenant was that the king could not innovate in matters of worship without first gaining the consent of the General Assembly. The resistance of Charles I to Scotland’s National Covenant had powerful repercussions. With a tenuous military situation in England and fears that a Royalist victory would threaten the Reformed religion and civil liberty in both England and Scotland, many were in favor of closer cooperation. To obtain military aid, the English were willing to make concessions; thus in 1643, the General Assembly of the Kirk joined in an alliance with the English Parliament. Known as the Solemn League and Covenant, its object was to force Presbyterianism on England in much the same way the Stuarts had commended Episcopacy to Scotland. The endeavor was not successful for two reasons. First, the Roundheads resisted embracing Presbyterianism, being more inclined to independency. Second, the alignment with England resulted in the Kirk giving up its distinctiveness in order to attain the compromise.

The League and Covenant was a religious and civil pledge between the Scots and English, affirming they had one King and *one* reformed religion. Whether the one religion was to be Episcopal or Presbyterian continued to be debated. There was one certainty: the religion would *not* be Roman Catholic. The Covenant declared the citizens of Scotland, England, and Ireland, “living under one king, being of one reformed religion,” had entered into a solemn league and covenant “for the preservation of ourselves and our religion from

³¹ J. D. Douglas, “National Covenant,” *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, 620.

utter ruin and destruction.”³² They also bound themselves to remove Popery and prelacy as well as superstition, heresy, and every teaching contrary to sound doctrine. Supporters of the 1638 National Covenant and the 1643 Solemn League and Covenant were known as ‘Covenanters’.

The General Assembly was suspended by Oliver Cromwell in 1653 when Parliament dissolved the monarchy in favor of a Protectorate. It did not meet again until 1690. During this time, Scotland continued to be divided between Anglicans and Presbyterians. In the wake of the Glorious Revolution, the Whigs and Presbyterians became ascendant under William III.³³ In 1690 the Scottish Parliament passed an Act with far-reaching implications. Among its accomplishments, the Act ratified the Westminster Confession of Faith, confirmed all laws against Popery, rescinded the legislation of 1661 which was hostile to Presbyterianism, ratified and confirmed the Presbyterian government (except on the matter of patronage), and confirmed the power of Presbyteries to depose ministers.³⁴

By the end of the seventeenth century, Scotland was a covenanted nation in which there was no separation of church and state, secular and profane, individual and community. This godly commonwealth had its roots in the Calvinism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in which the church was responsible for teaching God’s laws and the state for enforcing them. It was an idea, however, that foundered in the eighteenth century with the Act of Union with England and the effects of the Scottish Enlightenment, which in Scotland

³² Edward J. Cowan, “The Solemn League and Covenant,” *Scotland and England 1286-1815* ed. Roger A. Mason (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1987), 182-183.

³³ Wolmer, 15-18.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

was urbane, cosmopolitan, and secular.³⁵ In 1707 the Scottish Parliament, in connection with the Act of Union, passed the Act of Security. The Act affirmed true Protestant religion was the form and purity of worship in use within the Church, and its Presbyterian government and discipline would continue unaltered.³⁶ The British Parliament passed the same Act that year in the Act of Union.

Ulster Presbyterianism

The origins of Ulster Presbyterianism are rooted in the violence and uncertainties of the 1640s and 1650s. Scottish immigrants began moving to Ulster as part of an official plantation scheme initiated by England in 1609, and by 1700, Presbyterians in Ulster comprised the largest Protestant group and perhaps outnumbered Anglicans in the country.³⁷ Episcopalians and Presbyterians each agreed on the necessity of purging Christianity of the corrupt and superstitious practices of the Roman church, yet they were divided by disputes over theology and worship. The major point of contention, however, was the matter of church government. Whereas the Anglicans favored the episcopal form of government, the Presbyterians were committed to the more democratic presbyterial form. The Anglican church had retained the hierarchal ecclesiastical structure of the church at Rome, with power

³⁵ David Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and England from the Glorious Revolution to the Decline of Empire* (New York: University of Cambridge Press, 1996), 63 - 64.

³⁶ Wolmer, 22.

³⁷ S. J. Connolly, "Ulster Presbyterian Religion, Culture, and Politics, 1660-1850," *Ulster and North America: Transatlantic Perspectives on the Scotch-Irish*, ed. H. Tyler Blethen and Curtis W. Wood, Jr. (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 24 - 25.

vested in the bishops. In Presbyterianism, the ministers were considered equals, at least in theory, and their authority was vested in them by the popular consent of the people.³⁸

The primary ecclesiastical body was the General Synod of Ulster, established in 1690. The basic unit of this ecclesiastical structure was the kirk session, which consisted of the minister and his elders. The elders, who were laymen, were nominated by the session and approved by the congregation. It was the role of the session to maintain spiritual and moral discipline within the congregations. Just how resolute they were in that duty can be observed from session records. Minute books from presbyteries in Britain and America chronicle the trials of members who were disciplined for sins ranging from adultery and drunkenness to church absenteeism and heterodox beliefs.³⁹

In Ireland, as throughout Europe, Church and State represented two manifestations of the same national identity. However, comparisons between Scotland and Ireland must also take into consideration the major disparities that existed between them. In Scotland, Presbyterianism was the established, national religion. In return for the active protection of the civil powers and the financial support of the populace, the Church of Scotland was entrusted with the spiritual health of the nation.⁴⁰ Presbyterianism in Ireland was a unique branch, differing as much from its Scottish roots as it did from the American Presbyterian offshoots. Irish Presbyterianism was a social and political arrangement resulting from a

³⁸ McBride, 28, 29.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁰ J. L. McCracken, "Protestant ascendancy and the rise of colonial nationalism, 1714 – 60," *A New History of Ireland*, 10 vols, T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 105 -122. See McBride, 19.

combination of theological backgrounds, social factors, and political structures. In Scotland, the Presbyterian Church was the state religion; in Ireland, however, the Presbyterians represented a dissenting church. Presbyterianism, among other dissenting religions, was tolerated by a British government committed to the support of Anglicanism.

The presbyterian ecclesiastical structure, unlike that of the episcopal churches, provided the opportunity for active participation by the laymen. This arrangement established a link between the ministers and their congregations and diffused a vigorous interest in religious and ecclesiastical questions throughout the entire Presbyterian community. In addition, the relationship between ministers, elders, and members helps to account for the relative effectiveness with which discipline was enforced.⁴¹ This presbyterial structure of government, unlike the episcopal, provided an environment for disagreement and division.

By Schisms Rent Asunder: New Lights, Seceders, and Anti-Burgher Divisions

Presbyterianism was neither standardized nor stable. Rather, its history reveals a movement characterized by perpetual controversies and fractures. By the end of the eighteenth century, there were six Presbyterian groups in Ulster. Two major factors contributed to Presbyterianism's vulnerability to schism. First, the involvement of the laity in the governance of the Church provided members with opportunities to openly voice their individual opinions and objections. In contrast to the monolithic structures of Anglicanism

⁴¹ J. C. Beckett, "Introduction: Eighteenth-Century Ireland, *A New History of Ireland* 10 vols. T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan, eds. Vol. 4, Eighteenth-Century Ireland, 1691 – 1800. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), liii.

and Catholicism, the Presbyterian Church, by its very organizational character, enabled opposing theories to not only be heard, but to flourish.⁴² Second, scriptural precepts were elevated above human authority and the opinions of all Christians, even the religious leaders, were subordinate to the Word of God. These characteristics combined to practically ensure the inevitability of splinter groups. In the eighteenth century, Presbyterians in Ireland found themselves profoundly affected by events within the parent church as factions which originated in Scotland were duplicated in Ulster. One reason for this was the education of the Presbyterian ministers. The Presbyterian Church historically placed great emphasis upon its educated clergy, and education was as important for the Irish ministers as it was for the Scottish ones. Of the ministers ordained between 1730 and 1760 by the Synod of Ulster, at least thirty-six percent held the M.A. degree of a Scottish University. Even those ministers who did not attain the M.A. were most often educated at one of the theological universities in Scotland.⁴³ There was a degree of academic pride associated with Scotland, especially in comparison with the perceived backwardness and ignorance so often associated with Ireland. As a result, ministers who were educated in Scotland vigorously transported to Ireland controversies that frequently were uniquely Scottish. Often, Presbyterian ministers made sure that the arguments were carried on with as much intensity in Ulster as in Scotland.

⁴² McBride, 109.

⁴³ J. L. McCracken, "The Ecclesiastical Structure, 1714 – 1760," *A New History of Scotland*, Vol. IV, Moody and Vaughn, eds. 99.

Enter 'New Lights' and the Latitudinarian Dilemma

The first major upheaval within the Presbyterian ranks occurred in the Church of Scotland in 1646 when James Fisher's book, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, was first published. The Established Church interpreted Fisher's views of grace as being anti-Calvinistic and, therefore, heretical. The controversy cooled down but surfaced again among Presbyterians in 1717 when Thomas Boston found a copy of the book while visiting his parishioners in Simprin. Boston was impressed with the way *The Marrow* clearly set forth differences between the law as a covenant of works and the gospel as a covenant of grace. James Hog reprinted a portion of book in 1718. The new edition contained notes compiled by Boston and soon became sermon fodder for many Presbyterian ministers. As excitement over the book spread, so too did wariness over its teachings. A complaint was made to the Assembly that same year, and the *Marrow of Modern Divinity* was subsequently condemned as being a book with unscriptural and dangerous views. The Assembly authorized an Act prohibiting all ministers of the church, either by printing, writing, or preaching, to recommend *The Marrow*. They were to say nothing favorable of it and were to warn and exhort all not to read or use the book. The condemning of *The Marrow* by the Assembly actually had the effect of causing the book to be sought after. Rather than preventing the reading of the book, the Established Church actually guaranteed its circulation. It became widely read by a large number of Presbyterians, the majority of whom eventually sided with the ministers who espoused the *Marrow* doctrine.⁴⁴ The division that occurred became

⁴⁴ Rev. Basil G. McBee and Rev. Reid W. Stewart, *History of the Associate Presbyterian Church of North America* (Apollo, PA: Closson Press, 1983), 5.

associated with the ‘New Light’ controversy, which contradicted the traditional, orthodox views and eventually developed into a latitudinarian system that included the right of private judgment, the sincere opposition to creeds and confessions, and the validity of personal sincerity.⁴⁵

The derisive expression ‘New Light’ originally came to be applied to unorthodox or “new” teachings and had its origin with the formation of the Belfast Society in Ireland. In 1703 the young minister John Abernathy was ordained to the Presbyterian congregation of Antrim. In 1705 he, along with several other clergymen, theological students, and laymen organized The Belfast Society, which was dedicated to the increase and propagation of scriptural knowledge. In 1705 the Synod introduced the stipulation requiring its ministers to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith, which had been mandated in the Church of Scotland since 1690.⁴⁶

The adherents in The Belfast Society were primarily from Dublin, Belfast, and other northern towns. The usual monthly meetings of the group consisted of studying such controversial topics as The Nature and Scriptural Terms of the Unity of the Christian Church; The Nature and Mischief of Schism; The Rights of Conscience and Private Judgment; The Sole Dominion of Christ in His Own Kingdom; and The Nature, Power, and Effects of Excommunication. They also read and listened as various interpretations of difficult scripture verses were discussed. The Belfast Society was representative of the new breed of minister – one who was open to individual freedom, receptive to at least the

⁴⁵ McBride, 55.

⁴⁶ Brooke, 81-82.

consideration of new interpretations and not stubbornly entrenched in the doctrinal decisions of the past.⁴⁷

On December 9, 1719 Abernathy preached a sermon before the Society which he later published as a tract. Entitled, “Religious Obedience Founded on Personal Persuasion,” the discourse produced repercussions within the Presbyterian body which eventually led to the members of The Belfast Society being expelled from the Synod. Abernathy had stated his view that every individual’s conviction of truth, after sincere investigation and deliberation, was the sole rule of his personal faith and conduct and to exclude such a person from Christian communion was not only unjust, but unscriptural as well.⁴⁸

Opponents to such heterodoxy quickly surfaced to defend Presbyterian orthodoxy and condemn Abernathy and others who shared his heretical views. Abernathy’s chief adversary was Rev. John Malcome, the aged and venerated minister of Dunmurray, near Belfast. In 1720 Malcome published his response to Abernathy. In his “Personal Persuasion, No Ground for Religious Obedience,” Malcome pointed to what he saw as the dangerous nature of Abernathy’s imaginative views. He called such ideas “new light” concepts; thus he designated a term by which these – and successive novel or unorthodox teachings – would henceforth be labeled.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ James Seaton Reid, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Comprising the Civil History of the Province of Ulster, from the Accession of James the First: with a Preliminary Sketch of the Progress of the Reformed Religion in Ireland During the Sixteenth Century, and An Appendix, consisting of Original Papers.* Three Volumes, Vol. III (Belfast, William Mullan, 1867), 111-113.

⁴⁸ Reid, 117.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 118, 120.

‘New Lights’, the Subscription Controversy, and Transatlantic Offshoots

During the 1720s, ‘New Lights’ argued that subscribing to the Westminster Confession of Faith was without scriptural merit and conflicted with the fundamental right of private judgment. Central to their argument was a skeptical attitude concerning the danger of church courts and the rights of the Synod.⁵⁰ Their cardinal principal was the lordship of Jesus Christ. They argued that all executive, legislative, and judicial authority was vested in him, and that he had laid down his terms for Christian communion. To alter the pattern was to usurp his authority. The next principle was the all-sufficient nature of the Scriptures. ‘New Lights’ argued that the introduction and requirement of human creeds and confessions was a corruption of the Christian faith revealed in the Scriptures.⁵¹ In America, the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania detailed these very tenets of their belief in the mid-eighteenth century. Yet the Presbytery defended the Westminster Confession as a useful summary of essential Christian doctrine. Eventually, additional requirements for fellowship were stipulated, and in 1791 the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania declared that before any member is received into communion with the Presbytery, there must be the statement of “adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Smaller Catechism, Form of Presbyterial Church Government, and Directory for the Public Worship of God.”⁵²

⁵⁰ Brooke, 82.

⁵¹ McBride, 49.

⁵² Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, “Acts of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania Concerning the Admission of Church Members to Communion,” *A Display of the Religious Principles of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania*, Shaw-Shoemaker Bibliography, 1801-1819. (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. New York: Readex. Early American Imprints. 2nd Series. Year: 1814, Microprint, 1978), Microfiche, p. 169, No.: 30709.

At the 1721 Synod, the ministers were called upon to make a voluntary declaration of their belief in the eternal Sonship of Christ (a defense against the Arian doctrine that Christ, although divine, emanated from the Father and was thus not co-eternal with the Father). The ministers at the Synod were also to reaffirm their subscription to the Westminster Confession. Those refusing to make such declarations and subscriptions were ‘Non-Subscribers.’ It is important to note the actual grounds for their refusal. They did not disagree with the doctrines under consideration; they objected that the Synod had no authority to require declarations and subscriptions be made in affirming the doctrines.⁵³

In the minds of Subscribers, correct doctrine was of supreme importance, and the Church had the right and the responsibility to define it and to require their preachers to maintain it. The Non-Subscribers agreed with the fundamental doctrine of the inspiration and sufficiency of the Scriptures and believed that an individual’s personal persuasion should be guided by and be in harmony with the Word of God. Their objection was with the claim by the Synod, or any other church court, to make authoritative interpretations of scripture. For fallible men to administer human tests was the essence of popery and smacked of Romanism in the minds of Non-Subscribers.⁵⁴

The Non-Subscribers refused to sufficiently declare a litany of their beliefs, and the orthodox presbyteries refused to join in communion with any whose beliefs they could not ascertain with certainty.⁵⁵ Eventually the ‘New Light’ ministers, along with the elders who

⁵³ Brooke, 84.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 87-88.

⁵⁵ McBride, 50.

had openly declared the ‘New Light’ doctrine, were expelled from the Synod. Thus the Non-Subscribing Presbytery of Antrim became the first schism in Ulster Presbyterianism. It was not a definitive schism, however, as the expelled presbyters were not entirely severed from communion with the Ulster Synod. Although the dissident clergymen were not permitted to sit in the Synod, Christian communion continued. The Non-Subscriber clergy continued to receive their share of the *regum donum*, and ministers within the two bodies often exchanged pulpits.⁵⁶

The Seceder Rift Concerning ‘Patronage’ and Formation of the Associate Presbytery

Throughout the eighteenth century, the subject of patronage proved to be a divisive issue among Presbyterians. Prior to the Glorious Revolution, the patronage system empowered wealthy noblemen to select the ministers for the parishes in their estates. That system was overturned by the Act of 1690 which called for ministers to be selected by elders and heritors, subject to congregational approval.⁵⁷ Five years after the Parliaments of England and Scotland united in the Act of Union 1707, the independence of Presbyterian churches to elect their own ministers was once again threatened when Scottish nobles reinstated patronage over the parishes of their estates. The Patronage Act of 1712, *An Act to restore the Patrons to their ancient Rights of presenting Ministers to the Churches vacant in that Part of Great Britain called Scotland*, was intended to return to the noblemen in Scotland (there was no Patronage Act for Ireland) their control over their parish churches.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 41.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 72.

In the Kirk, the General Assembly at first protested the Act, believing it to have been settled in 1560 when the *First Book of Discipline* stipulated ministers were not to be placed within churches without the minister's consent. Queen Anne refused to yield on the matter, and the position was acquiesced to by the dominant party in the Church of Scotland. The question was not formally reopened for over one hundred years. However, attempts to ignore the issue were not without consequence. As frictions continued to mount, several groups of Seceders, believing that the General Assembly had sacrificed one of the major tenets of Presbyterianism by failing to protect the church against encroachment from the new British state, split off from the Established Church of Scotland over the issue.

In 1726 ministers who were unwilling to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith broke away from the General Synod and formed the separate Presbytery of Antrim. Not long afterward, dispute occurred in the Scottish church over the issue of lay patronage and with ministers being selected by heads of families with a congregation.

The Associate Presbyterian Church was born in Scotland in 1733 as the result of a protest by four ministers against what they regarded as evils in the Established Church. A major issue was the patronage system. In 1732 Rev. Ebenezer Erskine, being appointed to preach at the opening of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, chose for his subject the text, "The Stone the Builder's Refused, is Made Head of the Corner," (Psalm 118:22). His message was a testimony against the Church of Scotland, for their persistence in pursuing a course that he claimed was out of harmony with the Scriptures. The sermon was condemned by the Church,

and Erskine was pronounced worthy of censure.⁵⁸ The Synod of Perth called him to account for his criticism of the Church. Erskine was joined by William Wilson, Alexander Moncrieff, and James Fisher. The formal suspension of the four ministers resulted in the formation of a separate presbytery. On December 6, 1733, the new faction, named the Associate Presbytery, was formed at Gairney Bridge, Scotland.⁵⁹ On October 11, 1744, the members of the Associate Presbytery constituted themselves into a synod, which they called the Associate Synod. It consisted of three presbyteries: Dumferline, Glasgow, and Edinburgh.⁶⁰

This new faction claimed congregational control over the selection of ministers and grew rapidly. By 1766 there were ninety-nine congregations in Scotland.⁶¹ In addition, the Associate Presbytery gained momentum in Ireland and England, and eventually was transported to America where, as we shall see, commitment to Seceder orthodoxies was a visible trait among the Associate Presbyterians in Pennsylvania.

The Burgher and Anti-Burgher Factions Arise

Before undertaking a more detailed examination of the peculiarities of Seceder Presbyterianism, a brief historical overview is in order. The Seceder denomination, it will be recalled, left the Established Church in 1733 over patronage. Unable to come to terms

⁵⁸ Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, "Of the Rise of the Secession and of the Associate Presbytery" *Display of the Religious Principles of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: W. M'Culloch, Printer, 1814), 5, 6.

⁵⁹ McBee and Stewart, viii.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶¹ W. R. Ward, *Christianity Under the Ancien Régime, 1648-1789: New Approaches to European History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 141.

regarding their objection to the state's authority to appoint ministers, the Associate Church – or Seceders was established. The Seceders divided in 1747 over the issue of whether oaths – required of town burgesses (civil magistrates), binding them to support the religion of the realm – served, in fact, to sanction the very abuses by the national government which they had opposed. Those who favored the oath were 'Burghers' and those who protested it became 'Anti-Burghers.' Each faction insisted it was "the true church." In 1795 the power of the civil magistrate to act in religious matters was called into question. The debate centered on the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Solemn League and Covenant. At issue was whether ministers were still bound to hold that the secular ruler had power over the church and that the Solemn League and Covenant taken by Scots in the sixteenth century was still binding.⁶² As a result, the Burghers divided into the 'Old Light Burghers' and the 'New Light Burghers.' The Anti-Burghers also split into the 'Old Light Anti-Burghers' and the 'New Light Anti-Burghers.' Thus, within the context of the debate over magisterial authority, the terms 'Old Lights' and 'New Lights' take on new meanings. To complicate matters further, the 'Old- Light Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian Church' in Ireland, the church in which Thomas Campbell ministered, perpetuated the divisions in spite of the fact that the Burgher oath never pertained to Ireland. Given their zeal in evangelism, the ranks of 'New Lights' increased into the early nineteenth century. However, the numbers of the

⁶² Bebbington, 55. Bebbington argues that the underlying issue was whether principles of the Enlightenment should be accepted or rejected. The growing thought among the progressive thinkers was that knowledge increases over time and consciences, therefore, should not be bound to early statements of faith that were composed by humans. As no human decree can be thought to contain the full and comprehensive statement of divine truth, the Westminster Confession might err.

minority ‘Old Lights’ steadily decreased as that branch of Seceders continued in their traditions well into the nineteenth century.⁶³

The reason for the contention over the Burgess Oath within the Seceder denomination in 1745 was that the oath sworn by those who were admitted as Burghers of towns in Scotland, had this clause: “...Here I protest before God and your lordships that I profess and allow with my heart the true religion presently professed within this realm, and authorized by the laws thereof, that I shall abide thereat, and defend the same to my life’s end, renouncing the Roman religions called Papistry.”⁶⁴ Some interpreted the words of the oath as analogous with the true religion they professed, and they maintained that swearing this part of the oath was equivalent to approving of the corruptions that prevailed in the Established Church and against which the Secession had publicly testified. Others, however, believed that the clause within the oath bound the individual who swore it to approve only of the religion itself; it did not imply any approbation of the prevailing corruptions in either the state or the church. The Synod divided after concluding that they could not resolve their differing opinions regarding the implications of the oath. From the split emerged the Burgher and Anti-Burgher Synods.⁶⁵

Alexander Moncrieff, one of the four men who led in the Secession of 1733, and who believed that swearing of the religious clause in the burgess oath was sinful and inconsistent with the Secession testimony, sided with the Anti-Burghers in the 1747 split. Ebenezer

⁶³ Ibid., 55-56.

⁶⁴ *A Display of the Religious Principles of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania*, 34.

⁶⁵ McBee and Stewart, 15.

Erskine and James Fisher stood on the Burgher side of the breach.⁶⁶ The Burgher oath was not even administered in Ireland; nevertheless, the Irish church followed the pattern of their Scottish brethren and also divided into Burghers and Anti-Burghers.⁶⁷

The Burghers were interested in reconciling with the Anti-Burghers, and as early as 1770 the union was debated; however, it was crushed by the Scottish Synod. Another attempt was made in 1784, but it also failed.⁶⁸ An interest in greater cooperation between the two groups surfaced in Ireland around the turn of the nineteenth century, and in 1803 the Burgher Synod appointed a committee to meet with the representatives of the Anti-Burghers to discuss the possibility of reuniting the two bodies. Thomas Campbell was included in the Anti-Burgher deputation that was charged with those negotiations.⁶⁹ The committees met at Richhill in October 1804 and again at Lurgan in March 1805, with Thomas Campbell being selected to draft the report containing the propositions for union.⁷⁰ In 1804 the Anti-Burgher Synod of Ireland met at Belfast, and Campbell addressed the Synod on “the meeting of the Committee of Consultation in Richhill, on the second Tuesday of October last, according to appointment, for concerting a plan of union between the two bodies of Seceders in this kingdom....”⁷¹

⁶⁶ Ibid., 17.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁸ Alfred Russell Scott, “Thomas Campbell’s Ministry at Ahorey,” *Restoration Quarterly* 29, No. 4, (4th Quarter, 1987): 233.

⁶⁹ David M. Thompson, “The Irish Background to Thomas Campbell’s *Declaration and Address*,” *Disciplina* 46, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 26.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Campbell, *Memoirs*, 210.

The propositions for union also included a request for a Testimony to be adapted to the Irish situation.⁷²

...and seeing that the judicial decision about oaths in Scotland can be no actual subject of testimony-bearing here, much less a term of communion among us; therefore, it appears that there is nothing to prevent the two bodies of Seceders in this land to unite in a bond of a common testimony adapted to their local situation.⁷³

Campbell was appointed Moderator of the Anti-Burgher Synod for 1805-1806 and presented the Synod's case to the General Synod in Glasgow in 1805.⁷⁴ The propositions for union were rejected by the General Synod, however, and the two factions remained separate until 1818. When Thomas Campbell eschewed the walls of division that had been carefully erected by the Seceder Presbyterian hierarchy in western Pennsylvania and invited all Presbyterians to partake of the communion, he was pursuing the same goal for unity that he had worked for in Ireland two years earlier.

Transatlantic Implications of Seceder and Anti-Burgher Orthodoxies

Parallel to the development of the Seceders in Scotland were the Methodist revivals in England and the Great Awakening which took place, to a larger extent, among people of Ulster Presbyterian descent in America.⁷⁵ George Whitefield was the century's most famous

⁷² Thompson, 26.

⁷³ Campbell, *Memoirs*, 214.

⁷⁴ Alfred Russell Scott, "Thomas Campbell's Ministry at Ahorey," *Restoration Quarterly* 29, No. 4, (4th Quarter, 1987): 233.

⁷⁵ Brooke, 98.

itinerant preacher, and aside from England's monarch, he was arguably the best-known Englishman of the mid-eighteenth century.⁷⁶ Whitefield was converted while an undergraduate student at Oxford in the spring of 1735. Three years later, in 1738 Charles and John Wesley each experienced a spiritual "awakening" and began to pursue careers in ministry.⁷⁷ Following his conversion and with the encouragement of Whitefield, John Wesley began his career of open-air meetings in England in 1739. In 1741 Whitefield preached throughout parts of Scotland. Meanwhile, at Northampton, Massachusetts, Jonathan Edwards was involved in igniting a religious revival that would be termed 'The Great Awakening.' In the years that followed, Whitefield and the Wesleys successfully fanned the flames of revivalism that swept Britain and the North American colonies.

Whitefield was an Anglican preacher and presented the most obvious representation of the new evangelicalism that swept across America during the Great Awakening of the eighteenth century. In a radical departure from tradition, Whitefield willingly crossed denominational lines and eagerly reached out to all Protestants, preaching wherever a crowd could gather and making use of newspapers and pamphlets to generate publicity.⁷⁸ Whitefield was one of the first, along with Samuel Davies and Gilbert Tennent, to preach on a broad scale the theology that God's grace was not a respecter of persons. The question "for whom did Christ die?" had long been a subject of debate among theologians. Did Christ die only for 'the elect', as Calvinist advocates of 'particular redemption' insisted? Or was

⁷⁶ Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith, Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 182.

⁷⁷ Bebbington, 20.

⁷⁸ Noll, *The Work We Have to Do*, 43.

Christ's death on the cross for all, as Arminian believers of 'general redemption' affirmed?⁷⁹ The ranks of the eighteenth-century Evangelicals were divided by controversy between Methodists, who were Arminians, and most other denominations, who tended to be Calvinists.⁸⁰ For Whitefield, the distinctions between churches and the observances of various denominational traditions were secondary to the primary goal of preaching the free availability of grace on as many occasions as possible to as many people as possible.⁸¹ He encouraged ordinary men and women to view their own religious experiences with as much respect as the decrees of traditional religious authorities.⁸²

Believing, as did Jonathan Edwards, that claims of experiencing supernatural phenomena would detract from the written word and result in a misplaced faith, Whitefield never claimed to have experienced visions or to have witnessed miracles.⁸³ He emphasized one question to his listeners: "Are you saved?" His sermons were intended to convince them their answer was no, and he provided them with the knowledge of how to surrender their lives to Christ.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Jacobus Arminius, a Dutch theologian, viewed Christian doctrine much as the pre-Augustinian church fathers did. He differed from John Calvin's theology in several areas: Predestination is conditional, based upon the individual's response to God and God's foreknowledge of that response; Christ's atonement is unlimited since Christ suffered for everyone so that the Father could forgive the ones who repent and believe; saving grace is not irresistible; believers may lose their salvation so as to be eternally lost.

⁸⁰ Bebbington, 16-17.

⁸¹ Brooke, 99.

⁸² Noll, Mark A. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 143.

⁸³ Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, 186.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 187.

Whitefield was at odds with both the Church of Scotland and the Seceders on the matter of ‘open communion’. Each of the Presbyterian factions, believing itself to be the “true” church, confined communion to members of their own denomination.⁸⁵ Additionally, the leadership of the Seceders, staunch Calvinists that they were, viewed Whitefield’s messages of grace given by God apart from respect of persons as completely unacceptable. The Westminster Confession supports the doctrine of unconditional election by which predestined individuals have been “particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number cannot be either increased or diminished.” (III.4)⁸⁶ Arminians held to the doctrine of an indefinite, conditional election, represented in the election of all who believe.⁸⁷

John and Charles Wesley – and their fellow Anglican, George Whitefield – acted upon their conviction that seeking after God could not be satisfied by human works, but only by what was described in *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* as the Christian’s ‘passive obedience’ – the awareness of grace as the free gift of God and that it is the responsibility of the Christian to receive it.⁸⁸ Whitefield called upon his listeners to respond. In this way his preaching differed from Calvinism as expressed in *The Marrow*, emphasizing more than the “passive obedience” of the hearer. The concept of “passive obedience” in Whitefield’s preaching was applied most often in reference to Christ’s atoning sacrifice for the sins of mankind; by which sacrifice, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to sinners. Note the

⁸⁵ Brooke, 102, 103.

⁸⁶ F. H. Klooster, “Election,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 348-349.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ *Brooke*, 99.

following selected excerpts concerning “passive obedience” (which I have italicized for emphasis) from notable Whitefield sermons:

...if God shall be pleased to make me, to reach your hearts, I will tell you by the word "righteousness," I understand all that Christ hat [*sic.*] done, and all that Christ hath suffered: or, to make use of the term generally made use of by sound divines, "*Christ's active, and Christ's passive obedience;*" put those two together, and they make up the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ....⁸⁹

The Lord Jesus Christ is our righteousness; and if we are accepted with God, it must be only in and through the personal righteousness, *the active and passive obedience, of Jesus Christ his beloved Son*. This righteousness must be imputed, or counted over to us, and applied by faith to our hearts, or else we can in no wise be justified in God's sight: and that very moment a sinner is enabled to lay hold on Christ's righteousness by faith, he is freely justified from all his sins, and shall never enter into condemnation, notwithstanding he was a fire-brand of hell before.⁹⁰

Here then we see the meaning of the word righteousness. It implies *the active as well as passive obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ*. We generally, when talking of the merits of Christ, only mention the latter, — his death; whereas, the former, — his life and active obedience, is equally necessary.⁹¹

Although he spoke of Christ’s “active obedience” and “passive obedience” as accomplishing the will of God, Whitefield affirmed that the response of sinful mankind must be an *active* obedience and that, for sinners, “passive obedience” was unacceptable:

How soon would our pulpits have every where been filled with these old antichristian doctrines, free-will, meriting by works, transubstantiation, purgatory, works of supererogation, *passive-obedience*, non-resistance, and

⁸⁹ George Whitefield, “The Righteousness of Christ, an Everlasting Righteousness,” *Selected Sermons of George Whitefield* [book on-line](Grand Rapids: Calvin College, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2002, accessed September 25, 2007), 138. Available from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/whitefield/sermons.html>.

⁹⁰ George Whitefield, “Abraham’s Offering up of his Son Isaac,” *Selected Sermons of George Whitefield*, 32.

⁹¹ George Whitefield, “The Lord our Righteousness,” *Selected Sermons of George Whitefield*, 138.

all the other abominations of the whore of Babylon?⁹²...besides, considered as a Protestant people, do we not lie under the greatest obligations of any nation under heaven, to pay a cheerful, unanimous, universal, persevering obedience to the divine commands.⁹³

The Erskines of the Secession branch extended an invitation to Whitefield to bring his revival preaching to Scotland in 1741.⁹⁴ The result was disastrous. Whitefield was soundly condemned by a Seceder group intent on exercising Presbyterian discipline. He received “torrents of abuse” from the Associate Presbytery, which had demanded he “abstain from all intercourse with the Ministers of the Established Church.”⁹⁵ When he asked the reason for such a prohibition, they replied, “We are God’s people.” To this, Whitefield enjoined, “Has God got no people but you?”⁹⁶ The censure and the harsh spirit of the Seceders not only ended any fellowship Whitefield may have had with them, but it also rendered him “the object of their calumny and resentment.”⁹⁷ Despite his refusal to embrace their distinctive teachings, many of the more progressive thinkers within the Secession remained Evangelical.⁹⁸ In contrast to his experience with the Seceders, Whitefield’s

⁹² George Whitefield, “Britain’s Mercies and Britain’s Duties,” Preached at Philadelphia, on Sunday, August 14, 1746. *Selected Sermons of George Whitefield* [book on-line] (Grand Rapids: Calvin College, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2002, accessed September 25, 2007), 50. Available from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/whitefield/sermons.html>.

⁹³ Ibid., 56.

⁹⁴ Bebbington, 33-34.

⁹⁵ Thomas Somerville, “My Own Life and Times,” in *Scottish Diaries and Memoirs, 1746-1843*, J.G. Fyfe, ed. (Stirling, Scotland: Observer Press, 1942), 210.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 210.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Bebbington, 34.

revivalism met with great success in the Established Churches. The Associate Churches apparently were more interested in orthodoxy and reform than revival.⁹⁹

“New Light” theology, as it had surfaced in the wake of *The Marrow*, had challenged rigid orthodoxy by asking a fundamental question: Were Christians to be judged by their fidelity to the dictates of the church – dictates that were based upon human interpretations which had their origins in the minds of fallible human beings? Or were Christians to be judged by the sincerity of their beliefs?¹⁰⁰ As the example of Rev. Thomas Ledlie Birch illustrates, in America, as in Scotland and Ireland, the elite Presbyterianism of the New Lights and the orthodox Presbyterianism of the Seceders and Covenanters were often conflicting systems within the broad tradition of Presbyterianism.

For over twenty years Birch had been a Covenanting (‘Old Light’) minister in the congregation of Saintfield, County Down. After the defeat of the United Irishmen at the Battle of Balynahinch (a decisive encounter which effectively ended the United Irish Rebellion in Ulster in 1798), Birch was arrested and deported as punishment for his involvement in the uprising. He was ‘called’ by the Covenanting congregation in Washington, Pennsylvania in 1806; however, the presbyters of the Presbytery of Ohio were New Lights and were unwilling to install him as their minister. The Presbytery primarily objected that Birch did not possess ‘experimental’ religion. Revivalists during the Great Awakening chastised ministers for being educated but not *truly* converted. In Scotland and Ireland the emphasis with Covenanting congregations had been upon ministers complying

⁹⁹ Ibid., 141.

¹⁰⁰ McBride, 7, 8.

with the fundamentals of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Upon his being examined by the Ohio presbyters, Birch demonstrated his grasp of scripture, but the New Lights were not convinced of his 'new birth'.¹⁰¹

The rifts within the Scottish church ultimately were transported across the Atlantic to Pennsylvania, where Presbyterians of the various factions had settled and were in need of ministers. The first applications for missionaries were limited to the eastern counties of Chester and Lancaster in what was then the Province of Pennsylvania.¹⁰² In August, 1751 an urgent application for missionaries was received from Pennsylvania, beseeching the Synod to appoint a minister to come and to labor among them in that region. A shortage of ministers ready to depart for America forced the Synod to postpone answering the request. However, in August, 1752 the Synod enacted a measure that increased the supply of ministers available for American missions. Presbyteries, prior to entering their students for licensure, were to require them to affirm their willingness to accept any missionary appointment that might be issued them by the church courts.

Soon after the passing of this Act, the Synod received another request from Pennsylvania, again asking for missionaries to be sent to them. A Mr. Alexander Gellatly was ordered to proceed to Pennsylvania at the earliest opportunity. He was to be accompanied by Mr. Andrew Arnot. Upon their arrival the two men were to constitute themselves into a presbytery along with two elders. The presbytery was to be named the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania. The two men arrived in Pennsylvania in the early

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 65.

¹⁰² McBee and Stewart, 18.

summer of 1753. At first they worked chiefly among the people of Lancaster and Chester counties in the eastern region of the province. On November 2, 1753, Gellatly and Arnot constituted themselves as the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania subordinate to the Associate Synod of Scotland.¹⁰³

Verbal assaults from Covenanters in the area quickly appeared in the form of warnings and printed insults condemning the Seceder principles. The affronts were launched by the New Castle Presbytery, and although they were useful in publicizing and spreading the Seceder principles, they only widened and reinforced the fissure that existed between the two Presbyterian factions.¹⁰⁴ Several decades later the New Castle incident was still a burning memory in the minds of the Associate Synod. In affirming that they were a separate entity from the Covenanting body constituted by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania wrote, “We never did separate from the other Presbyterians here, for we were never in communion with them.”¹⁰⁵ The Presbytery continued:

The Synod of New York and Pennsylvania judge adherence to the Westminster Confession not essential or necessary in doctrine, worship, and government. They do not hold to confessions of faith, and in some article by the Presbytery of New Castle, near thirty years ago, represented our principles as pernicious and our conduct in leaving the established church of Scotland as schismatical.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Ibid., 17.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 17, 18.

¹⁰⁵ Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, *A Display of the Religious Principles of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania*, Revised by the Associate Synod 1813, and republished by their order (Philadelphia: W. M'Culloch, Printer, 1814), 40, 41.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 41.

Scottish Anti-Burghers Take Root in America

Until 1764 all the missionaries sent to America by the Seceders were from the Anti-Burgher Synod. In that year, Rev. Thomas Clarke (of the Burgher Synod) arrived in America. Clark was not opposed to the swearing of the Burgess Oath; however he did have scruples regarding taking the Oath of Abjuration, which asserted the right of the royal family to the British throne. Members of Parliament, clergy, and laymen were required to take the oath, pledging to support the House of Hanover. Because of his scruples about swearing the oath, which he believed to be in contradiction to the oath of the Covenant, Clarke and most of his congregation emigrated from Ireland to America. Some chose to settle in South Carolina; however Clarke and others elected to make their homes in Salem, New York. Clarke applied to the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania for acceptance as a member and was received on September 2, 1765.

Because the distinction between Burghers and Anti-Burghers grew out of the Scottish church / state system, the issue precipitating the original break posed no obstacle in America. The Scottish Anti-Burgher Synod, however, did foster and perpetuate strife and division within the transatlantic Seceder community. In 1767 Burghers Messrs. David Telfair and Samuel Kinloch also applied for admission into the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, agreeing basically to the same terms affirmed by Thomas Clarke two years earlier. They were not required to sever their connection with the Synod to which they belonged in Scotland, but they did affirm that they would not justify the swearing of the Burgess Oath. Three years later, additional Anti-Burgher missionaries arrived with a stern word from the Scottish Anti-Burgher Synod. The Synod directed the Associate Presbytery to annul its union

with Telfair and Kinloch immediately. If the Presbytery refused to sever the unauthorized ties, the new missionaries were instructed by the Synod to constitute themselves a separate presbytery, along with any others who were like-minded. The Synod's instructions set forth at a meeting in Pequea, Lancaster County on June 5, 1771. At the meeting, the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania agreed that their actions were not consistent with their subordination to the Anti-Burgher Synod and stated that they would have no further communion with the the Burghers without Synod approval.¹⁰⁷ The Presbytery also took steps to ensure that there would be no blurring of the lines when it came to fellowship within the faction. Being diligent to maintain the 'pure' religion handed down to it from the Scottish Church, and in the effort to thwart any teachings that might allow non-Anti-Burgher Seceders to enter into its communion, The Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania issued these warnings against various sorts of Latitudinarian or 'New Light' teachings:

- 1) Some are for comprehending in one church communion all who profess to believe in Jesus as the true Messiah, and to receive the Scriptures as the rule of faith, laying aside all creeds and confessions of faith.
- 2) Some are for comprehending in one church communion all Protestants, whether they be Episcopalians, Independents, Baptists, or Presbyterians, asserting that to decline church communion with persons on account of the tenets by which any of the denominations are distinguished, is bigotry and party zeal.
- 3) Some plead for church communion with all who bear the Presbyterian name, notwithstanding their different opinions about doctrine, worship, and government and notwithstanding that they refuse to join in a testimony for Presbyterial church order and government as a divine institution against episcopacy and independency.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ McBee and Stewart, 19.

¹⁰⁸ Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, *A Display of the Religious Principles of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania*, 166.

By the end of the eighteenth century, congregations of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania were scattered over the states of Pennsylvania, New York, Vermont, Virginia, and the two Carolinas. The Associate Synod of North America was formed consisting of four presbyteries. The Presbytery of Cambridge consisted of congregations and ministers in the states of New York and Vermont, excluding the city of New York. The Presbytery of Philadelphia included the congregations and ministers in Pennsylvania east of the Allegheny Mountains, in Virginia east of the mountains, in the Carolinas, and the city of New York. The Presbytery of Kentucky contained churches and ministers in Kentucky and Tennessee. The fourth presbytery was Chartiers, whose churches and ministers resided in western Pennsylvania and western Virginia. The four presbyteries were all subordinate to the new synod, which was erected upon the principle of subordination to the General Associate Synod of Scotland and conducted its first meeting May 20, 1801, in Philadelphia. To the Associate Synod of North America, Thomas Campbell presented his credentials as a Seceder minister in 1807. He was assigned to the Presbytery of Chartiers that same year.

Independent Churches Develop in Scotland and Ireland

The rise of Independent churches from within the Presbyterian structure can be traced back to the influences of John Glas (1695-1773).¹⁰⁹ His family's religious background was

¹⁰⁹ There is some confusion about the date of Glas' birth. The October 5, 1695 date is noted by "N.B." in "Selections from the Writings of John Glas," which is a preface to John Glas, *A Treatise on the Lord's Supper* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1883 reprint of the 1743 publication), p. 1. The preface states, "The information from this preface was derived chiefly from the memoir prefixed to Glas' 'Narrative.'" p. 13. Dr. Lynn McMillon cites September 21, 1695 as the date Glas was born. See Lynn McMillon, *Restoration Roots: The Scottish Origins of the American Restoration Movement* (Henderson, Tennessee: Hester Publications, 1983), p. 19. In his Ph.D. dissertation, McMillon provides additional information on the birth date of Glas, "The date 1696 is cited in James Ross, *A History of Congregational Independency in Scotland* (Glasgow: Maclehose and Sons, 1900), p. 25." See Lynn McMillon, "The Quest for

primarily Scottish Presbyterianism with several of his ancestors, including his father, having served as ministers in the Church of Scotland.¹¹⁰ He studied for the ministry at the universities of St. Andrews and Edinburgh. Glas became convicted of the divine responsibility placed upon him as a minister of the Gospel. As he studied the subject of religious authority, he became convinced Scripture is the only criterion by which all religious matters must be evaluated.¹¹¹

Upon coming to the parish of Tealing near Dundee in 1719, Glas quickly confronted the growing ‘New Light’ teaching regarding covenants. By this time, the controversy over *The Marrow* and its doctrines regarding grace and works had been swirling among the established churches in Scotland for several years. As Glas prepared a series of lessons on the Shorter Catechism, he came to the question, “How does Christ execute the office of a King?” This topic was among the controversial subjects discussed by the ‘New Lights’ from within the Belfast Society.¹¹² Glas studied the subject and eventually concluded that he could not harmonize the teachings of the Scriptures with the traditional beliefs concerning the binding nature of national covenants.¹¹³ According to the Scottish National Covenant, the Church of Christ was supposed to be represented in the body politic of the Scottish nation

the Apostolic Church: A Study of Scottish Origins of American Restorationism,” (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 1972), 54.

¹¹⁰ John Glas, “Selections from the Writings of John Glas,” in *A Treatise on the Lord’s Supper* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1743), 1.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Reid, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, Vol. III, 111-113.

¹¹³ McMillon, *Quest*, 56.

with an earthly king at its head.¹¹⁴ Glas was opposed to that view and questioned the legitimacy of the Scottish National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant of Scotland. Increasingly, ‘New Light’ concepts challenged Glas’ view of orthodoxy. In Glas’ mind, organizations which joined secular powers with religion were not authorized in the Scriptures.

Glas’ subsequent study of the nature of Christ’s kingdom led him in 1727 to write *The Testimony of the King of Martyrs Concerning His Kingdom* (published in 1729), wherein he stated his opposition to state churches and the intervention of civil authorities in matters of the church.¹¹⁵ During that time, Glas formed a new concept of the nature of the church. His former belief in the essentially spiritual constitution of the church was replaced with a conviction that the church was composed of individuals who had experienced the grace of Christ and had separated themselves from the world. Without intending to do so, he had transitioned to the concept of *gathered churches*, an idea first held by Anabaptists and later by English Independents.¹¹⁶

The Synod of Angus and Mearns¹¹⁷ convened in April 1728. At the session, Glas was accused of holding opinions that were contrary to the national standard for the church. To these charges, Glas responded that the government of the National Church by Kirk sessions,

¹¹⁴ Glas, 2.

¹¹⁵ Glas, *Memoirs*, viii.

¹¹⁶ McMillon, *Quest*, 57.

¹¹⁷ The Synod of Angus and Mearns, a synod of the Church of Scotland, has jurisdiction that corresponds generally to the traditional counties of Kincardineshire and Angus.

provincial synods, and general assemblies was without foundation in the Word of God.¹¹⁸ He referred to the New Testament as the completed, inspired revelation of God to which no one could add any words without receiving God's wrath.¹¹⁹ Glas addressed forty-seven questions which dealt with the traditional orthodoxy of church order and challenged the existing ecclesiastical order as being unscriptural.¹²⁰ In his opinion, the covenants commonly called the *National Covenant*, and the *Solemn League and Covenant*, were without warrant in God's word; and that all the true reformation was carried on by the word and the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, by the New Testament.¹²¹ On his views regarding there being scriptural warrant for a national church, he replied, "I can see no churches instituted by Christ, in the New Testament, beside the universal, but congregational churches: neither do I see, that a nation can be a church, unless it could be made a congregation, as was the nation of Israel. . . ."¹²²

Increasingly, Glas called for an examination of the Word of God *only* in order to determine the scriptural organization of the Lord's church.¹²³ When the Synod of Dundee met six months later, in October 1728, a vote was taken, and Glas was removed from his office as a minister in the Church of Scotland.

¹¹⁸ Glas, "Selections," *Treatise*, 3.

¹¹⁹ John Glas, *A Commentary on Part of the Fifteenth Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles* (Edinburgh: George Waterston and Sons, 1886), 30, 31.

¹²⁰ Glas, "Selections," *Treatise*, 3. McMillon observes that the members submitted twenty-six questions to Glas, *Restoration Roots*, p. 24. (See John Glas, *Queries Put to Mr. Glas, by the Synod of Angus and Mearns, With His Answers, in April, 1728*, in *The Works of Mr. John Glas*, I, 184.

¹²¹ Glas, *Works*, 186, 187.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ McMillon, *Restoration Roots*, 23

Glas' series of lessons based upon *The Testimony of the King of Martyrs* (1727) produced an independent congregation in Tealing. The first church roll for that Independent Church is dated July 13, 1725, and lists approximately one hundred persons. Although most of the names on the roll were from Glas' parish, other neighboring parishes were also represented.¹²⁴

An unshakeable commitment to the Word of God as the sole authority in all religious matters and as the final arbiter of all religious disputes distinguished Glas as an early Independent in eighteenth-century Scotland. As individuals questioned the validity of the various sources put forth as religiously authoritative, *sola Scriptura* was a call that was as popular as it was clear and as controversial as it was enlightening. During the eighteenth century, *sola Scriptura* began to mean "no authority *except* the Bible," replacing the earlier Protestant interpretation "no authority *over* the Bible."¹²⁵

Sola Scriptura enveloped several key doctrines in Glas' theology and eventually shaped the congregations that were formed in most of the large Scottish towns during the last half of the eighteenth century. The independent congregations were often referred to as *Glasite* churches and were noted by several prominent doctrinal stances, namely:

1. National establishments of religion are unscriptural and inconsistent with the true nature of the Church of Christ; that the church being spiritual should consist only of spiritual members.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ John Glas, *The Usefulness of Catechisms Considered*, in *Works*, II, 82. As cited by McMillon, "Influence," 4.

¹²⁵ Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 242.

¹²⁶ Glas, *Commentary on Acts*, 25, 41-42.

2. A congregation of Jesus Christ, with its elders, is in its discipline subject to no jurisdiction other than that of Christ and his apostles as revealed in the New Testament.¹²⁷
3. Each congregation should have a plurality of elders or bishops, selected by the members of that congregation, and in accordance with the inspired instructions given by Paul to Timothy and Titus, without regard to previous education for the office, continuous engagement in secular employment being no disqualification.¹²⁸
4. Churches observe the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week; and that love feasts be held, after the example of the primitive Christians.¹²⁹
5. Mutual exhortations be practiced on the Lord's Day, any brother able to edify being at liberty to address the church.¹³⁰
6. A weekly collection be made in connection with the Lord's Supper in aid of the poor, and for necessary expenses.¹³¹

In addition to these matters, Glas' study led him to adopt several key theological positions. His core beliefs were the following:

1. The New Testament did not take place until the death of Christ. "The new covenant, whereof he is the mediator, is set forth under the notion of the Testament... the Old Testament was ratified by death, and dedicated with the blood of the typical sacrifices; but the New Testament is effected by the blood of the Testator, and dedicated with the blood of the true sacrifice, by which alone the transgressions under the first Testament could be redeemed. The apostle seems plainly to say that the New Testament did not take place until the death of Christ, when he says, 'Where a Testament is, there must also be the death of the Testator, for a testament is of force after men are dead, otherwise it is of no strength at all whilst the Testator liveth,' (Heb. ix. 15-17)."¹³²

¹²⁷ Ibid., 46.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 35-36.

¹²⁹ Glas, *Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, 76.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 5-9.

¹³¹ Shepherd, *The Church*, 140.

¹³² Glas, *Commentary on Acts*, 121, 22.

2. Sinful mankind is justified by faith and saved through the grace of God, apart from any works of righteousness on man's part. "The grace through which we are saved, is the free love and goodwill of God toward sinners, which has no respect to any work of ours, or any excellency in one man beyond another, that can be supposed to move God to save him."¹³³
3. Baptism is the sign and seal of the new covenant, and became the "circumcision made without hands: which is received by persons when they are buried with Christ in baptism, and risen with him in baptism."¹³⁴ Again, "...the great Christian truth, concerning salvation by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in whom the Father is well pleased, and the purification of sinners by his blood shed for the remission of sins, is so expressed in the institution of baptism, and so signified in it..."¹³⁵

In addition to discarding old beliefs that did not stand the test of Scripture, often the reformers would embrace new beliefs as they became convinced of their validity, a validity founded not upon the traditions of men but authorized by the Word of God. In light of this principle, it is surprising to see Glas' heated argumentation in support of infant baptism:

...we must not say that a thing of this nature is not warranted in the New Testament, merely because there is not such a precept or example as some require for applying the institution of baptism to Christian infants, or the infants of Christian parents. For instance, we cannot deny a warrant in the New Testament for women partaking of the Lord's Supper, tho' there be no such precept or example there for it...we can no more show, by express particular precept or indisputable example, that Christian women are included in the precept, "Do this in remembrance of me," and "Drink ye all of it," than we can prove, by such precept or example, that Christian infants are included in the precept, "Baptizing them," &c.¹³⁶

¹³³ Ibid., 114-115. See also John Glas, *The Theme of Justification by Faith Agreeable to Common Sense*, in *Works*, II, p. 215, cited by McMillon, "Influence," 10.

¹³⁴ John Glas, *A Dissertation on Infant-Baptism*, in *Works*, II, p. 367. Cited by McMillon, "Influence," 10, 11.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 356.

¹³⁶ Glas, *Dissertation on Infant-Baptism* (Newcastle: T. Saint, 1771), 6.

In his use of the Greek, βαπτίζω,¹³⁷ Glas neglected word definitions and disregarded New Testament examples. He abandoned the original, first-century definition of βαπτίζω which means *to dip, to immerse, or to submerge*¹³⁸ and instead argued from the later development of *clinical baptism*, stating, “surely baptizing a sick man in his bed was not burying him under water.” He continued: “[T]he common way of baptizing is not by sprinkling...but by pouring water from the hand of the baptizer upon the baptized.”¹³⁹ Although Glas’ zeal was commendable, the fervor with which he opposed the Anabaptists inevitably distorted his reasoning, and his bias eventually outweighed his scholarship.

Actually, Glas’ argumentation in defense of infant-baptism serves as an example of the difficulty that exists in consistently separating tradition, ego, and personal preference from issues that relate to religion. Although the principle of being guided only by the Scriptures was popular, it was rare to find a Reformer who was capable of abiding by it consistently. That, perhaps, is even more reason to esteem the individuals who, in the light of revealed truth, were able to forsake long-lived and deep-rooted religious practices for the sake of following the teaching of the Scriptures as they understood them.

In a razor-sharp contrast, when the Campbells encountered a similar dilemma concerning infant sprinkling and whether or not Alexander Campbell’s infant daughter should be baptized, Alexander undertook a thorough study of the New Testament teachings

¹³⁷ Βαπτίζω (*baptizo*) has been consistently transliterated (not translated) by New Testament translators resulting in the creation of a new Anglicized word “baptize.”

¹³⁸ Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), 94.

¹³⁹ Glas, *Dissertation on Infant Baptism*, 29.

on the subject. When he reached his conclusion, he stated he could find no authority in the New Testament for sprinkling infants; however, he said there was scriptural precedent for the immersion of believers. Campbell concluded that his infant daughter was not in need of baptism, but he, however, was. Alexander Campbell, along with his wife, his father, his mother, and a sister were immersed in Buffalo Creek on Wednesday, June 12, 1812, by the Baptist preacher Matthias Luce.¹⁴⁰ In a letter to his uncle, Archibald Campbell, who was back in Ireland, Alexander informed him, “My wife and I with my Father and Mother and sister Dorothea were baptized in 1812 with about 40 others under the serious conviction of truth and deity.”¹⁴¹

Glas left the Established Church of Scotland in 1728 and formed churches based upon his Independent views in most of the larger towns of Scotland. In about 1734 Robert Sandeman (1718-1771) entered the University of Edinburgh where he became personally acquainted with Glas. Within a short time, he began to take part in the church where Glas was an elder. After completing two terms at the university, Sandeman returned to Perth in 1735, and two years later he married Glas’ daughter, Katherine.¹⁴² Sandeman enlarged upon Glas’ views, giving the movement a more clearly defined theological stance. He upheld the doctrine of justification by faith, stressing faith in the Lord was the beginning of salvation rather than evidence of the election of an individual who had received the “imputed

¹⁴⁰ Richardson, I, 391-398.

¹⁴¹ Alexander Campbell, Philadelphia, to Archibald Campbell, County Down, Ireland, December 28, 1815, transcript in the hand of R. Jeanne Cobb, Special Collections, T.W. Phillips Memorial Library, Bethany College, Bethany, WV.

¹⁴² C. Schoell, “Sandemans,” *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1969. Note also comments by McMillon, “Influence,” 14, 15.

righteousness.”¹⁴³ He also advocated a number of church practices including weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper, the holy kiss, love feasts, weekly contributions for the poor, mutual exhortation by members, and a claim of the Christian community upon private belongings.¹⁴⁴ Although there is nothing to indicate that Thomas Campbell was ever in direct contact with Robert Sandeman, both Thomas and Alexander Campbell came to embrace some of the positions Sandeman held. His views of local church autonomy and weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper, for example, became notable features in the nineteenth-century American Restoration Movement.

The movement initiated by Robert Haldane (1764-1842) and his younger brother James Alexander Haldane (1768-1851) was similar in many respects to that of Glas and Sandeman.¹⁴⁵ The Haldanes were concerned about the formalism of the Established Church and alarmed by the rationalist theology of their day. In 1796, soon after their personal conversion experiences, the Haldanes became active in evangelical revival. Widespread concern for political freedom and human rights only fueled convictions that all people have the right to hear the gospel. It was such attitudes that led to the creation of multiple Bible and missionary societies.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ McAllister and Tucker, 94.

¹⁴⁵ See Camille K. Dean, “Evangelicals or Restorationists? The Careers of Robert and James Haldane in Cultural and Political Context,” (Ph.D. diss., Texas Christian University, 1999), for a comprehensive study of the formative period of the careers of Robert and James Haldane, the years prior to 1808. With the exception of their personal writings, the major source of historical information on the Haldanes has been Alexander Haldane’s 1852 biography.

¹⁴⁶ Bebbington, 42.

Robert Haldane sought to set up a mission work in India. When the East India Company denied him permission, he turned his attention to Scotland, where he and James Haldane set up Sunday Schools. In 1798 they established the Society of Propagating the Gospel at Home, a school for the training of itinerant lay preachers. Soon young men from Glasite and Sandemanian backgrounds were drawn to the Haldane schools where they shared the writings of their mentors. Although they differed philosophically from the non-evangelistic Congregationalism of the Glasites and Sandemans, the Haldanes shared their views of following the New Testament pattern. As the new Scottish Congregationalism was being formed, the Haldanes followed Glas' commitment to restore the New Testament pattern of worship, fellowship, and organization, agreeing with the concept that the New Testament makes no distinction between laity and clergy. Ultimately, the Haldanes followed Glas and Sandeman in offering weekly observances of the Lord's Supper, incorporating mutual exhortation into the worship and installing a plurality of elders in congregations that were governed autonomously.¹⁴⁷

Alexander Carson received his education at the University of Glasgow and was ordained a minister in the Presbyterian Church. In 1798, at the age of twenty-two, Carson became pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Tubbermore.¹⁴⁸ He was dismayed when he saw the general disregard for religion prevalent in Irish society and noticed his church members

¹⁴⁷ Camille Dean, "Robert and James Haldane in Scotland: Evangelicals or Restorationists?" *Restoration Quarterly*, 42 (Number 2, Second Quarter, 2000): 104.

¹⁴⁸ Tubbermore is the older form of spelling and is used in this paper because it is the form most frequently cited in resource materials of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In 1805, "Tobermore" (the more modern form) is used in the records of the General Synod of Ulster. The village is in the parish of Kilcronaghan, barony of Loughinsholin, county of Londonderry, and province of Ulster, 18 miles south of Coleraine, on the road to Armagh, and 98 miles northwest of Dublin.

were as worldly as their neighbors. “Horse races, cock-fights, and other forms of sinful diversions were frequent, and were numerously attended even by professing Christians.”¹⁴⁹

Carson at first looked to the Synod of Ulster for support in the discipline that was necessary to “purge the ungodly from the ranks of the pure.”¹⁵⁰ When the Synod refused to take up the measures of righteous discipline, he began an intensive study to solve the questions in his mind that surfaced regarding the Westminster Confession and the organizational hierarchy of the Synod. Concluding the churches of the New Testament were not Presbyterian in polity, he made the decision in 1805 to withdraw from the Synod. He argued “that form of church government which leads us most to the Scriptures, and requires in church members the greatest acquaintance with them, is most likely to be that of the New Testament.”¹⁵¹ Furthermore, in his comparison of Independents and Presbyterians and their respective attitudes toward the Scripture, Carson judged,

With [Independents] it is absolutely essential, not merely in church rulers, but in private members. The Bible is their code of laws; they have no other confession or book of discipline. They can do nothing without it; it must be continually in their hands; the rulers rule only by the word of God. But a man may be a Presbyterian all his life, either pastor or private member, with a very slender acquaintance with the Bible. A knowledge of forms and of ancient usages, of ecclesiastical canons and books of discipline, is the chief qualification necessary for a Presbyterian judicatory.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹Alexander Carson, *Baptism, It's Mode and Subjects*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1981), Biographical sketch by John Young, xxvi.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, xxvii.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, xxix.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, xxix.

When the Synod assembled June 25, 1805, in Cookstown, the committee report was presented, and the pulpit of the Tubbermore church was declared vacant. Carson's break was complete. He then wrote an official letter to the Presbytery saying that he declined all connection with, and subjection to the General Synod of Ulster.¹⁵³ A reading of Thomas Campbell's letter stating his withdrawal from the Chartiers Presbytery and from the Associate Synod of North America reveals similarities between Campbell and Carson in the decisions they made and in the words they used to communicate those decisions to their respective synods.¹⁵⁴

As early as 1803, Carson had preached in independent churches which included Richhill, the village to which the Campbell family moved in 1805.¹⁵⁵ Years later Alexander Campbell recalled hearing Alexander Carson on several occasions, referring to Carson as "the finest religious teacher to whom he had ever listened."¹⁵⁶ By 1807 Carson and his supporters had organized an Independent church in Tubbermore where "he taught those members of his church who still adhered to his ministry to rise above human authority and human customs in religion, and bring all things to the Word and Testimony of God."¹⁵⁷ Based upon his study of the New Testament, Carson concluded that immersion of believers

¹⁵³ *Records of the General Synod of Ulster, from 1691 to 1820*, vol. III (Belfast, 1898), 293, 296. William Moor is listed as one of the members of the Monaghan Presbytery present at the meeting of the General Synod at Cookstown, June 1805.

¹⁵⁴ *Minutes of the Associate Synod of North America*, v.,1, 1801 -1809, May 27, 1805. Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia. 196.

¹⁵⁵ Richardson, I, 60.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁵⁷ Carson, xxx, xxxi.

was the biblical mode of baptism. In light of this belief, he became identified as the minister of the Tubbermore Baptist Church, which was formed around the year 1809 in Kilcronaghan Parish, County Londonderry.¹⁵⁸

In Ireland, the influence of Independents at this time was gaining momentum and afforded many opportunities for the sharing of religious views. During the late 1700s, Thomas Campbell studied for three years at Glasgow University in Scotland.¹⁵⁹ After completing a course of study at the Anti-Burgher Theological School, he was licensed as a probationer by the Seceder Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Around 1798 Campbell and his family moved to Ahorey where he began his ministry for the Ahorey church. During his years of education in Scotland and his ministry in Ahorey, Campbell had many opportunities to interact with Independent preachers who were acquainted with restoration principles, as well as ministers on various sides of the political spectrum regarding the United Irishmen and the Rebellion of 1798. Within this vortex of religious and political upheaval, Campbell formed opinions that would accompany him to Pennsylvania.

To supplement his Ahorey salary, in 1805 Campbell moved his family from their farm home into the village of Richhill where he opened an academy. The Richhill Independent Church was nearby, and Campbell occasionally attended the Sunday evening

¹⁵⁸ According to Dr. Joshua Thompson of the *Irish Baptist Historical Society*. Extracted from the original tithe Applotment books compiled by each Church of Ireland's parish minister, who had responsibility for collecting the tithe, a form of tax levied on anyone who occupied agricultural land within each parish. The original books are held at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland; accessed January 27, 2007; http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~alanmilliken/regarde_bien/5.html; Internet.

¹⁵⁹ Scott, 229.

services. The Richhill congregation was part of the Haldane movement, and here Campbell had the opportunity to hear restorationist themes presented by Independent preachers.¹⁶⁰

The Seceders did not permit anyone to neglect his own meetings to attend the meetings of others; however, when there was no Seceder gathering, it was not particularly objected to when members attended other meetings. Doing so was called the privilege of ‘occasional hearing’. This practice was conceded but was not encouraged by the Seceder clergy. The members of the Independent Church were always “much pleased to see Mr. Campbell come to their meetings, as they had high esteem for him as one of the most learned and pious of the Seceder ministers, but as he came only after dark, they were wont to compare him facetiously with Nicodemus, ‘who came to Jesus by night.’”¹⁶¹

The Independents were more liberal than others in granting the use of their meeting-house to preachers of various kinds, and thus occasionally persons who were distinguished in the religious world spoke in Richhill. James Haldane visited Richhill and preached during Campbell’s residence there. In September 1801, James Haldane visited John Gibson, who was Richhill’s Independent minister.¹⁶² During this visit Campbell and Haldane met and “Campbell heard him gladly and profitably.”¹⁶³ Alexander Carson, who left the Presbyterians and joined the Independents in 1803, also preached about this time at Richhill.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Bill J. Humble, “Alexander Campbell: The Years in Ireland,” *Restoration Quarterly*, 30 (Number 30, Second and Third Quarters, 1988): 73.

¹⁶¹ Richardson, I, 60.

¹⁶² Gary Lee, *Background of the Christian Baptist*, Seven Volumes in One, (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1983), 1.

¹⁶³ Scott, 232.

¹⁶⁴ Richardson, I, 60.

Beginning with the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement, and continuing through the efforts of Glas, Sandeman, and the Haldanes in the eighteenth century, many factors influenced Thomas Campbell's thinking. The significance of those influences cannot be over-emphasized, for some of the theological views Campbell voiced in the nineteenth century are clear parallels to those voiced earlier by Glas, Sandeman, and the Haldanes, demonstrating the interrelated nature of the religious movements. The axiom *no one lives to himself* is no more relevant than when applied to the establishment and development of the American Restoration Movement. Although not directly related to any other movement, it was far from unique in its goal of restoring New Testament Christianity.

The similarity between American restorers and their British counterparts reveals a far-reaching web of interconnectedness as theological concepts were frequently shared, often modified, and eventually adopted into practice. In Campbell's writings, views concerning such topics as biblical authority, baptism, church identity, ecclesiastical organization, and the observance of the Lord's Supper are comparable to those promoted by the Haldanes. Similarly, those views subscribed to and published by the Haldanes are noted in the writings of their Scottish brethren and predecessors, John Glas and Robert Sandeman. Indeed, the religious branches representing the Campbell-Stone tradition – known as Disciples of Christ, Christian Churches, and Churches of Christ – are numerous and varied.¹⁶⁵

The amazing characteristic of the Presbyterian radicalism of the 1790s was that in the midst of much social and political turmoil, there was a willingness to fraternize on

¹⁶⁵ Lynn A. McMillon, "The Influence of the Haldane Movement on the Campbell-Scott-Stone Tradition / Churches of Christ," presented at the conference, *The Interlaced Histories of Southern Baptists and Churches of Christ*, Southwestern Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, February 7-8, 1997. p. 1.

multiple levels. In Ulster, land ownership, national identity, and religion were at the center of distinct societal divisions. Yet the upsurge of evangelical enthusiasm in Ulster in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century reveals a dynamic link between social disruption and religious fervor.¹⁶⁶ Close family and economic ties as well as business, professional, educational, and ministerial associations characterized these educated and independent thinkers. ‘New Lights’ (those who opposed subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith) and ‘Old Lights’ mingled and shared fellowship as well as ideas.

The principles Campbell brought to America were ideas and concepts that were well established in the British Isles. As the Associate Synod had opposed any deviation from its orthodoxy in Scotland, Ireland, and Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century, so the Associate Synod of North America rejected and opposed the views when presented by Thomas Campbell in 1808. Upon his immigration to America, he was an Old Light, Anti-Burgher, Seceder Presbyterian, a designation which he not only personally eschewed but which he found divisive and unnecessary in his new surroundings.¹⁶⁷ As Glas, the Haldanes, and Carson before him, Campbell eventually – albeit, reluctantly – in the wake of his trial, decided to leave the confines of Anti-Burgher Seceders, in order to create a new environment for the expression of his faith. Into what would become the American Restoration

¹⁶⁶ Hempton, 95.

¹⁶⁷ Bill J. Humble, “Restoration Ideal in Churches of Christ, *The American Quest for the Primitive Church*, ed. Richard T. Hughes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 220.

Movement, Campbell grafted ideas and concepts that were identical in more ways than not to the restoration ideals that had emerged in Scotland and Ireland during the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER 3

POLITICS AND RELIGION IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ULSTER: A VOLATILE MIXTURE

He objected not so much to the doctrines of the Secession creed and platform, as a doctrinal basis, but to the assumption of any formula of religious theories or opinions, as the foundation of the church of Christ.

Alexander Campbell¹

The origins of Thomas Campbell's legacy as a central figure in the American Restoration Movement can be traced back to his life and ministry in Ulster during the decade from 1797 to 1807. Those years – and the episodes of political and religious upheaval he experienced – prepared Campbell for the sectarian turmoil he encountered in western Pennsylvania. In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in October 1909, on the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the Disciples of Christ, H. L. Willett of Chicago, a Disciples of Christ minister, opined in his speech, “We have known Thomas Campbell all too little.”² That lament is attributed chiefly to the fact that most of the family's records were lost in the shipwreck during their traumatic experience at sea; therefore, biographical materials

¹ Alexander Campbell, *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell, Together with a Brief Memoir of Mrs. Jane Campbell* (Cincinnati: H.S. Bosworth, 1861), 11. Note: In his foreword to William Herbert Hanna's biography, *Thomas Campbell: Seceder and Christian Union Advocate* (1935), Frederick D. Kershner offers his critique as to the reliability of Alexander Campbell's, *Memoirs*. Kershner states that when he undertook to write his father's biography, Alexander Campbell (September 12, 1788 – March 4, 1866) was past his prime, aging rapidly and beset by a faltering memory.

² H.L. Willett, “Thomas Campbell and the Principles He Promulgated,” *One Hundredth Anniversary of the Disciples of Christ, Pittsburgh, October 11 – 19, 1909* W. R. Warren, ed. *Centennial Convention Report* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1910), 356-360. (Willett's address was delivered at the East Liberty Presbyterian Church, Saturday morning, October 16, 1909). The Disciples' convention of 1909 was advertised as, “A Convention of 50,000, Representing 1,330,000, Celebrating the Centennial of an American Movement for Christian Union, in the City of Its Inception.”

regarding the life of Thomas Campbell are meager. Although there are numerous sources celebrating his influence in the nineteenth-century Restoration Movement and the history of the Christian Church / Disciples of Christ / Church of Christ, there is a dearth of written documentation on his life.³ As Willett affirmed, "...the story of Thomas Campbell's life is pieced out from the scanty materials that fall to us."⁴ Rosemary Jeanne Cobb, Archivist and Coordinator of Special Collections at Bethany College, noted in 1996:

[T]here are only three books in the Rare Book Collection at Bethany College that are fully devoted to a biographical study of the man himself: Alexander Campbell's *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell*; William Herbert Hanna's *Thomas Campbell – Seceder and Christian Union Advocate*; and Lester G. McAllister's *Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book*.⁵

On the broader scale, secular sources chronicling the British cultural, social, religious, and political climate of the times abound, and, with the extant biographical information on Campbell, we are able to accurately place him within the volatile religious and political climate that was eighteenth-century Ulster. Campbell's call for unity on the western frontier of Pennsylvania, his establishing of the Christian Association of Washington, his authoring the *Declaration and Address*, and ultimately his departure from the Presbyterian Church, are most accurately understood when viewed against the backdrop of Ulster at the close of the eighteenth and the opening of the nineteenth century.

³ Alexander Campbell, along with his mother and siblings, embarked October 1, 1808 from Londonderry on the *Hibernia*. The vessel encountered a violent storm and was dashed upon sunken rocks off the coast of Scotland. Although the family suffered no loss of life, their belongings were left to the elements, and their voyage to America was postponed for a year. Richardson recounts this experience in detail, (*Memoirs*, 95-106).

⁴ Willett, 356.

⁵ R. Jeanne Cobb has done extensive background research into the lives of many leaders of the Restoration Movement. Her unpublished historical narrative, "Following in the Footsteps of Thomas Campbell" provides a time-line for tracing Campbell's life and is an invaluable tool for piecing into a concise and uncomplicated narrative the scanty bits of extant materials available.

In writing the memoirs of his father Thomas, Alexander Campbell stated the family ancestry was traced to the Campbells of Argyll, Scotland. Sir Archibald Campbell, the Duke of Argyll, was the clan's head. According to Alexander, "Archibald Campbell, my grandfather, was the son of James Campbell who was born in the county of Down, Ireland, near Dyerlake wood. He lived to the advanced age of one hundred and five years."⁶

Eva Jean Wrather offers an alternate lineage:

Because of scant or lost family records, Archibald's direct lineage is traced back only to his father, Thomas, said to have been "born in the county of Down." But according to widely accepted local tradition their family history was connected to that of a Robert Campbell and his three brothers, "of the house of Strachur and family of Sasnach" who had emigrated from Argyllshire to County Down early in the seventeenth century at the time of the Plantation of Ulster under James I.⁷

Due to the absence of family ancestry records, any mention of the Campbells descending from either the Ulster Campbells of Scotland or the Campbells of the House of Argyll is not considered definitive. Dr. Alfred Russell Scott of Richhill, Northern Ireland, has been strident in his rejection of any direct Scottish link:

Five generations of his father Archibald's immediate family have been traced in Ireland, and as they were of the Romanist persuasion, there is no truth in the statement of a Virginia publication put out in 1962 that Bethany College, West Virginia, was founded by a Scottish born Alexander Campbell, for there was not Scots blood in Thomas' son Alexander save what he obtained by his birth near Ballymena, County Antrim, Northern Ireland.⁸

⁶ Campbell, *Memoirs*, 7.

⁷ Eva Jean Wrather, *Alexander Campbell, Adventurer in Freedom – A Literary Biography, Vol. I* (Fort Worth, TX: TCU Press and the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 2005), 5. Wrather devoted seventy years to writing an 800,000-word biography of Alexander Campbell. The result of her life's work lacks scholarly documentation but is based upon her first-hand visits to Scotland and Ireland and conversations in the United States with many Campbell grandchildren, "Some welcomed her and spent hours sharing the pages of family scrapbooks. Others refused to see her." xv. Three volumes were envisioned, but her failing health and ultimate death in 2001 make the publication of volumes II and III tentative.

⁸ Scott, "Thomas Campbell's Ministry at Ahorey," 229.

What is known from the immediate family records is that Archibald, Thomas' father, was of the Roman Catholic faith. While a young man, he entered the British army where he served under General Wolfe and accompanied him to the island of Cuba and to Quebec.⁹ According to tradition, General Wolfe died in the arms of Archibald Campbell, "at the close of the conflict."¹⁰ After the conquest of Quebec, the senior Campbell returned to his native country and "abjuring Romanism became a strict member of the Church of England, to which he adhered until his death in his eighty-eighth year."¹¹ Becoming attached to the Church of England, he was determined, as he would often say, "to serve God according to act of Parliament."¹²

Archibald Campbell had four sons and four daughters. The daughters, all of whom died in their infancy, were each, in succession, named Mary.¹³ The sons were Thomas, James, Archibald, and Enos. The latter son's death in 1804, three years before his father, was greatly lamented.¹⁴ It is thought James emigrated to Canada while Enos, perhaps joined by Archibald, conducted a popular academy in the commercial town of Newry. The two men were members of the Anti-Burgher Secession Church, having joined in their youth.¹⁵

⁹ Campbell, *Memoirs*, 7. There is no evidence to support Alexander Campbell's statement of Wolfe sailing to Cuba. One of the criticisms of his *Memoirs* of his father is that when he undertook the work, he was at an advance age and was experiencing some loss of memory. In this example, it is likely that Alexander confused the Quebec campaign of 1759 with Cuba of 1762.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Richardson, I, 21.

¹² Ibid., 24.

¹³ Lester G. McAllister, *Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book* (St. Louis, MO: The Bethany Press, 1954,) 23. Also see Richardson, *Memoirs*, 21.

¹⁴ Campbell, *Memoirs*, 8. The three-year period between the death of his brother Enos and that of his father, Thomas, would place Archibald's death in 1807, the year of Thomas Campbell's emigration to America.

¹⁵ Scott, 230.

Thomas was born on February 1, 1763, and completed his schooling at a regimental school near Newry. He attended the meetings of the Covenanters and Seceders, preferring them to the “cold formality of the Episcopal ritual.”¹⁶ Upon deciding to devote himself to ministry, he enrolled in the University at Glasgow, where for three years he committed himself to the prescribed courses for students of divinity. During this time, he also attended medical lectures,

...it being regarded proper for ministers to have, in addition to a knowledge of their own particular profession, such an acquaintance with medicine as would enable them to render necessary aid to their poorer parishioners who might not have the services of a regular medical attendant.¹⁷

“He did not formally matriculate, as did his famous contemporary, the poet, Thomas Campbell, who distinguished himself with honors at the university. For this reason, the exact dates of his attendance have been controversial.”¹⁸ After completing his course of study at Glasgow, it was necessary for Campbell to enter the theological school established by the Anti-Burghers, the branch of Seceders to which he and his brothers belonged.¹⁹ It appears that after entering the theological school at Whitburn, Campbell alternated between school in Scotland and his teaching duties in northern Ireland. He attended five annual sessions of the school from 1787 to 1791, and since the school was in session for only eight weeks each

¹⁶ Richardson, I, 22.

¹⁷ Ibid., 25.

¹⁸ R. Jeanne Cobb, “Following in the Footsteps of Thomas Campbell, September 6, 1996,” (photocopy), pages unnumbered. Special Collections, T.W. Phillips Memorial Library, Bethany College, Bethany, WV.

¹⁹The Anti-Burghers differed from the Burghers within the Seceder branch of Scottish Presbyterianism. The issue concerned whether the burghers of the Scottish cities could properly swear to support the established church. Thomas Campbell subscribed to the Anti-Burgher position. The Rev. Archibald Bruce was the professor of the Anti-Burgher “Divinity Hall” at Whitburn (located midway between Edinburgh and Glasgow) and the minister of the Anti-Burgher Seceder congregation in Whitburn. See McAllister, 29, and Richardson, 25-27.

year, he evidently spent the long period between sessions in Ireland.²⁰ After completing the course and passing the examination for license before the Presbytery in Ireland, Campbell became a *probationer*, “whose office was to preach the Gospel, under the supervision of the Synod, in such congregations as were destitute of a fixed minister.”²¹

During the time he was teaching at Ballymena and serving as a probationer minister, Campbell married Jane Corneigle, a descendent of a Huguenot family.²² The date usually accepted is sometime in June 1787 when he was twenty-five and she was twenty-four.²³ The Campbell’s first child, Alexander, was born September 12, 1788. Shortly after Campbell completed his study at Whitburn in 1791, he returned to the vicinity of his father’s home near Sheepbridge where he resumed teaching school and preached for the Seceder congregations in that area.²⁴ After several years at Sheepbridge, the family moved to Markethill, County Armagh.²⁵ Still a probationer, he supplemented his income by tutoring the children of families in the vicinity, eventually establishing a small school at Markethill. Sometime between the politically turbulent years of 1797 and 1799, Campbell accepted a call from the church at Ahorey. In due time, he was ordained as the congregation’s second

²⁰ McAllister, 30, 31.

²¹ Richardson, I, 27.

²² The Huguenots were French Protestants who had fled from France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV in 1685. The Corneigle family was one of two families who settled in Ireland, purchasing an entire township on the shores of Loch Neagh. Here they farmed and educated their children in the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church. (See McAllister, 31, 32).

²³ McAllister, 32.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Markethill is a market and post-town, partly in the parish of Mullaghbrack, and partly in the district of Kilcluney, barony of Lower Fews, county of Armagh, and province of Ulster, 5 1/2 miles (E.) from Armagh, on the mail coach road to Newry, and 60 miles (N. by W.) from Dublin.

pastor.²⁶ The most probable ordination date of 1798 can be approximated by the letter from the Markethill presbyters, dated March 24, 1807. Herein, David Arnott, moderator and co-presbyter certified, “Thomas Campbell, has been for about nine years minister of the Gospel in the Seceding congregation of Ahorey.”²⁷ The Campbells soon moved from Markethill to Hamilton’s Bawn where they resided until moving two miles away to Richhill in 1804.²⁸

Presbyterians and the *Regium Donum*

The *regium donum* was an annual royal grant made from the public funds to all Presbyterian and other Non-conformist ministers in Great Britain and Ireland. The ministers received the pension directly from the Crown. This state subsidy had originated in a £ 600 grant made by Charles II and doubled by William in 1691 as a reward to the Presbyterian ministers for their services during his struggle with James II. At the end of the reign of Queen Anne, the grant was suspended amid Anglican concerns that the funds had been used to set up new dissenting congregations. George I resumed the *regium donum* and increased the amount to £ 1,600 in 1718 in recognition of Presbyterian support for the Hanoverian monarchy. The grant was a lump sum that was distributed evenly between the ministers and amounted to an annual payment of about £ 11 each. As the number of congregations – and consequently ministers – multiplied, the amount of the *regium donum* received by each minister was reduced proportionately. In 1783 the Synod calculated that the royal bounty

²⁶ Richardson, I, 30, 31.

²⁷ Campbell, *Memoirs*, 20, 21.

²⁸ Scott, 231.

amounted to less than £ 9 per minister. During the 1740s, there were several unsuccessful attempts to have the *regium donum* increased. In 1784 it was raised to £ 2,600, in 1790 it was increased to just over £ 6,329, and in 1803 the grant was raised to over £ 14,970.²⁹

In early nineteenth-century Ireland, a man living as a modest gentleman would have needed an annual income of about £ 100.³⁰ As a dissenting minister at Ahorey prior to the 1803 increase, Campbell received approximately £ 50 per year. The amount was comprised of a “£ 20 stipend and £ 30 from the royal Bounty.”³¹ In 1804 or 1805³² Campbell moved his family into a large, two-story house on the square in Richhill. Here he opened a classical academy which substantially increased the family’s income by about £ 200 annually.³³

Receiving state assistance, while providing nominal financial benefits for the Synod of Ulster, had the effect of accomplishing much more. Since the grant was received directly from the monarch, it gave the Presbyterians a modicum of official recognition for their political loyalties. However, when they began accepting the royal grant, the Synod opened itself up to the charge that it had bargained away its independence and had entered into an alliance with an ungodly king to preserve the unscriptural episcopacy – a charge that the

²⁹ McBride, *Scripture Politics*, 149.

³⁰ Karl S. Bottigheimer, *Ireland and the Irish, a Short History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 172.

³¹ Scott, 231. See also Richardson, I, 46.

³² Bill J. Humble, “Alexander Campbell – The Years in Ireland,” *Restoration Quarterly*, 30 (Number 30, Second and Third Quarters, 1988): 73. Scott argues for the earlier date. 231.

³³ Richardson, I, 47, 48. See also Scott, 23. In 1868 the sum granted to the Irish Presbyterian ministers was £ 45,000 . The *Regium Donum* was withdrawn by the act of 1869, which disestablished the Irish Church. Provisions were made for the ministers of the Church of Ireland, and many Presbyterian ministers received the same terms as the clergy of the Irish Church. In England, George I authorized the *regium donum* of £ 500 for benefit of the poor widows of dissenting ministers. Afterwards this sum was increased to £ 1000 and was made an annual payment for the ministers or their widows. It was later increased to £ 1695 per annum and was given to distributors who represented the three denominations enjoying the grant, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Independents.

Seceders and Covenanters exploited at every opportunity.³⁴ Seceders, being opposed to covenanting and regarding the oath of allegiance to the state tantamount to the rejection of Christ's headship over the church, at first declined the royal grant. In 1784, when the *regium donum* was increased to £ 2,600, a new conservatism among the Seceders was suggested by their decision to begin accepting the royal grant.³⁵

In the wake of the 1798 Rebellion, the government aimed at restoring its authority in the country by restructuring the *regium donum*. In an attempt to create a subordinated ecclesiastical aristocracy, it was decided that the grant, rather than being paid through the Synod, would be paid directly to the individual ministers and would be conditioned upon statements of each minister's character. Additionally, the ministers were grouped into three classes determined by the size and wealth of their congregations. In the first group, there were approximately fifteen ministers, each of whom received £ 200 per year. The second group was comprised of about seventy ministers who were each given £ 70. The third group consisted of one hundred or so ministers who received £ 60 each. These payments were to be received at the hand of an agent, nominated by the Synod and confirmed by the government.³⁶

The majority of dissenting ministers opposed the scheme of classification, arguing that the smaller congregations were typically rural and situated over sparsely populated areas, thus requiring more time, effort, and expense than was necessitated by the large urban congregations. On the other hand, ministers in the large towns had particular advantages

³⁴ McBride, 76. See also J. L. McCracken, "The Ecclesiastical Structure, 1714–1760," *A New History of Ireland*, vol. iv, 100; Reid, *History* vol. III, 285. n. 5

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 108.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 217.

which also meant unique expenses unlike those incurred by the ministers in smaller towns. In the end, the government's terms were non-negotiable, and the Synod accepted the new terms for the grant. However, the administration's goal of fashioning an ecclesiastical aristocracy was not realized. Dissenting preachers, New Lights and Old Lights, united in defense of the principle of parity among ministers, the right of churches to elect their own pastors, the fundamental scriptural basis of the Presbyterian organization, and the sinfulness of the doctrine of the supremacy of the state in ecclesiastical matters.³⁷

Upon immigrating to America, Thomas Campbell relinquished the *regium donum* (which was limited to the Non-conformist ministers in what was, at that time, the United Kingdom). However, being received into the Associate Synod of North America in May, 1807 and assigned to the Chartiers Presbytery, Campbell did receive fifty dollars from the Synod in anticipation of the expenses he would incur in fulfilling his appointments.³⁸ The Presbytery set the preaching engagements for its ministers and determined the financial compensation of the ministers. As payment for their ministerial duties, local churches were to give ministers sent to them by the Chartiers Presbytery "four dollars for a Sabbath, and two dollars for a working day."³⁹ During and after his trial, when the Presbytery made the decision to withhold preaching assignments from him, their action effectively ended Campbell's ministerial income as a Presbyterian. In 1809 Campbell appeared at the annual sederunt of the Associate Synod, stating that he declined the authority of the Associate

³⁷ Ibid., 218.

³⁸ *Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod of North America, Begun in the Year of our Lord 1801 and Continuing till 1809.* May 20, 1807, 161. Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

³⁹ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, Vol. I, 1801 – 1828, p. 123. Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

Synod of North America and that of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers. In his letter, he enclosed a Fifty Dollar note, thus refunding to the Synod the entire amount that had been given to him two years earlier.⁴⁰

Religion and National Identity

In Europe, where Protestantism achieved political ascendance, almost all of the Protestant churches were established as state churches within their various domains and were thus supported by the national governments.⁴¹ As a result, the state churches monopolized the religious activities within the individual regions. Although theologies and doctrines were changing as a result of the Protestant Reformation, one feature of European Christianity remained unchanged: governments continued to determine the faith that would be officially practiced. This was true for Protestant nations and regions such as England, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, and areas of Germany, where Anglicanism, Calvinism, and Lutheranism tended to be dominant. It was also true for the Catholic nations of France, Spain, and Portugal as well as German regions that remained loyal to Catholicism.⁴²

Since Scotland had produced a surplus population for centuries relative to its resources, the native Scots were accustomed to “seeking abroad the gear denied them at home.”⁴³ Between 1690 and 1715, Ireland had been the destination of over 50,000 Scottish Presbyterians who settled in Ulster in an effort to escape poor harvests, rising rents, and

⁴⁰ *Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod of North America*, May 23, 1809, 213.

⁴¹ Noll, *The Work We Have to Do*, 31.

⁴² Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, 10.

⁴³ William Ferguson, *Scotland: 1689 to the Present*, vol. 4, *The Edinburgh History of Scotland* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), 178.

religious strife in the Lowlands of Scotland.⁴⁴ During the eighteenth century, especially after the great migration from Ulster to North America was underway, Scottish immigrants continued to settle in Ulster.⁴⁵ The interchanges between Ulster and Scotland continued, not merely from family connections but also from the strong political and religious ties that existed between the two nations. The diverse patterns of ancestry and nationality that developed in Northern Ireland were irrevocably intertwined within a unique political and religious structure. As notions of Englishness, Scottishness, Irishness, and Britishness developed, the sense of a powerful Ulster-Scots identity alternated between the extremes of acceptance and rejection.⁴⁶

England, Scotland, and Ireland, although separate nations, were ruled by the same king. Ultimately, policies that were undertaken by the monarchy in one realm of the kingdom affected the other realms as well. Later Stuart rulers who followed James I – but who lacked his imperial vision – were invariably perceived in Scotland and Ireland as placing English interests first. This sensitivity within those two countries enhanced an awareness of the extent of British hegemony.⁴⁷ Since developments within these kingdoms were invariably affected by the policies pursued in England, the histories of the nations are visibly intertwined politically and religiously.⁴⁸ In Ireland – as in Scotland – church and state

⁴⁴ Miller, 152.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁴⁶ Toby Barnard, “Protestantism, Ethnicity, and Irish Identities, 1660 – 1760,” *Protestantism and National Identity*, Claydon and McBride, eds., 226, 227.

⁴⁷ Tim Harris, “The British dimension, religion, and the shaping of political identities during the reign of Charles II,” *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650 – c. 1850*, Tony Claydon and Ian McBride, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 134.

⁴⁸ Harris, 134, 135.

represented two manifestations of the same national identity. Yet, unlike the Scottish situation, Anglicanism was the official religion in Ireland; Presbyterianism, a dissenting religion, while permitted, was ever aware of its subordinate position. Whereas the total defeat of Catholic power assured the security of the Protestant Ascendancy, the English government entrusted the Established Church with the spiritual care of the nation. In return, the Church received the political recognition of the civil powers and the financial support of the populace.⁴⁹

Ironically, restrictions imposed upon the Presbyterians in their role of subordination vis-à-vis Anglicanism, actually united the Ulster Irish and allowed them to successfully maintain their common identity with the Scots as “a community which straddled the North Channel.”⁵⁰ The Presbyterian Church, in spite of multiple fractures and a pattern of extensive emigration from Ulster to America during the eighteenth century, from its headquarters in Scotland, continued to exert enormous control over its adherents and its influence in Ulster remained significant.⁵¹ In a broader sense there was a religious and political situation uniquely Irish: Religiously, the anti-Catholicism of the Protestant Ascendancy was honed to a sharp edge by close proximity to “the other.” Politically, the Dublin Parliament was inferior to the Parliament in London. The result was the skewed

⁴⁹ McBride, 19.

⁵⁰ Barnard, “Protestantism, Ethnicity, and Irish Identities, 1660 – 1760, *Protestantism and National Identity*, 227.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 224.

development of a British heritage in Ireland and a national identity that was very different from that found in either Scotland or England.⁵²

In such a political system where Church and State were interlinked, the survival of alternate, dissenting theologies naturally posed a threat to the status quo.⁵³ It is impossible to accurately understand the development of radicalism in Britain or Ireland without taking into consideration the range of popular demands concerning the lack of accountability in a national government and oligarchic rule as well as the closed nature of the ecclesiastical system that was in place.⁵⁴ The dominant Ascendancy mindset had been formed by the upheavals of the seventeenth century, the Irish rebellion of 1641 and the Jacobite war of 1688 - 1691 being especially significant in shaping the Anglican psyche.⁵⁵ Upon the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658, the majority of Englishmen saw the restoration of the monarchy as the best path to avoiding anarchy within the kingdom. Presbyterians, who at that time were the largest non-Anglican religion, had hopes of securing a place in the newly established kingdom. A hostile English Parliament, however, dominated by Anglicans and Cavaliers, enacted the Clarendon Code “to punish, harass, and exclude dissenters from public life.”⁵⁶ Thus, for the Presbyterians, the political/religious die was cast. In Ireland, they would be the church of dissent.

⁵² Ian McBride, “‘The Common Name of Irishman’: Protestantism and Patriotism in Eighteenth-Century Ireland,” *Protestantism and National Identity c. 1650 – c. 1850*, Claydon and McBride, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 236.

⁵³ McBride, *Scripture Politics*, 5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁶ Thomas J. Curry, *The First Freedoms: Church and State in America to the Passage of the First Amendment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 54.

The role of the various ministers within this fractured political system was a cacophony of different voices. Anglican ministers naturally preached sermons with recurrent themes such as the necessity of being in subjection to the civil authorities, the dangers of political upheavals, the superiority of British rule, and the benefits of the rule of law. Presbyterian ministers, who often saw themselves not only as spiritual leaders but as the voice of the people, frequently preached sermons which reflected the tone and content of radicalism.⁵⁷

The Religious Politics of Civil Rebellion

The final decades of the eighteenth century were marked by a period of general unrest in Ireland. Problems of empire, trade, and political turmoil were fueled by the ideological issues of the American Revolution.⁵⁸ The closing of American markets in 1775 was devastating to an already depressed Irish economy and threatened to bankrupt the country.⁵⁹ Sympathy for the American struggle for independence was exceptionally strong among the Scots-Irish of Ulster who had tens of thousands of their relatives living in the colonies. In 1775 the Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Harcourt wrote, “The Presbyterians in the

⁵⁷ McBride, 5

⁵⁸ R.B. McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution 1760 – 1801* (Oxford, 1979) as cited by David Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland From the Glorious Revolution to the Decline of Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 94.

⁵⁹ Hachey, 43.

north are in their hearts Americans.”⁶⁰ Indeed, many Scots-Irish in the colonies proved to be “ardent patriots and notable fighters in the cause of the colonies.”⁶¹

When the Revolutionary War erupted in America, opinions in Ireland were divided. Ulster Presbyterians sympathized with the colonists’ struggle against a British monarch whom they also believed to be oppressive. The Church of Ireland establishmentarians naturally sided with the empire and condemned the American rebels. Among the Presbyterians, the Seceder faction evidenced a growing pietist attitude against participation in secular affairs. This reluctance is clearly observed during the final decade of the eighteenth century, when very few Seceder ministers participated in supporting the rebellion of 1798.⁶²

British military losses in America mounted, concluding with the surrender of Lord Cornwallis to General George Washington at Yorktown in 1781. The defeat of the British at the hands of the American rebels brought pressure for Irish political reform as the British world was turned upside down. The next year the new Irish constitution was put into effect. Ireland now had “a tenuous kind of independence for the first time in over 600 years.”⁶³ The inflow of revolutionary ideas following the American Revolution and leading up to the French Revolution of 1789 brought heated ideological debate in Britain and upheaval to Ireland.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ James G. Leyburn, *The Scotch-Irish, A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 236.

⁶² McBride, 220.

⁶³ Hachey, 44.

⁶⁴ Karl S. Bottigheimer, *Ireland and the Irish: A Short History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 150-151.

In 1791 Theobald Wolfe Tone, a young Anglican barrister from Dublin, helped found the Society of United Irishmen in Belfast. Tone referred to Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* as the Koran of Belfast.⁶⁵ By creating an alliance between Catholics and Protestants, their goal was "to bring about political reform and complete religious equality – in one sense, to form a genuine Irish nation, and in another, to bring the French Revolution to Ireland."⁶⁶

After the execution of Louis XVI on January 21, 1793, and France's declaration of war against England on February 1, the Irish government enacted the Catholic Relief Act which "extended the parliamentary franchise to Catholic 'forty-shilling freeholders' – a lifetime leaseholder with an annual rent of forty shillings – and permitted Catholics to hold most civil and military offices and to receive university degrees."⁶⁷ Tone and the United Irishmen, however, were not placated by the extension of the franchise to propertied Catholics. They began working to escalate the peasant unrest into political revolution. The government, fearing that a French invasion and an Irish revolution were imminent, sought to suppress the Society of United Irishmen. They succeeded only in driving them underground, and in 1795 rural sectarian violence erupted and escalated into full-scale riots.

The dangerous fusion of social, economic, and political competition between religious communities produced violent conflicts between Protestant Peep o' Day Boys and Catholic Defenders.⁶⁸ Protestant landlords, many of them Anglicans, founded the Orange

⁶⁵ Hachey, 46.

⁶⁶ Bottigheimer, 154-155.

⁶⁷ Hachey, 46.

⁶⁸ Hempton, 94, 95.

Society to preserve the minority Protestants' ascendancy.⁶⁹ The subordinated Catholic majority sought redress of issues that had simmered for centuries. As all of these tensions increased, bloody vendettas were carried out between Catholic and Protestant tenants and small farmers in Ulster, particularly in County Armagh. In a fitting commentary on the times, Bottigheimer declared, "The spirit of enlightened rationalism flickered fitfully in the gloom of an Ireland that was largely primitive, divided, and bitterly sectarian."⁷⁰

These rural conflicts culminated in the short-lived Rebellion of 1798. On August 22, 1798, General Jean Humbert's army of 1,000 Frenchmen landed at Killala Bay, County Mayo. After initially defeating government troops on August 27, Humbert's relatively small force was overwhelmed on September 8 at Ballinamuck. Humbert surrendered to General Cornwallis, the new Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.⁷¹ In October a French invasion squadron was defeated off Lough Swilly, County Donegal. Seven of the ten French ships were captured, and Wolfe Tone, dressed in the uniform of a French general, was arrested upon landing at Buncara on November 3. On November 19, 1798, Tone committed suicide in a Dublin prison, calculating that death by his own hand was preferable to being hanged as a traitor. The death of Wolfe Tone effectively ended the rebellion.⁷²

During the tumultuous rebellion, the clergy and laity of the Church of Ireland maintained steadfastness in their loyalty to the monarchy and the constitution. Many of them viewed the Rebellion of 1798 as a Catholic conspiracy that had been hatched by priests and

⁶⁹ Ibid., 76.

⁷⁰ Bottigheimer, 155.

⁷¹ Hachey, 48.

⁷² Ibid., 49.

Presbyterian ministers.⁷³ The Anti-Burgher Synod was scheduled to meet in Aghohill, County Antrim, in 1798. However, the upheaval resulting from the 1798 Rebellion prevented the Synod from assembling that year, which explains why Thomas Campbell was ordained in Ahorey ‘since last meeting’ [1797] according to the Synod Minutes for 1799.⁷⁴

When Campbell became pastor for the Seceder church in Ahorey, County Armagh, the area was a hotbed of Defenders and Peep o’ Day Boys. In the six northern counties, the Society of United Irishmen comprised a very large part of the population. Although the greater part of the Presbyterians became connected with the organization, Campbell refused to have any part in the movement.⁷⁵ McBride lists sixty-three ministers and probationers who were suspected either of being involved in the rebellion or of being members of the United Irishmen. Among them, twenty-two are identified as New Light ministers, and twenty-two are listed as Old Light ministers. The list contains only three Seceders, all of whom are identified as Old Light, Burghers.⁷⁶ No Anti-Burgher ministers or probationers are listed as supporting the cause of the United Irishmen.

Believing secret organizations to be incompatible with discipleship in the kingdom of Christ, Campbell felt an obligation to speak against forming such alliances and taking such oaths, regarding them as injurious to the growth and development of spirituality and harmful to the spiritual growth and happiness of the disciples of Christ.⁷⁷ His opposition proved

⁷³ McBride, 203.

⁷⁴ Scott, 231.

⁷⁵ Richardson, I, 42.

⁷⁶ McBride, 232-236

⁷⁷ Campbell, *Memoirs*, 22.

irritating to certain leaders of one of the organizations who finally requested he deliver “a discourse upon the lawfulness of oaths and of secret societies.”⁷⁸ Campbell agreed to do so, and on the day appointed, the local group of United Irishmen assembled in all the pomp and pageantry of their order. Campbell’s message regarding oaths and secret orders was one they neither expected nor received graciously. A portion of the assembly was so enraged by Campbell’s remarks that a prominent official took him by the arm and escorted him through the crowd to safety.⁷⁹

Although Campbell’s staunch opposition to oaths and secret organizations put him at odds with many people in the community, it was consistent with the principles of the Seceders. Campbell viewed the secret organizations as political entities and inferior to the Kingdom of Christ. Although the Church and the State exist as divine institutions, “the Church is always paramount to the State, and, therefore, our relations to the Church are always paramount to the State and to every other human and temporal institution existing in this world.”⁸⁰ For a Christian to be bound by the oath of an inferior institution would not be expedient; yet each member of the secret order was bound by the sanctity of the solemn oath and committed to the mysterious workings of that secret association. There was the additional problem that arose when the political objectives of the institution became perverted to insurrectionary purposes. In such a case, it was possible that a Christian could

⁷⁸ Richardson, I, 42; Campbell, *Memoirs*, 22. Neither Richardson nor Campbell named the organization; however, it would appear that Richardson is referring to the United Irishmen. Alexander Campbell wrote, “...certain leading men in that fraternity requested him to deliver them a sermon on the premises.” This variant rendition indicates they wanted to hear his reasoning for objecting to oaths and secret societies, whereas Richardson indicates they wanted a discourse on the merits of oaths and secrets organizations.

⁷⁹ Campbell, *Memoirs*, 22

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

be guilty of opposing God by opposing the divinely instituted State. Campbell, therefore, could not conscientiously give support to such organizations. Additionally, he refrained from politicizing the issue. In his sermons and public discourses, his themes concentrated upon spiritual matters, as evidenced from an extant diary entry.⁸¹

By refusing to take political sides, Campbell escaped the retribution that some ministers received when their messages revealed a political bias. In that regard, therefore, Campbell was not persecuted to the same extent as were some of his fellow ministers. The example of Rev. Francis Pringle illustrates the extreme political and religious volatility that characterized Ulster during the turbulent years at the end of the eighteenth century. Pringle, who pastored the Seceder congregation at Gilnahirk, near Belfast, steadfastly supported the British constitution and urged his congregation to remain loyal. Pringle discovered that his opposition to the United Irishmen put him at odds with his congregation. Eventually, the hostility became unbearable, and Pringle was forced to emigrate to America, where he became a prominent member in the Associate Synod of North America.⁸² Pringle was present in Philadelphia on May 20, 1801, at the first session of the newly constituted Associate Synod and was named the Synod's first clerk.⁸³ Minutes of the Synod also name Pringle as one of the committee members who participated in Thomas Campbell's trial before the Associate Synod in 1809.⁸⁴ In spite of Ulster's volatile environment surrounding

⁸¹ Ibid., 194.

⁸² McBride, 107. See also, Reid, vol. III, 391.

⁸³ McBee and Stewart, 24.

⁸⁴ *Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod of North America*, Friday, 19 May, 1809, 202-203.

the uprising of 1798, Campbell continued in his ministry and did not emigrate to America until 1807.

The Evangelical Society of Ulster

In the aftermath of the violent United Irish Rebellion, a group of ministers and laypersons met in Armagh. The men were exceptional in that they were willing to cross sectarian boundaries in order to create an evangelistic society that would spread ‘the light of the pure Gospel’ throughout the northern region of Ireland.⁸⁵ Sixteen Seceder ministers, three ministers from the Synod of Ulster, and four clergymen from the Church of Ireland joined together to form the Evangelical Society of Ulster. Their goal was to establish a system of itinerant preaching throughout the towns and villages of Ulster.⁸⁶

At the meeting, George Hamilton, minister for the Armagh congregation (Burgher), preached a sermon challenging the men who were present to assume their evangelistic responsibilities.⁸⁷ The group decided to convene an organizational meeting in October of that same year. On October 10, 1798, “in spite of heavy rain, a large crowd, including thirteen ministers from four denominations met in Armagh.”⁸⁸ Thomas Campbell led the ecumenical assembly in prayer, and Hamilton preached a sermon on “The Necessity of Itinerant

⁸⁵ Reid, 415.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Hiram J. Lester, “An Irish Precursor to Thomas Campbell’s Declaration and Address,” *Encounter*, 50:3 (Summer, 1989): 247–267. Drawing heavily from what he refers to as “primary texts recently discovered in Northern Ireland and London,” Lester links Campbell’s actions of 1807 with his earlier ecumenical experiences in Ireland. See also David M. Thompson, “The Irish Background to Thomas Campbell’s Declaration and Address,” *Disciplina* 46 (Summer, 1986): 23–27. Thompson cites T. Withrow, *Historical and Literary Memorials of Presbyterianism in Ireland, Second Series, 1731–1800* (London: 1880), 310–312; and J. S. Reid, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland* (Belfast: 1867), iii, 415-417.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 254.

Preaching.” Afterward, the assembly voted unanimously to form an evangelical organization. Fashioned after the London Missionary Society (LMS), the Evangelical Society of Ulster (ESU) helped fund the publication and distribution of religious tracts among the poor as well as supported itinerant preachers of the LMS to evangelize Irish villages without ministers.⁸⁹ The majority of the elected officers were laymen, but ordained ministers were also elected: George Hamilton (Burgher), George Maunsell (Anglican), William Henry (Burgher), Reed [first name not recorded] (Synod of Ulster), and Thomas Campbell (Anti-Burgher).⁹⁰

From its inception, the more rigid Seceders looked with suspicion upon the Associate Ministers who patronized the ESU.⁹¹ Fearful that the doctrinal views of their ministers, and subsequently their members, would be weakened by this ecumenical association, the Burgher Synod warned its presbyteries not to compromise their beliefs on Christian communion, worship, and discipline.⁹² In 1799 both Seceder Synods condemned the ESU, stating that its principles were not consistent with the Secession Testimony.⁹³ This condemnation apparently resulted in some of the Associate ministers increasingly questioning the cause of the Secession. Their estrangement was strengthened by interactions which they had with the Independent preachers, many of whom had been sent over from England to be itinerant preachers for the Society.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ McBride, 220, 221.

⁹⁰ Lester, “An Irish Precursor,” 254.

⁹¹ Reid, 417.

⁹² McBride, 221.

⁹³ Reid, 416.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 417.

The Anti-Burgher Synod in Scotland condemned the formation of missionary societies in 1796.⁹⁵ When the Belfast Anti-Burgher Synod met in Armagh in July of 1799, a question was raised concerning the ESU and whether it was constituted on “principles consistent with the Secession Testimony.”⁹⁶ The Synod called upon Campbell, the sole Anti-Burgher minister with membership in the ESU, to explain his involvement in the Society. After hearing Campbell’s statements, while agreeing with the zeal and the pious intent of the ESU, the Synod concluded that the organization was too ecclesiastically permissive and resolved, “The principles of the Constitution are entirely latitudinarian, whereby the truth of the Gospel is in danger of being destroyed and the practice of godliness overthrown where they have been established in the providence of God.”⁹⁷ The Synod also declared, “While the zeal of the society would carry them out to the enlargement of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, on the one side, it would eventually undermine and destroy it on the other.”⁹⁸

A committee from the Synod, including William Drysdale, the representative of the General Associate Synod in Scotland, was delegated to confer with Campbell regarding his connection with the ESU. The committee’s report was submitted on August 1 and “implic[ed] that the pressure applied had not produced a complete meeting of the minds.”⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Thompson, 24.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 23 - 27.

⁹⁷ John P. Harrison, “Evangelical Society of Ulster, (n.d.)”, (photocopy), pp.1, 2, Personal Papers, Oklahoma Christian University, Oklahoma City. See also, *Minutes of the Anti-Burgher Secession Synod*, 21, quoted in Peter Brooke, “Controversies in Ulster Presbyterianism, 1790 – 1836”, Cambridge Ph.D. Dissertation, 1980, 47; also, Stewart, *The Seceders*, 104 – 107.

⁹⁸ Thompson, 24.

⁹⁹ Lester, “An Irish Precursor,” 258.

Synod called for the report of the Committee appointed to converse with Mr. Campble¹⁰⁰ when Revd Heny [*sic*] Hunter read the following paper drawn up and subscribed by said Mr. Campble, viz –

I am willing to receive the advice of the Synod respecting my connexion with the Evangelical Society of Ulster to take it under my most serious consideration and to endeavor in all things to see eye to eye with the Revd Synod and in the meantime to desist from any official intercourse with said Society, only remaining a simple subscriber.

Mr. Camble

After some conversation the foregoing Declaration was accepted as satisfactory on the occasion.¹⁰¹

Apparently, the ESU – and Thomas Campbell’s role in it – was the only significant business of the 1799 Anti-Burgher Synod.¹⁰² When the Synod convened for its 1800 sederunt, Campbell had conformed to its directive:

On the motion of a member the minute of last Synod, concerning Mr. Campbell’s connexion with the Evangelical Society of Ulster was read. Mr. Campbell gave full satisfaction as to his seeing eye to eye with the Synod in this matter, having even declared, that he had not paid the last year’s subscription to that society.¹⁰³

Several of the Seceder ministers, including John Gibson of the Richhill congregation (Burghers) eventually left the Seceder faction to become pastors of Independent congregations.¹⁰⁴ Thomas Campbell, ESU’s only Anti-Burgher, emigrated to America several years after being rebuked for his involvement in the ecumenical society.¹⁰⁵ In

¹⁰⁰ The spelling of Campbell’s name occurs as Campble, Camble, and Campble in the proceedings.

¹⁰¹ *Minute Book of the Associate Synod of Ireland*, [Anti-Burgher], July 31, 1799), 119 – 120, as cited by Lester, 258.

¹⁰² Lester, “An Irish Precursor,” 266, note.

¹⁰³ *Minute Book of the Associate Synod of Ireland*, [Anti-Burgher], 1800), 131 – 133, as cited by Lester, 258.

¹⁰⁴ Reid, 416. See also Richardson, I, 82.

¹⁰⁵ McBride, 221.

America, Campbell would resume his ecumenical efforts, write his *Declaration and Address*, and form the Christian Association of Washington, Pennsylvania for purposes similar to those of the ESU: to encourage Christian cooperation in spreading the gospel, to support and send forth preachers with the gospel message, and to provide the poor with Bibles.¹⁰⁶

The Christian Association of Washington

In the aftermath of the trial, Thomas Campbell eventually severed relations with the Chartiers Presbytery and the Associate Synod; however he continued to meet with groups of his friends, many of whom he had been associated with at the Markethill and Richhill congregations in County Armagh. The Acheson brothers from Markethill had come to America a few years earlier. James Foster, of the Independent congregation in Richhill, had emigrated from Ireland at about the same time as Campbell.¹⁰⁷ They met in the homes of the people, and occasionally they would meet in barns. Outdoor meetings were also frequent when the weather permitted. Those in attendance consisted of members of the Presbyterian and Associate Presbyterian churches, members of other religious bodies, and people who held no membership in any church.¹⁰⁸ Campbell preached and administered the Lord's Supper among these groups, which had been the charge in one of the articles brought against him by the Presbytery in 1807. His sermons carried a consistent theme: a plea for the union

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Campbell, *The Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington County Pennsylvania* (Washington, PA: Brown and Sample, 1809; reprint, Historical Reprint Series, Henderson, TN: Hester), 4-5.

¹⁰⁷ Richardson, I, 81-83.

¹⁰⁸ McAllister, 96.

of the divided church upon the foundation of the Scriptures. He deplored the religious divisions that separated Christians, called upon Christians to cooperate with each other, and proclaimed the Scriptures as the only absolute guide in matters of faith.¹⁰⁹

As it became evident that many of his listeners were in agreement with his views, Campbell proposed to some of the leading men among them that a meeting should be held to discuss their organization and give “more order, definiteness, and permanency to their efforts.”¹¹⁰ The home of Abraham Altars, who lived between Washington and Mount Pleasant, was selected as the meeting place of what would become known as one of the most famous meetings of the American Restoration Movement. Altars was not a member of any church, but he had an interest in what Campbell and his friends were attempting. In the early summer of 1809, a group assembled at the Altars’ home where Campbell addressed the gathering. In his message he emphasized “the evils resulting from divisions within the church – divisions that were unnecessary for God had provided, in his sacred Word, an infallible standard as a basis for union and cooperation.”¹¹¹ He spoke of returning to the simple teaching of the Scriptures and the rejection of all doctrines that were not found in the Bible. After reviewing at length the need to return to the Bible as a basis for belief and practice, he concluded his message with this affirmation: “That rule, my highly respected hearers, is this, that WHERE THE SCRIPTURES SPEAK, WE SPEAK; AND WHERE

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Earl Irvin West, *The Search for the Ancient Order, A History of the Restoration Movement, 1849–1906, Vol. 1. 1849–1865*. (Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Company, 1964), 47; Also see McAllister, 97.

¹¹¹ McAllister, 98.

THE SCRIPTURES ARE SILENT, WE ARE SILENT.”¹¹² Robert Richardson, biographer of Alexander Campbell and well acquainted with both father and son,¹¹³ states the significance of the event and the statement:

Simply, reverentially, confidingly, they would speak of Bible things in Bible words, adding nothing thereto and omitting nothing given by inspiration. They had thus a clear and well-defined basis of action, and the hearts of all who were truly interested re-echoed the resolve: “*Where the scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.*” It was from that moment when these significant words were uttered and accepted that the more intelligent ever afterward dated the *formal and actual commencement of the Reformation* which was subsequently carried on with so much success, and which has already produced such important changes in religious society over a large portion of the world.¹¹⁴

Richardson recounts an interesting exchange that occurred after Campbell had made the statement and had sat down:

As discussion ensued regarding the future course the group would pursue, Andrew Munro, a Scotch Seceder who was a bookseller and postmaster at Canonsburg, arose saying, “Mr. Campbell, if we adopt *that* as a basis then there is an end of infant baptism.” To this Campbell replied, “Of course, if infant baptism be not found in Scripture, we can have nothing to do with it.” At that instant, Thomas Acheson rose, and laying his hand on his heart, emotionally exclaimed, “I hope I may never see the day when my heart will renounce the blessed saying of Scripture, ‘Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for such is the kingdom of heaven.’” Upon saying this he burst into tears. Meanwhile, James Foster, not willing that this misapplication of Scripture should pass unchallenged, cried out, “Mr. Acheson, I would remark that in the portion of Scripture you have quoted there is no reference, whatever, to infant baptism.”¹¹⁵

¹¹² Richardson, I, 235-236. Emphasis by Richardson.

¹¹³ William Herbert Hanna, *Thomas Campbell, Seceder and Christian Union Advocate*. Cincinnati, OH: The Standard Publishing Company, 1935. Reprinted for the 1987 President’s Meeting of Ozark Christian College, *Biography of Thomas Campbell, Advocate of Christian Union*, Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, Inc.), 116-117.

¹¹⁴ Richardson, I, 237. Emphasis by Richardson.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 238.

The meeting defined for the first time the exact view held by the group. As a result, some of the members withdrew when they realized the direction they were going. Others embraced the concept of allowing all religious matters to be directed by the Scriptures. The question that plagued many was the issue of infant baptism. James Foster became convinced while in Ireland, perhaps through the influence of Alexander Carson and other Independents, that there was no scriptural foundation for infant baptism.¹¹⁶ The Campbells, too, would face the same issue in a few years.

Even with the differences in opinion that were evident within the group, most of those who attended the weekly meetings felt themselves united in the great goal of promoting Christian unity. More than anyone, Campbell saw the need for guiding principles and organization for practical purposes. He proposed forming a Christian Association for the purpose of circulating the ideas of Christian cooperation. It is likely his idea arose out of his experiences as a member in the Evangelical Society of Ulster a few years earlier.

A second meeting was held at the headwaters of Buffalo Creek on August 17, 1809. Those in attendance were from the Buffalo Creek community, and regardless of denominational affiliation, they believed in the principles of Christian union. It was resolved that the organization would become *The Christian Association of Washington*, indicating the county in which they were active.¹¹⁷ Twenty-one members were appointed to confer together and, with Campbell's assistance, to decide upon the most appropriate methods of putting the Association's goals into effect.¹¹⁸ The group would not be a church but "an

¹¹⁶ McAllister, 99.

¹¹⁷ Richardson, I, 240,241; McAllister, 100.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 241.

agency for helping propagate the ideas of Christian cooperation.”¹¹⁹ Campbell was careful that his actions in withdrawing from the Synod and Presbytery were not interpreted as a withdrawal from the larger fellowship of other Christians within the church in general.¹²⁰

Because of the inconvenience involved in holding weekly meetings in private homes, the Association decided to build a meetinghouse. In frontier fashion, the neighbors gathered and erected a log building on the Sinclair farm, about three miles from Mount Pleasant, on the road from Mount Pleasant (Pennsylvania)¹²¹ to Washington at the crossroad of the road from Middletown to Canonsburg. The building also served as a school house for the community.¹²² Mr. Welch, a respectable farmer and a man who was sympathetic to the Association, lived near the meetinghouse and prepared a small, upstairs room for Campbell. This room became his quiet place of study and writing.¹²³ Here, during the summer of 1809, Campbell wrote the *Declaration and Address*, “designed to set forth to the public at large, in a clear and definite manner, the object of the movement in which he and those associated with him were engaged.”¹²⁴ The committee had agreed a publication was called for. When Campbell had completed the document, he asked for a meeting in order to read to them *The*

¹¹⁹ McAllister, Lester, G. and William E. Tucker. *Journey in Faith, a History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (St. Louis, Missouri: The Bethany Press, 1975), 110.

¹²⁰ Frederick D. Kershner, *The Christian Union Overture: An Interpretation of The Declaration and Address of Thomas Campbell*. (St. Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1923), 22.

¹²¹ There is a Mount Pleasant, Ohio that is situated toward the eastern portion of the state.

¹²² McAllister, 100.

¹²³ Richardson, I, 241.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 241-242.

*Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington County Pennsylvania.*¹²⁵ The document included the following preface dated September 7, 1809:

At a meeting held at Buffalo, August 17, 1809, consisting of persons of different religious denominations, most of them in an unsettled state as to a fixed Gospel ministry, it was unanimously agreed, upon the considerations, and for the purposes hereinafter declared, to form themselves into a religious association, designated as above, which they accordingly did, and appointed twenty-one of their number to meet and confer together, and, with the assistance of Elder Thomas Campbell, minister of the Gospel, to determine upon the proper means to carry into effect the important ends of their Association; the result of which conference was the following Declaration and Address, agreed upon and ordered to be printed, at the expense, and for the benefit of the society. – September 7, 1809.¹²⁶

In the *Declaration* portion of the document, Campbell identified nine resolutions that were agreed upon by the Association. In Resolution I, the plan to promote simple evangelical Christianity moved from a concept to a carefully worded phrase identifying the sole purpose of the organization.

- I. *The Christian Association.*¹²⁷ That we form ourselves into a religious association under the denomination of the Christian Association of Washington, for the sole purpose of promoting simple evangelical Christianity, free from all mixture of human opinions and inventions of men.
- II. *Finances of the Association.* That each member, according to ability, cheerfully and liberally subscribe a certain specified sum, to be paid half yearly, for the purpose of raising a fund to support a pure Gospel ministry, that shall reduce to practice that whole form of doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, expressly revealed and enjoined in the word of God. And, also, for supplying the poor with the holy Scriptures.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 242, McAllister, 100-101.

¹²⁶ Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington* (Washington, Pa: Brown and Sample, 1809), 1.

¹²⁷ Words in italics that precede each of the resolutions are added for the sake of defining the general meaning of the statements. These definitions are loosely based upon Kershner's concept. See F D. Kershner, *The Christian Union Overture*, 33-34.

- III. *The Purpose and Mission of the Association.* That this Society consider it a duty, and shall use all proper means in its power, to encourage the formation of similar associations; and shall for this purpose hold itself in readiness, upon application, to correspond with, and render all possible assistance to, such as may desire to associate for the same desirable and important purposes.

It should be noted that Resolutions II and III contained ideals that closely resembled the principles of the London Evangelical Society and the Evangelical Society of Ulster.

Sections IV and V define the identity and goal of the Association. Section IV reveals *the members did not consider themselves to be a church* but saw themselves as volunteers in the quest of reforming the church. Section V stipulates *the advancement of simple, evangelical Christianity as their only goal.*

- IV. *The Association is not a Church.* That this Society by no means considers itself a Church, nor does at all assume to itself the powers peculiar to such a society; nor do the members, as such, consider themselves as standing connected in that relation; nor as at all associated for the peculiar purposes of Church association; but merely as voluntary advocates for Church reformation; and, as possessing the powers common to all individuals, who may please to associate in a peaceable and orderly manner, for any lawful purpose, namely, the disposal of their time, counsel, and property, as they may see cause.

- V. *The Goal of the Association.* That this Society, formed for the sole purpose of promoting simple evangelical Christianity, shall, to the utmost of its power, countenance and support such ministers, and such only, as exhibit a manifest conformity to the original standard in conversation and doctrine, in zeal and diligence; only such as reduce to practice that simple original form of Christianity, expressly exhibited upon the sacred page; without attempting to inculcate anything of human authority, of private opinion, or inventions of men, as having any place in the constitution, faith, or worship, of the Christian Church, or anything as matter of Christian faith or duty, for which there can not be expressly produced a "Thus saith the Lord," either in express terms, or by approved precedent.

Beyond the first five fundamental resolutions, the Association addressed the practical matters involving their organizational structure, frequency of meetings, the agenda to be followed in each meeting, and how the Association was to receive its financial support.

- VI. *The Executive Committee of the Association.* That a Standing Committee of twenty-one members of unexceptionable moral character, inclusive of the secretary and treasurer, be chosen annually to superintend the interests, and transact the business of the Society. And that said Committee be invested with full powers to act and do, in the name and behalf of their constituents, whatever the Society had previously determined, for the purpose of carrying into effect the entire object of its institution, and that in case of any emergency, unprovided for in the existing determinations of the Society, said Committee be empowered to call a special meeting for that purpose.
- VII. *The Meeting Times for the Association.* That this Society meet at least twice a year, viz.: on the first Thursday of May, and of November, and that the collectors appointed to receive the half-yearly quotas of the promised subscriptions, be in readiness, at or before each meeting, to make their returns to the treasurer, that he may be able to report upon the state of the funds. The next meeting to be held at Washington on the first Thursday of November next.
- VIII. *The Agenda for Each Association Meeting.* That each meeting of the Society be opened with a sermon, the constitution and address read, and a collection lifted for the benefit of the Society; and that all communications of a public nature be laid before the Society at its half-yearly meetings.
- IX. *Financial Support of the Association.* That this Society, relying upon the all-sufficiency of the Church's Head; and, through his grace, looking with an eye of confidence to the generous liberality of the sincere friends of genuine Christianity; holds itself engaged to afford a competent support to such ministers as the Lord may graciously dispose to assist, at the request, and by invitation of the Society, in promoting a pure evangelical reformation, by the simple preaching of the everlasting Gospel, and the administration of its ordinances in an exact conformity to the Divine standard as aforesaid; and that, therefore, whatever the friends of the institution shall please to contribute toward the support of ministers in connection with this Society, who may be sent forth to preach at considerable distances, the same shall be gratefully received and acknowledged as a donation to its funds.¹²⁸

The ambitions expressed within Resolutions II and III failed to materialize. No additional ministers joined the Christian Association, no missionaries went out from it, and no similar societies were formed. It might have been concluded regarding the Christian

¹²⁸ Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address*, 4-5.

Association of Washington that the entire endeavor was ineffective. The subsequent results of the Association, however, proved otherwise.¹²⁹

The actions of both the Chartiers Presbytery and those of the Associate Synod of North America are most accurately evaluated in view of the institutional transatlantic roots of Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterianism. Likewise, Campbell's actions and the attitudes he brought with him to Pennsylvania are interpreted most clearly when they are seen as being shaped by his experiences in Scotland and Ulster. The tensions that existed between Campbell and the religious hierarchy of the Chartiers Presbytery and that of the Associate Synod of North America can be traced to the institutional authority that was a characteristic of the Anti-Burghers in Scotland and Ireland – an institutionalized authority that had been effectively replicated in Pennsylvania. Just as the Anti-Burgher branch in Ireland was subordinate to the Anti-Burgher Synod in Scotland, the Associate Synod of North America was, likewise, subordinate to the same parent Scottish Synod.

Although he was moving in a direction that was consistent with his convictions, when he formed the Christian Association of Washington and wrote the *Declaration and Address* in 1809, Thomas Campbell was not yet prepared to renounce Presbyterianism. That decision would come with reluctance and only after enduring the thorny events surrounding his trial.

¹²⁹ Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ, A History* (St. Louis, Missouri: Christian Board of Publication, 1954), 148.

CHAPTER 4

A RELUCTANT DEPARTURE: THE TRIAL AND SUBSEQUENT SEPARATION FROM SECEDERISM

It is with sincere reluctance, and, at the same time, with all due respect and esteem for the brethren of this reverend Synod who have presided in the trial of my case, that I find myself in duty bound to refuse submission to their decision as unjust and partial; and also finally to decline their authority, while they continue thus to overlook the grievous and flagrant mal-administration of the Presbytery of Chartiers.

– *Thomas Campbell*¹

Although Thomas Campbell had worked within an Ulster society characterized by schism and ecclesiastical fractures, he was unprepared for the divisiveness he found within the Seceder faction in western Pennsylvania. In Northern Ireland, he was able to move within and between various religious groups with relative ease, advocating the reunion of Burghers and Anti-Burghers, visiting and listening to ministers of Independent churches, and emphasizing unity among Christians. In Pennsylvania, the rigid orthodoxy of the Seceders allowed for no such ecumenical attempts. The Associate Synod of North America was under the supervision of the General Associate Synod of Scotland and familiar with Seceder ministers from Ulster, having accepted Rev. Francis Pringle into its communion after his emigration from Ulster in the wake of the ‘Rebellion of ‘98’. Upon the presentation of his credentials, Campbell likewise was received by the Associate Synod into its fellowship in

¹ Campbell, *Memoirs*, 18.

May, 1807 and assigned to the Presbytery of Chartiers in western Pennsylvania. Before year's end, however, Campbell's role as protagonist in the "Cannamaugh Incident" sparked a controversy within the Chartiers Presbytery, and he was accused of publicly teaching doctrines "erroneous and contrary to the Holy Scriptures or our subordinate standards." Based upon that accusation, the Chartiers Presbytery brought charges of libel against Thomas Campbell. Those charges led to his trial before the Presbytery. Campbell defended himself against the libel charges; however, the Presbytery, judging him to be deserving of censure, suspended him from his ministerial duties. Campbell then appealed his case to the Associate Synod of North America. The investigation by the Synod resulted in three significant decisions: First, the Synod determined that the Presbytery had acted improperly in its actions against Campbell.² Second, the Synod determined to examine the articles of libel, as to whether the charges were merited.³ Third, the Synod reversed the Presbytery's suspension of Campbell, reinstated him, and assigned church appointments for him to fulfill.⁴

The Cannamaugh Incident and Subsequent Articles of Libel

In his biography of Alexander Campbell, Richardson accurately captured the flavor of the frontier during the first decade of the nineteenth century: "[T]he various fragments of religious parties, which, having floated off from the Old World upon the tide of emigration,

² *Minutes of the Associate Synod of North America*, Vol. I, May 14, 1799 – May 17, 1809, pp.172-173, 176. Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

³ *Ibid.*, 165 ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 199.

had been thrown together in circling eddies of these new settlements.”⁵ The Seceder congregations, although few in number and widely scattered throughout the area, were nonetheless overseen with rigid discipline. As a presbytery, Chartiers was subordinate to the Associate Synod of North America, which was subordinate to the parent Synod in Scotland.

Campbell, arriving in Philadelphia and being assigned to the Chartiers Presbytery by the Associate Synod in May of 1807, attended the quarterly meeting of the Anti-Burgher Presbytery which was held in the summer of that year at Harmony meetinghouse. On July 1, the second day of the session, preaching appointments were assigned. The first mention of Thomas Campbell in the minutes of the Chartiers Presbytery lists him among the ministers who are given church appointments to the Anti-Burgher churches in the area for July through October. Campbell was to be in attendance “at Cannamaugh on the 3rd and 4th [Sabbaths (meaning Sundays) of August].”⁶ Cannamaugh was a community situated on the Allegheny River just above Pittsburgh and was about a two- or three-days journey by boat from Campbell’s home in Washington.⁷ In keeping with Presbyterian practice, Campbell was to be accompanied by another Seceder minister. William Wilson was the minister who was to assist Campbell in the conducting of the worship and in the administration of the sacramental celebration of communion among the Anti-Burgher flock at Cannamaugh.⁸

⁵ Richardson, I, 224.

⁶ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, Vol. I, 1801 – 1828, p. 123. Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia. See also Hanna, 34. Hanna identifies Cannamaugh as the Associate Church in Indiana County, established in 1798. It is alternately spelled “Cannamagh”, “Cannamaugh”, and “Conemaugh” in the Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers.

⁷ Richardson, I, 224; See also McAlister, 73.

⁸ Ibid.

There is no indication either in the records of the Presbytery or otherwise that Thomas Campbell ever failed to appear at any of his appointed places of worship or that he was unable to fulfill any of his appointments during those four months. Ironically, a review of the Chartiers Presbytery minutes reveals that it was one of the other ministers of the Presbytery who failed to keep an assignment, and it was *that* minister's failure which brought forth the libel charges against Campbell and the subsequent trial.

The trouble between Thomas Campbell and the Presbytery of Chartiers originated when John Anderson was called upon by the Presbytery to explain his actions in failing to assist Campbell in "dispensing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper" at Buffaloe in October, 1807.⁹ Among those who were present at the August Cannamaugh meetings were Presbyterians belonging to various factions of the church. Campbell, seeing no reason to perpetuate the schisms within the denomination, invited all Presbyterians assembled to partake of the Lord's Supper. Wilson, who was present and assisting Campbell at Cannamaugh, did not publicly confront him at the time. However, the account soon circulated that Campbell had erred grievously in opening the sacrament to all Presbyterians. Based upon Campbell's reputed actions, Anderson refused to keep his appointment of assisting Campbell at Buffaloe.¹⁰ The matter was addressed in the morning meeting of the Presbytery at Mount Hope on October 28, 1807.¹¹ The Presbytery issued the decision that

⁹ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, October 27, 1807, 123.

¹⁰ McAlister, 74.

¹¹ Hanna, for the sake of brevity, includes only the portion of the minutes relating directly to Thomas Campbell. However, a reading of the minutes reveals some of the happenings (that Hanna omits) and which explain why Campbell abruptly issues his verbal protest and resignation from the Presbytery.

Anderson's conduct in declining to fulfill his appointment was excusable,¹² and, upon investigating the charges against Campbell, judged that there was sufficient cause to bring seven articles of libel against him.¹³

On October 27, 1807, the Chartiers Presbytery met at the Mount Hope meetinghouse for its scheduled monthly sederunt. The minutes open with the introductory recording of those in attendance:

The Presbytery met according to appointment and was constituted with prayer by Mr. Alison the Moderator.

Sederunt Messrs Anderson, Wilson, McLane, McClintock, Ramsay, _____, and Campbel, Ministers – with Hugh Millar from Kings Creek, James Thornburg from Mentour's Run, John Hay from Chartiers, George Murray from Little Beaver, and William Strain from Cross Creek ruling elders.¹⁴

After the reading of the formal minutes from the previous sederunt, the first matter of business to be addressed concerned fulfilling appointments, at which point Anderson was called upon to answer whether or not he had failed in fulfilling an appointment to assist Campbell:

Enquiry having been made concerning the fulfillment of appointments, *Mr. Anderson acknowledged that he had not fulfilled the appointment to assist Mr. Campbel in dispensing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Buffaloe*, [emphasis added here and in subsequent minutes, CFB] and gave as his excuse or reason an account, which he had by such testimony as he judged sufficient for him to proceed upon, that Mr. Campbel had publickly taught the opinion so expressed in the two following propositions, viz. That there is not an appropriation of Christ to ourselves in the essence of saving faith, such appropriation belonging to a high degree of that faith; and that we have nothing but human authority or agreement for confessions of faith,

¹² *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, October 27, 1807, 123.

¹³ Hanna, 123-136.

¹⁴ Thomas Campbell's name is consistently spelled with but one "L" in the minutes of the Presbytery.

testimonies, covenanting, and fast days before the dispensation of the Lord's Supper; and as *Mr. Anderson judged that these propositions were inconsistent with some articles of our testimony, it appeared upon consideration most proper not to join with Mr. Campbel in the communion, till the matter should be enquired into.*¹⁵

The two charges leveled at Campbell accused him of going against the accepted Presbyterian dogma concerning the essence of Christ's role in saving faith and the human origins of many traditional observances. The incident and ensuing trial revealed the Presbytery's staunch awareness of what they held to be doctrinal issues.¹⁶

Although the Presbytery concluded that Anderson was justified in not completing his appointment and ruled his actions to be excusable, it is curious how Anderson knew of Campbell's views since he had never been present when Campbell spoke. William Wilson, who did not confront Campbell and did not bring formal charges against him before the Presbytery regarding the incident at Cannamaugh, remarked to others that he had witnessed the newly-arrived minister from Ireland offering the Lord's Supper to gatherings that included non-Anti-Burgher Presbyterians.¹⁷ That failure on Campbell's part to *fence the Table* was deemed a departure from approved Seceder practice.

The Presbytery (after hearing two discourses delivered by the students in Divinity) [so in the record, CFB] met according to adjournment and was constituted with prayer by the Moderator. Sederunt as before, excepting that Mr. Duncan was now come up and took his seat. The minute of the former

¹⁵ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, Oct 27, 1807, 123.

¹⁶ Wesley P. Walters, "The Early Years of Chartiers Presbytery" (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1952, photocopied), 7. For additional background into the origins of the Presbytery, and an interpretation of the events culminating in Thomas Campbell's trial and the events surrounding it, see Rev. John T. Brownlee, *History of the Associate and United Presbytery of Chartiers* (Pittsburgh, PA: Jas. M'Millin, 1877).

¹⁷ Lester G. McAlister, *Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book* (St. Louis, Missouri: The Bethany Press, 1954), 74.

Sederunt was read; upon which a motion was made [“Mr. Campbel” is inserted above line at this point, perhaps an indication by the Secretary that Thomas Campbell is the one who made the motion] and seconded, to reconsider what respected Mr. Anderson’s excuse for not fulfilling his appointment at Buffaloe. Upon which the question was put, Reconsider or not? Upon which Mr. Campbel gave a verbal protest, and having said that he would not sit any longer in this Presbytery, he withdrew. It was agreed not to admit his protest as it was without any appeal to an higher court.¹⁸

In Hanna’s version – as well as in McAlister’s record – Campbell is deemed to be the one making the motion.¹⁹ I concur with Hanna’s and McAlister’s assessment since the secretary inserted Campbell’s name above the wording documenting the motion. However, Hanna and McAllister go on to say, “The motion was lost.” They then erroneously conclude that because Campbell lost the motion he angrily stated his withdrawal from the Presbytery. *In actuality, the motion was made and seconded.* “The minute of the former Sederunt was read; upon which a motion was made *and seconded*, to reconsider what respected Mr. Anderson’s excuse for not fulfilling his appointment at Buffaloe.”²⁰ The problem truly arose *after the motion was made and seconded*, when the question was *again* raised: “Reconsider or not?” which effectually negated Campbell’s motion as well as the second it had received. It was this flagrant infraction by the Presbytery in not addressing the motion that had been made and seconded – and not the losing of the motion, as Hanna and McAlister contend – that incensed Campbell and evoked his resignation from the Chartiers Presbytery. During the exchange, Campbell verbally protested the Presbytery’s decision, and judging that he would

¹⁸ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, Oct 28, 1807, 124.

¹⁹ McAllister, 75.

²⁰ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, Oct 28, 1807, 124.

not receive a fair hearing, he exclaimed “he would not sit any longer in this Presbytery.”²¹

The Presbytery refused to accept his protest, however, “as it was without any appeal to an higher court.”²² *This was the first of three statements Campbell made in which he stated his intention to leave the Chartiers Presbytery.*

The record of the minutes continues on October 29, 1807, “at the Meetinghouse.”²³

This likely refers to the Mount Hope Meetinghouse where the Chartiers Presbytery met on October 27, 1807.

The Presbytery met and was constituted with prayer by the Moderator. Sederunt as before.

The Presbytery entered upon the consideration of the case of Mr. Campbel who according to Mr. Wilson’s testimony had taught the erroneous tenets formerly mentioned. Agreed to appoint Messrs Anderson, Wilson, Alison and Ramsay ministers, with John Kay ruling elder as a committee to enquire into reports concerning erroneous opinions said to be delivered by the Revd Mr. Campbel and if they judge it necessary, to state the charges that appear to lie against him in the form of libel to be laid before this Presbytery at their next meeting; [the following was inserted later and written above the line:] and in the meantime, agree not to give him any appointments on account of his disorderly behavior. Whilst the Presbytery’s members of Presbytery were attending to this business, they received a letter from Mr. Campbel containing among other things a protest which could not be received for the same reason as before. The Presbytery appointed Mr. Anderson and Ramsay to make a draught of an answer to this letter, which draught being and approved was appointed to be transcribed and sent to Mr. Campbel....²⁴

The contents of the letters herein referred to were not recorded in the minutes and

²¹ Ibid., 125.

²² Ibid.

²³ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, Oct 29, 1807, 126. Although a meeting had occurred at the home of Mr. Lauren’s at 7:00 p.m. on the evening of the 28th, Mount Hope is considered the “Meetinghouse.”

²⁴ Ibid., 128-129.

consequently are lost to us. After page 129 of the *Minutes of Chartiers Presbytery*, a page was removed. There appears to have been writing down to the middle of the page, but only a few of the words are legible. Moreover, the remaining words were written by a different hand than the words written on page 129.

Anderson, Wilson, Alison, and Ramsay were a tightly-knit group of Seceder ministers. John Anderson became a Doctor of Divinity and Professor of Theology for the Associated Churches in the Chartiers Presbytery on April 24, 1794 and was a prominent figure among the Seceders. Wilson, Alison, and Ramsay each had studied under Dr. Anderson and held to the same doctrinal views as their professor and mentor.²⁵ These four men, along with ruling elder John Hay, comprised the committee to look into the charges of libel against Campbell. In their deliberations, the committee agreed to withhold from Campbell all preaching appointments until the next session convened in January, 1808. Thus the committee effectually deprived Campbell of two months' income.²⁶

When the Chartiers Presbytery assembled at Monteur's Run²⁷ meetinghouse on January 5, 1808, Campbell is listed among the ministers present.²⁸ The minutes of that meeting record his unsuccessful efforts to correct the minutes of the previous meeting concerning the motions he made.

²⁵ Hanna, 37, 38.

²⁶ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, July 1, 1807, 121. The Presbytery, on July 1, 1807, "...agreed that the vacancies shall give ministers that are sent to them by this Presbytery, 4 dollars for a Sabbath, and two dollars for a working day."

²⁷ Spelled also as Monture's Run in Minutes.

²⁸ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, January 5, 1808, 129. Here the secretary inadvertently wrote 1807. A crude attempt by someone to correct the date has left a faint outline of an "8" on the page.

The minutes of the former meeting being read, Mr. Campbel offered as a correction of that minute with regard to the motions he made at that meeting for the Presbytery's reconsidering their decision concerning Mr. Anderson's not fulfilling his appointment at Buffaloe; that it ought to have as a distinct motion, that he should have leave to state his grievances to the Presbytery. *After some conversation of this proposed correction, the question was put, correct the mistake according [to] Mr. Campbel's proposal, or not? It was carried, not correct; the members agreeing that Mr. Campbel made only one motion at the time referred to, not two.*²⁹

The session resumed the following day and libel charges were formally presented:

The Presbytery met and was constituted with prayer by the Moderator. Sederunt Messrs Anderson, Wilson, Duncan, Alison, Ramsay, and _____, and Campbel, Ministers. Ruling elders as before agreed to receive the report of the Committee appointed to make enquiry concerning erroneous tenets said to have been taught publicly by Mr. Campbel. Upon which a libel was produced: the tenor whereof follows:³⁰

THE ARTICLES OF LIBEL³¹

- I. It is erroneous and contrary to the Holy Scriptures or to our subordinate standards to teach that a person's appropriation of Christ to himself as his own Saviour does not belong to the Essence of saving Faith; but only to a high degree of it. This appears from I Cor. xv. 3 "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received; how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." Compared with vss. "So we preach and so ye also believed." Psm. xxxi.14, "I trusted in thee, O Lord, I said thou art my God." Acts xv.11, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved."

Larger Catechism Quest. 72 – "Justifying Faith is a saving grace whereby a sinner assenteth not only to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon Christ and his righteousness

²⁹ Ibid., 129-130.

³⁰ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, January 6, 1808, 132. See Hanna, 39, where Hanna comments upon the fact that the entire text of the Libel is written in the minutes in "a very fine and sometimes ornate hand, seemingly other than the secretary's."

³¹ Ibid., 123 – 136. Hanna, for the sake of brevity, listed only the sources of the citations. As far as the legibility of the Minutes permits, we present the Articles of Libel in their entirety. Where the citation is exceptional in length (e.g. a chapter of the Bible) only the reference is cited. Abbreviations are maintained as they occur in the Minutes, except where clarification is necessary.

therein held forth for the pardon of sin; and for the accepting and accounting his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation.”

Declaration and Testimony Part ii Art xiii, Sect 6 – “We testify against all who deny that any persuasion, assurance or confidence that we in particular through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, belongs to the nature of faith.”

But you the Rev Thomas Campbell have publicly taught this error at Conemaugh and Mount Pleasant Witnesses Revd Wm Wilson, Alex Murray, student in Divinity, Patrick Douglas.

- II. It is erroneous and contrary to the Holy Scriptures and our subordinate standards to assert that a church has no divine warrant for holding Confessions of Faith as terms of communion. This will appear from 2 Tim i.13, “Holding fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” Acts xvi.4, “And as they went through the cities they delivered there the decrees for to keep, that were ordained by the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.” Jude 3, “Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints.”

Confession Chap xxxi Sec 3, (3) – “It belongs to synods and councils ministerially to determine controversies of Faith and cases of Conscience, which decrees and determinations if consistent with the word of God are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the word, but also for the hearer. Whereby they are made as being an ordinance appointed hereunto in his word.”

Declaration and Testimony Article 4th Sect 1st – “We declare that a confession of faith or some public Declaration of the principles of a church is necessary to its well being. Without some public joint confession of the faith, there would be no keeping out the most heretic that ever appeared bearing the Christian name, from communion with us.” *But you the Revd Thomas Campbell taught this error at Conemaugh and Buffaloe. Witnesses Revd Wm. Wilson, Jas. Brownlee, Hugh Allison, Wm. Brownlee.*

- III. It is erroneous and contrary to the Holy Scriptures and our subordinate standards to assert that it is the duty of ruling elders to pray and exhort publickly in vacant congregations. I Tim. iv. 13, 14, “Give attention to exhortation, neglect not the gift that is in thee which was given by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” I Tim v.17, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor

especially they that labor in word and doctrine.” Heb v. 4, “And no man taketh this honor to himself but he that is called of God as was Aaron.”

The form of church government agreed upon by the Westminster assembly treating of the office of the Pastor, says it belongs to his office to pray for and with his flock as the mouth of the people unto God. Acts vi. 12, 13, 14 and xx. 36, where preaching and prayer are joined as several parts of the same office. The office of the elder (that is of the Pastor)³² is to pray for the sick even in private, to which a blessing is especially promised, and much more therefore ought he to perform this in the public execution of his office as a part thereof. The ministers of the gospel have as ample a charge and commission to dispense the word as well as other ordinances, as the Priests and Levites had under the Law, Isaiah lxvi.21. Matt xxiii.34, Where our Saviour entitleth the officers of the New Testament, whom he will send forth by the same names as the teachers of the Old. It belongeth to the office of the Pastor to feed the flock by preaching the word according to which he is to teach, convince, reprove, exhort and comfort.

Larger Cat. Quest. 158 – The word of God is to be preached only by such as are duly appointed and called to that office.

But you the Revd Thomas Campbell taught the above error at Buffaloe. Witnesses James Brownlee, Walter Maxwell, Hugh Allison.

- IV. It is erroneous and contrary to the Holy scriptures and our subordinate standards to assert that it is warrantable for the people of our communion to hear ministers that are in a state of opposition to our testimony, (that is) to the truths of God’s word for which that testimony is maintained Prov. xix.27 Cease my son to hear the instruction that causeth to err.³³
- V. It is erroneous and contrary to the Holy scriptures and our subordinate standards to assert that our Lord Jesus Christ was not subject to the Precept as well as to the Penalty of the Law in the stead of his people or as their surety.

³² Here the secretary includes a parenthetical statement of explanation, defining the “elder” as also being the “pastor” of the congregation. This terminology is consistent with the New Testament where the three Greek words, “bishop” - ἐπίσκοπον (*episkopon*, “overseer”), “elder” – πρεσβυτέρους (*presbuterous*, “a senior”), and “pastor” - ποιμαίνειν (*poimanein*, “to feed as a shepherd”) are used in to describe different responsibilities of the same office.

³³ Here follows a part of the record that is extended and difficult to read. Hanna cites Romans 16, Heb. 11:23; 2 John 10; (2) Larger Catechism, Quest. 108. (3) *Declaration and Testimony*, Part 3, Art. 1.

Declaration and Testimony Part ii Art viii Sect 4 – We believe that Jesus Christ our surety was made under the Law which Adam broke and which all men in their natural state are under, otherwise it could not be said that he was made under the law to redeem them that were under the Law. Farther, as those whom our Lord Jesus Christ represented owed both a debt of obedience and of suffering neither of which they were able to pay, he accending [*sic*] to his engagement paid both for them. It became him to fulfill all righteousness in the place of his people.

Sect 3 – We testify against the following error – that the satisfaction which Christ made for us consisted wholly in his sufferings not in his actual obedience to the Law. The scriptures make no such distinction.

But you the Revd Tho. Campbell have publicly taught the above mentioned error in Buffaloe. Witnesses James Brownlee, Walter Maxwell, Jesse Mitchell, Hugh Allison.

- VI. It is erroneous and contrary to the Holy scriptures and our subordinate standards to assert that any man is able in this life to live without sinning in thought, word, and deed. Eccl. vii.20, “For there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not.” I John i.8, “If we say we have not sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” Gal v.17, “For the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh and these are contrary, the one with the other so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

Shorter [corner of page torn and missing] Cat. Quest 89 – “No mere man since the fall is able in this life to keep the commandments of God but dost daily break them in thought, mind and deed.”

Declaration and Testimony, Part ii, Art xix – “We acknowledge that all the saints in this life, so much sin cleaves to their best services that no one action any of them ever did could be approved if tried by the pure and holy Law of God; a body of death presses them down to the dust.”

But you the Revd Tho. Campbell have publicly taught the above mentioned error in Buffaloe. Witnesses James Brownlee, Elizabeth Hannah.

- VII. It is erroneous and contrary to the Holy scriptures and to the rules of presbyterial church government for a minister of our communion to preach in a congregation where any of our ministers are settled without any regular call or appointment. There are two ways in which an ordinary minister of the Word has a regular call to exercise his office in

any congregation. One is when he is sent by a presbytery to continue for a short time, Acts viii. 14 – “When the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word, they sent unto them Peter and John.” The other is when a minister is ordained the fixed pastor of a congregation, Acts xiv. 23 – “When they (Barnabas and Paul) had ordained them elders in every church and had prayed with fasting they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed.”

The practice now mentioned is manifestly irregular and divisive, contrary to such texts as the following – I Cor xiv. 32, 33, “The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets for God is not the author of confusion but of peace as in all the churches of the saints.” Rom xvi. 17, “Mark them who cause divisions and offences.”

This practice is contrary to the engagements ministers came under at their ordination to endeavor to maintain the spiritual unity and peace of this church carefully avoiding every divisive cause.

But you the Revd Tho. Campbell a member of this Presbytery are chargeable with the above mentioned practice in preaching within the bounds of the associate congregation of Chartiers where the Revd Mr. Ramsay is settled without any regular call or appointment.

In the libel charges, *what originated as two counts were expanded to seven charges.* The charges made by the Chartiers Presbytery against Campbell may be summarized as follows. “It is erroneous and contrary to the Holy Scriptures and our subordinate standards”³⁴ to teach:

1. One’s appropriation of Christ’s atoning sacrifice does not belong to the essence of saving faith but only to a high degree of it.
2. The church has no divine warrant for holding confessions of faith as terms of communion.

³⁴ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, January 6, 1808, 123-136.

These were *the two original complaints*. However, the Presbytery added additional charges, namely:

It is erroneous and contrary to the Holy Scriptures and our subordinate standards...and to the rules of presbyterial government...

3. To teach that it is the duty of ruling elders to pray and exhort publicly in congregations where no ministers are assigned.
4. To teach that it is warrantable for the people of our communion to hear ministers that are in stated opposition to our testimony.
5. To teach that Jesus Christ was not subject to the precept as well as the penalty of the law in the stead of his people or as their surety.
6. To teach that man is able in this life to live without sin in thought, word, and deed.
7. For a Presbyterian preacher without a regular call or appointment to preach in a congregation where other Presbyterian ministers have settled.”³⁵

According to the minutes, the charges were read and judged to be relevant. The Presbytery then heard Campbell on each of the articles and listened to the “reasoning of members.”³⁶

[I]t was agreed to put the libel into Mr. Campbel’s hand, which was done accordingly and the further prosecution of this affair was delayed till the next meeting which was appointed to be at Buffaloe on the 2nd Tuesday of February next. At which meeting though the Presbytery do not appoint a formal trial, nor summon witnesses, yet they resolve, as far as the parties agree, to make use of the testimony of witnesses as may be required, as well as of reasoning on the several articles of libel in order to bring the affair to an issue at that meeting.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, January 6, 1808, 137.

Adjourned to meet here tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock. Closed with prayer.³⁷

Buffalo meetinghouse Feb 9, 1808³⁸ The Presbytery met according to app. Constituted with prayer by _____ moderator. Sederunt Messrs Anderson, Wilson, Duncan, Campbell, Ramsey, Imrie, Ministers. Robert Ramsay, Kings Creek; Thomas Hay, Minter's [*sic*]Run ["Run" inserted later and above the line of writing]; John Waite Chartiers, William T_____, Mahoning; John Tembleton, Mt. Hope; ruling elders. The minutes of the former meeting were read.

[Business conducted regarding the Mahoning congregation's place of worship]

Mr. Campbell requested the Presbytery define more particularly the method in which they were to proceed in his case. It was agreed that the method of procedure was sufficiently determinate as stated in the minutes of the last meeting; & they resolved to proceed accordingly, & to enter upon that business at the beginning of the next sederunt. It having been moved that as the Presby. had been invited by William Anderson of Buffaloe to go to his meeting-house on acct of the inclemency of the weather, it was agreed to adjourn to meet there at 10 o'clock tomorrow.

Closed with prayer.³⁹

Hanna states it is here that the minute book "bears mute testimony to a mysterious transaction, which will probably never be revealed."

Mr. Anderson's Meetinghouse, Feb 10th

The Presbytery met and was constituted with prayer by the Moderator. Sederunt as before. Agreed to enter upon the consideration of the several articles of charges against Mr. Campbel. It was judged proper to hear Mr.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Different handwriting indicates someone else is now writing the minutes. The writing is in a light ink that fades greatly on the paragraph containing Campbell's request. It is very faint but legible. There is an abundant use of abbreviations: "&", names, some words are omitted and inserted later by another writer using different ink.

³⁹ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, February 9, 1808, 138-143.

Campbel's answers to each of the articles. Accordingly they were read one by one and Mr. Campbel's answer to each of them was heard distinctly.

To the 1st article Thomas Campbell answered with these words:

With respect to faith, I believe that the soul of man is the subject of it, the Divine Spirit the author of it, the Divine word the rule and reason of it, Christ and him crucified the object of it, the Divine pardon, acceptance and assistance, or grace here and glory hereafter, the direct, proper and formal end of it. That it is an act of the whole soul intensively looking to, embracing and leaning upon Jesus Christ for complete salvation – for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness – that it is the right of all that hear the gospel so to believe upon the bare declaration, invitation, and promise of God holden forth equally and indiscriminately to all that hear it, without restriction or exception of any kind; though at the same time none can do this except it be given him of God – that as the habit, power or principle of faith, divinely wrought in the soul by the word and spirit of God is increased and strengthened in the appropriate exercises ordained of God for that purpose, so its inward comfort, confidence and assurance of faith is proportionably increased and strengthened, growing up in many to a full assurance of eternal life, even in the direct actings of a vigorous and lively faith. But that this faith may be in lower degrees of it where this assurance is not – that therefore this assurance cannot be of the essence of faith; for if it were, then none that had true faith could possibly be without it.

This lengthy answer was not included in the original minutes, but was evidently added later.⁴⁰

The minutes contain an abbreviated response:

To the 1st article his answer was, “With regard to faith I believe Cf.” After some conversation on his answer...⁴¹

To the 2nd article his answer was, “With respect to confessions Cf.”

⁴⁰ Hanna, 45. According to Hanna, “The Legend reads: ‘Mr. Anderson's meeting-house, Feb. 10.’ Following occur minutes about one-third of a page. The minutes are written in the same hand as those of February 9 and have been crossed out. Pages 139, 140 and 141 are other paper that have been roughly cut and sewed into the book and contain minutes in another handwriting, Page 142 is blank. Page 143 is in the same writing as page 138, with the crossing out in the same fashion. It is useless to speculate upon this strange discovery.”

⁴¹ Here the remaining words are virtually the same, with some slight changes in the word arrangements, as in the final minutes. See page 139 of minutes as recorded at Mr. Anderson's meetinghouse February 10, 1808.

Hanna describes pages 138-143 of the minutes as a “mysterious” transaction.⁴² It is also a quite confusing one:

1. The original record on the bottom one-third of page 138 was crossed out with an X and two vertical lines, leaving the original words clearly legible.
2. Page 139 is a new page that includes Campbell’s complete responses.
3. Similar correcting occurred for the other articles, and a similar striking of the original record is seen on page 143 (page 142 is blank).
4. The bottom half of page 143 contains the minutes from the morning of February 10, 1808.

There is also confusion as to the date and location of the meetings:

1. Page138: Buffaloe meetinghouse Feb. 9, 1808.
2. Page 138: Mr. Anderson’s meetinghouse Feb. 10. (This is Campbell’s response to the 1st and 2nd articles and was struck through).
3. Page 139-141: Mr. Anderson’s meetinghouse Feb. 10th. (Different hand)
4. Page142: Blank.
5. Page 143: Top one-third contains the original record of Campbell’s responses to Articles 3-7 and is in the same handwriting as the record on bottom one-third of page 138 at Anderson’s meetinghouse Feb. 10.
6. Page 143: Bottom two-thirds is at Buffalo meetinghouse, Feb. 10, 1808, A.M.

These actions lead to the conclusion that the full account, consisting of Campbell’s complete answers and the response of the Presbytery, was added later by another person.⁴³

⁴² Hanna, 45.

⁴³ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, February 9, 1808, 138.

The minutes at Anderson's meetinghouse of February 10, 1808, continue on page 139

and include the Presbytery's responses to Campbell's answers:

After some conversation on this answer, it was agreed to put the following question to him: Whether he agreed to the article of the Declaration and Testimony concerning the appropriation of saving faith and the terms there used on that subject? And whether he considered those ministers who testified against the Act of the Gen. Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1720 condemning the doctrine of the Marrow concerning the appropriation of faith, as maintaining the cause of God and truth? *This question being accordingly put, he refused to give a positive answer because he considered this question as insinuating that he was reading from the testimony to which he had professed allegiance.*

To the 2nd article his answer was, "With respect to confessions of faith and testimonies, I believe that the church has all the Divine warrant for such exhibitions of the truth, that our confession and testimony we use for that purpose, and that it is lawful and warrantable to use them as terms of communion in so far as our testimony requires, in which sense I have never opposed them."

Being dealt with as to what he meant by saying in the former meeting at Monteur's Run, "that we have neither precept nor example in Scripture for confessions of faith and testimonies," he answered, "that there was no formal or expressed precept or example to that purpose."

The question being put, Whether the Presbytery was satisfied with Mr. Campbell's written answers to the 1st and 2^d articles or not; it was carried in the negative.

To the 3rd article his answer was, "With respect to Elders, it appears to me that it is their duties as the ordained overseers and rulers of the house of God to see that all his ordinances be duly observed by those over whom the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers; and that, of course, in the absence or want of the teaching elder, the others should do what is competent to them to prevent the objects of their charge from forsaking the assembling of themselves together, but should for this purpose meet with them in the usual place of their assembling and read the word, make prayer, and sing the praises of God, catechize the young, and exhort all to the due and faithful performance of their duties according to the word of God."

And to the 4th Article his answer was, "I believe that in the present broken and divided state of the church, when Christians have not an opportunity of

hearing those of their own party, it is lawful for them to hear other ministers preach the gospel where the publick worship is not corrupted with matters of human invention.”

After some reasoning the Presbytery found that Mr. Campbel holds in his answers to the 2nd and 3rd articles of libel, the tenets with which he is charged in these articles.

To the 5th article his answer was, “That our Lord Jesus Christ was subject both to the precept and penalty of the law for his people, that if he had not been subject to the former he could not have been subject to the latter as their surety; and that by his one obedience unto the death he hath wrought out for them a complete deliverance from the curse of the law being made a curse for them which obedience is embraced and rested upon by all them that believe for their justification; and is actually imputed to them for righteousness, as if they had wrought it out in their own persons.”

After some explanation, the Presbytery admitted his declaration in answer to the 5th article to be satisfactory as to that point of doctrine.

To the 6th article his answer was, “I believe that no mere man since the fall, is able in this life to perfectly keep the commandments of God but doth daily break them in thought, word or deed, either by actual transgression or want of conformity in some degree or other, and that our very best actions are so imperfect, that they could not be acceptable to God without a mediator. These are my sentiments respecting the matters alleged against me, and which I constantly believe and teach. Thomas Campbel.”

The doctrine expressed in his answer to the 6th article was approved in general, but not his criticism on the answer to the 82d question of the Shorter Catechism putting the word or instead of and; so far as it seems to imply, that a man may be free from sin either in his thoughts or in his words, or in his actions.

Here Hanna surmises, “Mr. Campbell had read from a paper his answers, and that the paper was handed in at the end of the reading of his sixth article. Or it might be that reference is made to the sixth article alone.”⁴⁴ It appears, however, more likely that the paper

⁴⁴ Hanna, 49.

Campbell signed included all of his first six answers and that he then submitted a separate signed paper for his answer to the seventh article. The minutes proceed:

To the 7th article his answer was, “As to the 7th charge I acknowledge I preached at Cannonsburgh, but not in a congregation where any of our ministers is settled, nor yet without a regular call as I conceive I have appointment to preach the gospel and had the call of some of the most regular and respectable people of that vicinity to preach there, of which I can produce sufficient testimonials if required.” Thomas Campbel

This answer was not admitted as satisfactory.

Adjourned to meet tomorrow at Buffaloe meetinghouse - Closed with prayer.

Here the pagination of the book proper resumes with the minutes of the following day at the Buffaloe meetinghouse.

Buffaloe meetinghouse Feb 10 [11th?] A.M. 1808⁴⁵

The Presbytery met and constituted with prayer by the Moderator; sederunt as before. The minutes of the former sederunt were read and corrected. Mr. Campbell gave in a declaration in regard to the 2nd article a paper containing the following words on the one side, “That we have no formal ~~warrant~~—or expressed command either by Christ or his apostles enjoining upon the pastors of the Catholic church or any part of it to draw up a compend of the divine truth contained in the word of God and to make the approbation of them a term of communion to entrants into the church of Christ as a *sine qua nom* of their admission.” Signed, Thomas Campbell.

Containing the following words on the other side, “This I alleged at Monteur's Run when discussing the relevancy of the libel upon the 2nd article of charge which I denied and was not defending but only supposing that any person who might have uttered such a sentiment might mean no more than what I offered as probable in that case.” Signed, Thomas Campbell.

⁴⁵ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, February 10 [11], 1808, 143.

With regard to the 5th Article Mr. Campbell objected to the word explanation in the minutes & insisted that his answer should be what he had given in in [sic] writing; upon which Mr. C was asked whether he would admit the words, “as a covenant of works,” to be added as an explanation to the word “Law” in his written answers; he answered peremptorily in the negative.

During the next portion of the trial, the witnesses were deposed and offered their statements.⁴⁶ In the course of the proceedings, interesting recollections appeared, reflecting Campbell’s history in Ireland, his attempts to unify the Burgher and Anti-Burgher factions, and his concern that creeds often further divide Christians. The deponents affirmed Campbell had made statements that were not consistent with the Seceder doctrines. The following are noteworthy in showing the connection to Campbell’s roots in Irish Presbyterianism:

1. The church has many things for which there was only human authority, such as a confession of faith and testimony.
2. Ministers had done more hurt to the church [by arguing opinions which concerned matters even they did not understand, as in consubstantiation and the oaths regarding Burghers] than ever they did good.
3. Witness the division that took place among ourselves respecting the Burghers-oath.⁴⁷
4. By bringing in their individual rules, humans had composed the greatest hurt to the church.
5. If people were to take the word of God for their only rule it would be the likeliest way to bring about unanimity in the church.
6. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were a sufficient rule to the church for her faith and conduct.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid., 143 – 150. These pages contain testimony of the deposed witnesses charging on various days and locations they had heard Thomas Campbell teach the things that he was accused of by the Presbytery in the seven articles.

⁴⁷ See the “Address of Thomas Campbell to the Synod of Ireland,” 1804. Appendix. A.

⁴⁸ Here the theme of the Protestant Reformers is echoed by Thomas Campbell. Having heard Independent ministers (Alexander Carson, et.al.) Campbell applies the principle of biblical authority as the

On Saturday morning, February 12, the Presbytery met to evaluate the testimony that had been given and to render their verdict:

The Presbytery having considered the evidence brought in support of the articles of the Libel judged the 1st & 2nd clearly proved; the 5th they found not sufficiently proved, though Mr. C's declaration on that head was not so full and satisfactory as to remove all suspicions of error. The 3rd, 4th and 7th were acknowledged in his declarations given to the Presb'y and still adhered to by him.⁴⁹

The Presbytery's findings relating to the seven Articles of Libel may be summarized as follows:

1. Regarding saving faith, the Presbytery's primary point was that Campbell refused to include any mystical or emotional experience as evidence of salvation. Campbell taught that valid faith did not require such evidence. He maintained that faith is the natural response of the mind to evidence.
2. Regarding creeds as terms of communion, the Presbytery committee's testimony was that Campbell had stated he would require communicants to accept the Confession not specifically but only in general as there were things in the Confession which were not proven and understood in the Holy Scriptures.
3. Campbell confessed his belief that lay elders should pray and exhort when no minister was present.
4. Pertaining to the occasional hearing of ministers outside their particular group, Campbell believed it was lawful for Christians to hear other ministers preach the gospel when the people did not have the opportunity to hear the minister appointed by the Presbytery. This statement of belief was *interpreted as Campbell's confession to the libel charge*.
5. Regarding the theological question about the substitutionary nature of Christ's death as it relates to the precept and penalty of the Law, the Presbytery admitted

only way to heal the fractures within the Presbyterian body. He later will apply this principle in *The Declaration and Address* and affirm uniting on the Scriptures as the only means of uniting all Christians.

⁴⁹ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, February 12, 1808, 149.

his answer was “not so full and satisfactory as to remove all suspicions of error.”

6. Campbell denied the view of complete sanctification others had attributed to him. *The minutes contain no verdict on this charge. Although he was not judged guilty on this matter, neither was he cleared of the libel.*
7. On the matter of preaching where he had not been assigned by the Presbytery, Campbell admitted preaching in Cannonsburg, “but not where any of our ministers is settled.” *This confession was taken as an admission of his guilt.*

The Presbytery voted that the charges in the first two Articles were clearly proven.

The minutes then expressly state, “*The 3^d, 4th and 7th were acknowledged in his declarations given in to Presb’y and still adhered to by him.*”⁵⁰ By allowing lay elders to pray and exhort, by encouraging members to hear ministers from other parties, and by preaching in an area without being assigned to it, Campbell was viewed by the Presbytery as clearly challenging their authority.

The following was indicated by an asterisk and was marked through in the minutes following the closing prayer:

*Mr. Campbel objected to the Presbytery proceeding to decide upon the 1st and 2nd articles of the libel, alleging that there might be witnesses found in Conemaugh who would prove the contrary of what Wm Wilson had deposed concerning Mr. C’s teaching there. But this objection did not appear sufficient to sist procedure in this stage of the business, for the following reasons:

1st At the last meeting of Presbytery, it was determined to “make use of the testimony of witnesses on both sides, as well as reasoning on the several articles of the libel as far as the parties can agree, in order to bring the affair to an issue at their next meeting;” and Mr. C had concurred with the Presbytery in calling witnesses and reasoning on these two articles.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

2nd All the testimony he could bring from Conemaugh could only be negative, and could not overthrow what had been positively deposed.

3rd Mr. C did not propose to prove that he had taught in Conemaugh that there is an “appropriation in the nature of saving faith”; and that “Confessions of faith should be made terms of communion.”

4th Presbytery judged that there was sufficient testimony to prove that Mr. C had taught the errors contained in the charges, exclusively of Mr. Wilson’s.⁵¹

The Presbytery met at Mount Hope on March 8, 1808. Campbell was present but was not named among the ministers:

The Presbytery met according to appointment and was constituted with prayer by Mr. Allison Moderator. P.T. (Mr. Duncan had been selected moderator at last session.)⁵² Sederunt Messers Anderson, Wilson, Ramsay, Ministers... The minutes of the former meeting were read, and after some corrections [here the * note cited above is inserted] approved.

Receive a letter from Mr. Campbell containing a remonstrance concerning the action of the Presbytery in his case and a request that it should be reconsidered. On motion it was agreed to take this paper into consideration, and after the members had spoken on the subject of it and hear further explanation from Mr. Campbell, *the question was put, “grant the request of Mr. Campbell in this paper or not? It was carried, not grant.* The Presbytery adjourned to meet in this place tomorrow at ten o’clock. Closed with prayer.⁵³

In the wake of the decisions handed down by the Presbytery of Chartiers, Campbell elected to appeal his case before the full Synod, which met again in May 1808. We conclude, therefore, that as of that time, he was not yet prepared to sever his ties with his church. He evidently held out the hope that he would be cleared by the Synod and that he would work in harmony with his fellow ministers of the Chartiers Presbytery. During his short time in

⁵¹ Ibid., 150.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 151.

America, Campbell had learned that the ecumenical spirit – which had enabled the Protestant ministers of Northern Ireland to work together in advancing the gospel – was non-existent in the western Pennsylvania Presbytery of Chartiers.

When the Synod convened on May 18, 1808, Thomas Campbell is listed as one of the ministers present.⁵⁴ On May 19, under the fourth matter of business brought up for consideration, the minutes record,

Reasons of protest and appeal by Mr. Thomas Campbell against the proceedings of the Presbytery of Chartiers in his case and particularly a deed of said Presbytery suspending him from the office of the ministry, and Answer by said Presbytery.⁵⁵

On May 20, the Synod addressed various concerns, including the business of a Mr. McMillan, who had been suspended by the Presbytery from the office of minister following his trial for intoxication. “His name was accordingly erased from the Synod’s roll.”⁵⁶ The next sentence of the paragraph then reads, “Entered in the consideration of the cause between Mr. Campbell and the Presbytery of Chartiers. The minutes of Presbytery relative thereunto were read, together with a remonstrance by Mr. Campbell given into said Presbytery. Read his reasons of protest and appeal and the Presbytery’s answer.”⁵⁷ That afternoon, the Synod “proceeded to read the Articles of the Libel upon which Mr. Campbell was tried, with the declarations relative to each article, as given to the Presbytery, and also the depositions of

⁵⁴ *Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod of North America, Begun in the Year of our Lord 1801 and Continuing till 1809*. 163. The Synod met May 18 – May 27 in 1808. The pages of the sederunt are 163 – 200.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 165-166. Here Hanna’s transcription of the proceedings transposes some of the words.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 167-168.

witnesses.”⁵⁸ In the days that followed, the Synod reviewed the trial in its various components, including whether or not Anderson acted inappropriately by refusing to assist Campbell in serving the Lord’s Supper at Buffalo.⁵⁹ The Synod also reviewed the manner in which the Chartiers Presbytery conducted the trial. Especially disturbing to the Synod was the Presbytery’s refusal to allow Campbell to produce witnesses sufficient for his defense.⁶⁰

In the course of their evaluation of the trial, the Synod stated their “disapproval of Mr. Anderson’s conduct in said instance, because he had not 1st written Mr. Campbell on the subject and sought an interview with him; and likewise the Presbytery’s sustaining said excuse.”⁶¹ Concerning the legitimacy of the trial, the Synod sided with Campbell’s opinion that the proceedings were not handled appropriately.

A motion was made and seconded, that in consideration of the Synod’s judging that the proceedings of the Presbytery of Chartiers in the Trial of Mr. Campbell were, in the instance specified, irregular, they find it necessary to lay aside any further consideration of the Trial as brought before them by his Protest and Appeal....⁶²

The Synod praised the Presbytery’s diligence, saying they “...highly approve of the care shown by said Presbytery to check the appearance of a departure in any minister under their inspection from our received principles.”⁶³ In their conclusion regarding the Chartiers

⁵⁸ Ibid., 168.

⁵⁹ *Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod of North America*, Monday, May 23, 1808, 171. The minutes for Monday are contained in pages 170 – 173.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 175.

⁶¹ Ibid., 171.

⁶² Ibid., 175-176.

⁶³ Ibid., 176.

Presbytery's trial of Campbell, the Synod gave this decision, reversing the verdict handed down by the Presbytery:

[O]n the ground of the foresaid irregularity, they reverse the sentence of suspension passed by them on Mr. Campbell, and order a new trial, or deal with Mr. Campbell himself. The motion, after discussion, was adopted, and the said sentence accordingly reversed. Against which deed of reversal Mr. Ramsay, in his own name and in the name of all who should adhere to him, offered a verbal protest.⁶⁴

On Wednesday, May 24, 1808, the Associate Synod took up the charges against Campbell and proceeded to consider anew the testimony of witnesses and the declarations of Campbell as to the conviction of his beliefs.⁶⁵ In their deliberations, the Synod ruled:

On the First Article, concerning the charge, "Mr. Campbell affirms that a person's appropriation of Christ to himself as his own Saviour does not belong to the essence of saving faith." It is considerably evident that Mr. C. in his declaration denies the very doctrine which the Presbytery was affirming.⁶⁶

Mr. Campbell is charged in the second place with teaching that a church has no divine warrant for confessions of faith as terms of communion. Comparing what Mr. Campbell has advanced upon this article in his declarations with what he says in the introduction to his Reasons of Protest, the Committee are of opinion that he has materially acknowledged the charge. The manner in which he speaks in his declarations is *evasive and equivocal* [emphasis mine].⁶⁷ Fewer words than he has employed would have formed an explicit and satisfactory answer.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ *Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod of North America*, Wednesday, May 25 - Friday, May 27, 1808, 178- 200.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Thursday, May 26, 1808, 186-189.

⁶⁷ These terms will prove to be of significance later when Campbell addresses the Synod regarding its decision to rebuke and admonish him.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 189-190.

On the 3rd article, the Committee remarks that if Mr. Campbell means by ruling elders exhorting publicly in vacant congregations, their doing so as what belongs to their office, which indeed appears to be his mind, his encouraging such a practice is inconsistent with preserving the Scripture distinction between the duties of the teaching and ruling elder.⁶⁹

On the 4th Article which refers to Mr. Campbell's asserting that it is lawful for people of our communion to hear ministers that are in a stated opposition to our Testimony, the Committee remarks that Mr. Campbell in his declaration plainly teaches that it is lawful for them, in the absence of their own ministers, to hear other ministers, when the worship was not corrupted with matters of human invention.⁷⁰

Thus, the Synod considered four articles against Campbell, concluding,

Upon the whole, the Committee are of opinion that Mr. Campbell's answers to the two first articles of charge, especially, are so evasive unsatisfactory, and highly equivocal, upon great and important articles of revealed religion as to give ground to conclude that he has expressed sentiments very different upon these articles from the sentiments held and professed by this church; and are sufficient ground to infer censure.⁷¹

At this point, Campbell requested he be given the opportunity to speak. The record states he was heard accordingly. Afterward, the Synod put forth the question of whether "to agree to the concluding paragraph or not, and it was agreed to."⁷² To this, Campbell "declared his dissent, for reasons to be offered in due time." The session then adjourned to meet at three o'clock that afternoon.⁷³

⁶⁹ Ibid., 191.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 192.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

On page 193, of the minutes⁷⁴ the proceedings continue with the discussion of the case against Campbell and the nature of the censure that was due him.

A motion was made that he be rebuked and admonished, and, if further satisfaction be not received by the Synod, that he be suspended from his office...After some conversation, the question was put, rebuke and admonish Mr. Campbell, or admonish only. And it carried, rebuke and admonish. Mr. Campbell wished the Synod to delay passing censure until tomorrow. Adjourned to meet at half past 8 o'clock this evening. Closed with prayer.⁷⁵

When the sederunt convened at 8:30 that evening, Campbell presented a paper entitled *A Remonstrance* in which he stated “he could not submit to censure as proposed, because he could not acknowledge the charge found against him.” He went on to state, however, that “he was willing to submit to an admonition on the score of imprudence; and requested the Synod to reconsider their deed concerning him.”⁷⁶ After some discussion, the Synod agreed to reconsider. At 6:00 a.m., when the Synod reconvened, Campbell was not present.

A letter from Mr. Campbell to the Moderator was received and read, containing grievous charges against the Synod, for their judging him guilty of evasion and equivocation, charges of partiality and injustice, and informing the Synod that he declined their authority.⁷⁷

The Synod quickly summoned Campbell to appear immediately to give an answer for bringing such charges against the Synod and for declining its authority. Campbell heeded the summons, “was conversed with on the contents of his letter and required to retract the

⁷⁴ Hannah inadvertently says page 192 here, Hanna, 81.

⁷⁵ *Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod of North America*, Thursday, 26 May, 1808, 193-194.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁷⁷ *Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod of North America* Friday, 27 May, 1808, 196.

charges against the Synod, and submit to their authority.”⁷⁸ He withdrew the letter and acknowledged his rashness in making such accusations against the Synod and in declining the Synod’s authority. At the conclusion of the confrontation, Campbell yielded to the Synod’s decision. At the same time, he gave the Synod a written declaration in which he stated “... his submission should be understood to mean no more, on his part, than an act of deference to the judgment of the court, that, by so doing, he might not give offence to his brethren by manifesting a refractory spirit.”⁷⁹

This was now the second time within a span of three months that Campbell had stated he would not continue under the authority of the Synod. Once again, in retracting his words, he demonstrated his hesitancy in severing ties with his church. This was due in part to the relationships he continued to cherish among many preachers and other families and individuals who were in the Seceder Church.⁸⁰ As frustrating as the experiences of the trial were, the prospect of being a man without a church was even more distasteful.

The Synod then displayed its willingness to accommodate Campbell by agreeing to his request that the word “evasive” be removed from the charge against him.

The Synod reconsidered their judgment in the case of Mr. Campbell, finding his answers in the two first articles of charge evasive, unsatisfactory and highly equivocal. *A motion was made that the word ‘evasive’ be erased, and after some conversation, was agreed to.* The question was then put, *Adhere to the Synod’s deed respecting censure, namely, Rebuke and Admonition, or not; and it was carried, adhere.* Mr. Campbell was then asked if he was ready to submit to censure. *After a few remarks, he declared his submission.* And a Brother having been employed in prayer, *he was accordingly rebuked*

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Richardson, I, 229.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

*and admonished by the Moderator. And in this manner, the affair was issued.*⁸¹

Before adjourning the 1808 session of the Associate Synod of North America, preaching assignments were made for the ministers. Campbell was the last minister to be mentioned, and he was given the assignment of preaching in Philadelphia during the months of June and July, 1808. He was then to return to the Chartiers Presbytery, where he would minister until the next meeting of the Synod in May 1809.⁸²

There is no written record of where Campbell preached during those summer months in Philadelphia. In August, when he returned to Washington, Pennsylvania and the Chartiers Presbytery, he clearly expected to be assigned his preaching appointments as the Synod had stipulated. However, at the meeting of the Presbytery on September 13, 1808, Thomas Campbell was informed that the Presbytery had assigned to him no preaching appointments.⁸³ When he asked for an explanation as to why he had been overlooked, the Presbytery first claimed that they had no knowledge of Campbell's desires to be included. They then blamed Campbell for failing to inform anyone as to when he had planned to return to the area.⁸⁴

The Presbytery met at the Chartiers Meetinghouse on August 2, 1808, to read an extract of the minutes of the Synod's findings regarding Campbell. In those minutes, the Presbytery dissented from the Synod's finding that it had been guilty of breach of agreement

⁸¹ *Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod of North America* Friday, May 27, 1808, 197.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 199.

⁸³ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers* September 13, 1808, 183. Also Hanna, 86.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* See also Hanna, 86-87 and McAllister, 92.

in its dealings with Campbell. It also dissented from the Synod's decision to remove Campbell's suspension "while the grounds of it were not examined."⁸⁵ The hostility of his opponents in the Chartiers Presbytery was relentless, and their animosity toward him had been "only intensified by the issue of the trial, and was more undisguised than ever."⁸⁶

At the meeting of the Presbytery in Burgettstown on September 13, 1808, following an exchange of "rather sharp words,"⁸⁷ Campbell approached the Presbytery's clerk and retrieved the copy of the Synod's minutes concerning his case that he had presented earlier.⁸⁸

The minutes record this statement by Campbell:

In his own name and in the name of all who adhered to him, he declined the authority of the Presbytery for the reasons formerly given, the authority of the Associate Synod of North America and all the courts subordinate thereto; and all further communion with them.⁸⁹

This is the final occurrence of Thomas Campbell declining the authority of the Chartiers Presbytery and the Associate Synod. In this concluding exchange, Campbell announced his intention to sever all communion with the Seceder Church. This time there would be no withdrawal from his reluctant decision.

The next meeting of the Chartiers Presbytery was held on September 14, 1808. Thomas Campbell did not attend. He did, however, provide them with a letter. There is speculation as to whether this might be the letter he had submitted to the Synod. In all

⁸⁵ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, 2 August, 1808, 183. See Hanna, 86 and McAllister, 92.

⁸⁶ Richardson, I, 230.

⁸⁷ Hanna, 90.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, September 13, 1808, 184.

likelihood it was not. The fact that the letter given to the Synod spoke of Ramsay's actions against him and referred to the "obnoxious phrase, 'guilty of evasion and equivocation'" indicates two separate letters.⁹⁰ Since it was due to his argument that the findings of the Synod were amended so as to erase the word "evasive," leaving only "unsatisfactory and highly unequivocal," against him, Campbell would most certainly *not* have included the word "evasion" in his farewell address.⁹¹ The letter submitted on this occasion to the Chartiers Presbytery "must have been another letter that has been lost."⁹²

At the September 14, 1808 meeting, Campbell affirmed in his letter that he would no longer be subject to the Synod, the Presbytery, or any subordinate courts. In this final statement, he declined all further communion with them. As a result, the Presbytery acted immediately and unanimously to suspend Campbell from the ministerial office which he had just voluntarily vacated. Further, it was agreed that "intimation should be made of the suspension of Mr. Campbell to all the congregations belonging to this Presbytery and to the other Presbyteries belonging to the Synod."⁹³ In the November 2, 1808 minutes of the Chartiers Presbytery at Monteur's Run meetinghouse, the clerk was appointed to send Campbell a citation to appear before the Presbytery at their next meeting in order to be dealt with.⁹⁴ Campbell, however, had attended his last meeting of the Chartiers Presbytery.

⁹⁰ See Appendix B, "Letter Bidding Adieu to Chartiers Presbytery and Associate Synod."

⁹¹ Hanna, 109.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 110. Another possibility for the letter is that it is the "Protest and Appeal Letter" that Alexander Campbell seems to cite as being written for the Synod. He includes this letter in his *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell*, 12-15.

⁹³ Hanna, 93.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

The Presbytery, unwilling to allow Campbell to quietly fade away, continued to press for the Synod to complete its defrocking of the obstinate minister. At the Mount Pleasant meetinghouse on May 3, 1809, the minutes record the tenacity of the Presbytery in the matter:

A draught of remonstrance against certain decisions and steps of procedure of the Associate Synod in the case of Mr. Campbell having been produced by the Committee appointed to prepare was read and ordered sent to the Synod.⁹⁵

The next meeting of the Associate Synod began on May 17, 1809 in Philadelphia. The record reflects that one minister, a Mr. A. Bruce, was the only person from the Chartiers Presbytery listed on the roll as being in attendance.⁹⁶ Campbell appeared before the Synod later in the meeting, and on the third day of the session, the minutes state:

Read an extract from the minutes of the Presbytery of Chartiers, stating that in September last Mr. Th. Campbell had declined said Presbytery, this Synod and all courts subordinate thereto; and that they had suspended him from his office; and requesting the Synod's advice as to further procedure in his case. Appointed Messrs. Pringle, Goodwillie, Smith, Hamilton and Bruce a committee to consider and report on the advice to be given to the Presbytery of Chartiers on the case referred. On motion, Resolved that considering it appears from the minutes of the Presbytery of Chartiers that Mr. Campbell has declined as aforesaid, his name should be erased from the roll.⁹⁷

In a sentence that nearly escapes notice, hidden within the paragraph are these words:

“Mr. Campbell gave in a paper, entitled Declaration and Address to the Associate Synod;

⁹⁵ *Records of the Associate Presbytery of Chartiers*, May 3, 1809, 198. Hanna, 93.

⁹⁶ *Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod of North America*, Wednesday, 17 May, 1809, 200. It is noted in the minutes and in the margin on page 200 that Mr. A. Bruce was ordained. The minutes reflect that he was ordained as pastor “to the Associate congregations of Pittsburgh and Peters Creek on Dec. 14th ult.”

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, Friday, 19 May, 1809, 202-203.

and said paper was referred to the Committee now appointed.”⁹⁸ There are several reasons why this paper is probably not the document that later gained fame and acceptance within the American Restoration Movement. First, in the paper submitted to the Synod, Campbell repeated his decision to no longer be subject to the Synod or to the Presbytery of Chartiers. In the *Declaration and Address*, neither the Synod nor the Presbytery were specifically named. Second, according to Richardson, Campbell met with a group of like-minded individuals in Buffaloe on August 17, 1809. At that meeting they formed themselves into “a regular association, under the name of ‘The Christian Association of Washington.’”⁹⁹ During the remainder of the month of August, Campbell spent his time in study and in writing.

“The writing with which he was at this time engaged was a Declaration and Address, designed to set forth to the public at large, in a clear and definite manner, the object of the movement which he and those associated with him were engaged, it having been agreed by the committee appointed that such a publication was highly expedient.”¹⁰⁰

On September 7, 1809 the Christian Association of Washington ordered the document titled *Declaration and Address* to be printed.¹⁰¹

While the paper Campbell submitted to the Synod contained many of the principles embodied in his *Declaration and Address*, it most certainly was not the same document. Nonetheless, a paper entitled *Declaration and Address to the Associate Synod* was read

⁹⁸ Ibid., 203.

⁹⁹ Richardson, I, 241, 242.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 242.

during the afternoon session on May 19, 1809.¹⁰² The Synod then concerned itself with the matters at issue between the Synod and the Presbytery of Chartiers. The Synod dismissed the protests of the Presbytery on the grounds of arrogance and “other harsh expressions unfit to be used in any case, especially by an inferior court to a superior.”¹⁰³ On Tuesday, May 23, 1809, “A letter inclosing a Fifty Dollar note, refunding a like sum given him by the Synod in May, 1807, was received from Mr. Thomas Campbell. The clerk was directed to give him a receipt.”¹⁰⁴ It would be another year before the Presbytery of Chartiers completed their efforts to impoverish and defrock Campbell.¹⁰⁵ On April 18, 1810, the Mount Pleasant meetinghouse minutes read:

The Presbytery having agreed to enter upon the consideration of Mr. Campbell’s case, the minutes of Presbytery respecting his suspension were read, and also his answer sent in writing to the Presbytery’s last citation. After considering this answer and finding that it contained nothing to stop procedure in his case, the question was put, Inflict higher censure upon Mr. Campbell for the reasons of his suspension specified in the minutes of the Presbytery’s meeting at Burget’s town on September 14, 1808, and for contumacy in not appearing to answer the citations that have been sent him, or not? Which question was carried in the affirmative. After which, and a member having been employed in prayer, the question was first put, whether, or not, the censure that ought to be inflicted in this case be deposition and suspension from sealing ordinances? Which was carried in the affirmative. After which another question was put, viz. whether or not the censure thus determined is to be inflicted now? Which was also carried in the affirmative. Accordingly, the Presbytery did and hereby do depose Mr. Campbell from the office of the Holy Ministry, and from sealing ordinances for the reasons above mentioned. Agreed to send an abstract of this

¹⁰² *Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod of North America* Friday, May 19, 1809, 203.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Tuesday, May 23, 1809, 209.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Hanna, 96, 97.

deposition of Mr. Campbel to the Synod and to intimate it to the congregations under our inspection.¹⁰⁶

The Presbytery conducted further business as usual, set the time and place of the next meeting, and the sederunt was closed with a prayer. These minutes of the Chartiers Presbytery mark that body's final reference to Thomas Campbell.

Campbell's trial, accompanied by the subsequent animosity that festered within the Chartiers Presbytery, provides a framework for understanding his ultimate decision to leave the Presbyterian church. Historians evaluating the events have pointed out incidental causes for his departure from the ranks of the Presbyterians. Hatch voices his opinion that both Stone and Campbell "withdrew from the Presbyterian church when their orthodox colleagues began to clamp down on their freedom of inquiry concerning Presbyterian standards."¹⁰⁷ Ahlstrom states, "Campbell continued his ministry in western Pennsylvania; but after being censured by the Associate Synod of North America for laxity in admitting people to the Lord's Supper, he withdrew from it..."¹⁰⁸ From the Christian Church segment of the Restoration Movement, historian Harold Ford states, "Thomas Campbell was severely censored [*sic*] by his Presbytery for inviting Presbyterians other than Seceders to commune with the latter."¹⁰⁹ Disciples of Christ historian David E. Harrell says, "[Campbell's] desire for unity led him to admit nonmembers of the church to communion services and this

¹⁰⁶ *Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod of North America*, April 18, 1810, 206.

¹⁰⁷ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 73.

¹⁰⁸ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972.), 447.

¹⁰⁹ Harold W. Ford, *A History of the Restoration Plea* (Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1952), 11.

brought him into immediate conflict with the church authorities. In 1808 he was suspended by the Synod and the next year he and his followers formed the Christian Association....”¹¹⁰ Hiram J. Lester, who was Professor of Religious studies at Bethany College, West Virginia, said of Campbell, “. . . he was tried and convicted of heresy, suspended from the ministry, and ‘rebuked and admonished’ by the national synod.”¹¹¹ Lester stops short of relating how, following the rebuke and admonishment and during the same session of the Synod, Campbell was reinstated by the National Synod, assigned church appointments to Anti-Burgher congregations in the vicinity of Philadelphia for that summer, and instructed to return to the Chartiers Presbytery, where he was to resume his duties with Synod endorsement.¹¹² Leonard Allen and Richard Hughes, both church historians from the Church of Christ tradition, offer this observation:

The deep divisions among Christians entered his [Thomas Campbell’s] own life when he sought to share communion with Presbyterians in southwest Pennsylvania who did not belong to his rigidly orthodox Presbyterian sect – the Old Light, Anti-Burgher, Seceder Presbyterian Church. For this transgression, the Pittsburgh Synod summarily dismissed Campbell from his preaching appointments.¹¹³

These statements by esteemed historians, some of whom represent the American Restoration Movement, are indicative of the prevailing reasons given for Campbell’s departure from Presbyterianism and point out the need for future historians on the subject to examine more

¹¹⁰ David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1865* (Nashville, Tennessee: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966), 6.

¹¹¹ Hiram J. Lester, “A Dream Still Lives,” *The Disciple*, XII, 1 (January, 1985): 12-14.

¹¹² *Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod of North America*, Tuesday, May 27, 1808, 199.

¹¹³ C. Leonard Allen and Richard T. Hughes, *Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ* (Abilene, Texas: ACU Press, 1988), 80.

closely the details of Campbell's trial and the events surrounding it. Kershner states the *nearly* accurate, yet often ignored truth of the matter:

Thomas Campbell accepted the decision of the Synod in good faith notwithstanding its insinuation of hypocrisy and continued his work with the Presbytery of Chartiers until further actions of his opponents in the church made it impossible for him to remain in the Presbyterian communion.¹¹⁴

It merits noting that although he severed his ties with the Seceders in 1809 in the wake of his trial, Thomas Campbell's break with Presbyterianism was not complete until the following year. In the summer of 1810, not desiring to be guilty of creating another sect within the already fractured body of Christianity, Campbell applied for membership in the Pittsburgh Synod of the Presbyterian Church. The non-Seceder Pittsburgh Synod, subordinate to the General Synod in Scotland and organized by that body in 1802, had a congregation in Washington, Pennsylvania and met there for the Synod session in October, 1810. Campbell, while possessing views that were out of harmony with the Presbyterian denomination, nonetheless was willing to work within the ecclesiastical structure of the church. His application was unanimously – and unceremoniously – rejected by the non-Seceder Presbyterians.¹¹⁵ Campbell's willingness to approach the Pittsburgh Synod is revealing. First, it discloses a strong desire on his part for Christian and ministerial communion within the familiar structure of his denomination. Second, it indicates that he

¹¹⁴ Frederick D. Kershner, *The Christian Union Overture, An Interpretation of the Declaration and Address of Thomas Campbell* (St. Louis, Missouri: The Bethany Press, 1923), 20. The minutes of the Chartiers Presbytery indicate that it was in fact the Presbytery that opposed him. In that the Presbytery did not consider him a member and refused to assign him any preaching appointments following the Synod's decision of May, 1808, we would argue that it is more accurate to claim that Campbell *attempted* to continue his work with the Chartiers Presbytery.

¹¹⁵ McAllister, 143, 144.

had not reached a conclusion regarding a definitive system of doctrines or polity.¹¹⁶ The 1810 rejection by the Pittsburgh Synod marks the final connection of Thomas Campbell with Presbyterianism – in any of its forms.

Campbell's 'Heresy Trial': Church Tradition versus Historical Reality

There is another matter regarding Thomas Campbell's trial that merits discussion and a correction of the historical record. Many historians, biographers, and students of the nineteenth-century Restoration Movement have been quick to use the term 'heresy' in describing the charges that were brought against Campbell by the Anti-Burgher Presbytery and Synod. However, one will search in vain for any reference to 'heresy' within the trial records of either the Presbytery or the Synod. The term 'heresy' appears nowhere in the minutes of the Chartiers Presbytery nor in the minutes of the Associate Synod of North America. Unfortunately, several historians of the Stone-Campbell Movement have placed an interpretation on the event of the trial that is not supported by the historical documents. In doing so, they have erroneously applied the term 'heresy' to what is consistently referred to in the primary documents as a trial for 'libel.' The trial was not about heresy but, in Presbyterian terminology, one of libel; or, as the case against Thomas Campbell reads, 'libels.' The term, very different from 'heresy,' referred to individuals (often ministers or other teachers) who were spoken against by others, for teachings or actions that were deemed unorthodox or inappropriate.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 144.

Early in the history of the Anti-Burgher Associate Synod, the censure of libel was applied by those who believed the swearing of the religious statement in the burgh oath was sinful and contrary to the Secession testimony. The Anti-Burgher Synod met in Edinburgh in August, 1747 and proceeded to “serve the censure of libel upon their Burgher brethren.”¹¹⁷ In the proceedings, the Burgher ministers who had been “libeled” did not appear before the bar of their Synod; however, they were deposed. As Seceder congregations and sessions were broken apart, the division of the Synod created confusion within the entire Associate Church.¹¹⁸

Nor were such censures of libel restricted to the Seceders in the Scottish Synod. The proceedings of the Associate Synod of North America – a branch of the Associate Church under the authority of the Scottish Synod – reveal the commonly accepted practice of bringing charges of libel against Associate ministers. At the 1802 annual meeting of the Synod in Philadelphia, a Mr. J. Smith is charged with having acted wrongly in being “inattentive in keeping appointments” and a libel is brought against him. The case was dismissed when it was determined that the actions of the libelers were based upon their design to rid themselves of Mr. Smith and not upon any sinfulness on his part.¹¹⁹

The action of issuing charges and complaints to the Synod did not always find the minister being libeled. The process sometimes involved the minister as the libeler. In 1803

¹¹⁷ Rev. Basil G. McBee, and Rev. Reid W. Steward. *History of the Associate Presbyterian Church of North America, Together with a Manual of the Associate Presbyterian Church* (Apollo, PA: Closson Press, 1983), 16.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Elizabeth J. Fisher, “Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod of North America, Begun in the year of our Lord 1801 and Continued till 1809,” Transcribed by Fisher, Washington, Iowa, n.d. (photocopy)

Robert Laing – one of the ministers of the Chartiers Presbytery – appeared before the Associate Synod with articles of complaint against the Presbytery. Hearing the complaint and the reply made by the Presbytery, the Synod made its ruling.¹²⁰ In 1804 Laing petitioned the Synod to review the conduct of the Chartiers Presbytery in its action of bringing “a libel against him in August of last year.”¹²¹ The practice of presbyteries and ministers issuing libels before the Synod was evidently deeply rooted, and according to Synod and Presbytery minutes, the Chartiers Presbytery had its share of such controversies.

In keeping with Presbyterian rhetoric, Thomas Campbell was not accused of heresy in the charges preferred against him by the Presbytery. He was accused (libeled) by others of public teachings that were contrary to the accepted doctrines of the Presbyterian sect to which he belonged and which he represented in his ministrations. Eventually, however, the term ‘heresy’ was introduced and various writers began using it in its various forms in describing the charges made against Campbell. By the middle of the twentieth century, ‘heresy’ had become the commonly accepted – although grossly inaccurate – expression used in defining Campbell’s trial.

As early as 1894, B.B. Tyler, in the Table of Contents outlining his *History of the Disciples of Christ*, refers to Chapter Five as “The Heresy Trial.”¹²² This early use of the term ‘heresy’ would be repeated by historians of the American Restoration Movement and

p. 29. Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 40-41.

¹²¹ Ibid., 59.

¹²² B.B. Tyler, *A History of the Disciples of Christ* (New York: Christian Literature, 1894. Reprints, Louisville, KY: Guide, 1895; Joplin, MO: College Press), iii.

by several noted Campbell biographers. In the first – and up to now only – examination of Campbell’s trial as represented by the actual minutes of the proceedings conducted by the Chartiers Presbytery and the Associate Synod of North America, William Herbert Hanna gave an orderly and detailed account of the proceedings. He is also the first historian to describe the trial of Thomas Campbell as a heresy trial, referring to it as, “the first detailed heresy trial in the United States.”¹²³ Hanna also uses the word ‘heresy’ in two of his chapter titles.¹²⁴

Undoubtedly influenced by Hanna, other church historians and biographers of Thomas Campbell have placed the same “spin” on the trial. Unfortunately, many scholars and other researchers have misread the evidence of the trial and, by referring to the trial as a heresy trial, have misled readers about the nature of the accusations against Thomas Campbell. Regarding the accusations leveled at Campbell, in 1948 W.E. Garrison and A.T. DeGroot cite Hanna and state Campbell was accused of “heretical teaching.”¹²⁵ In 1954 Lester McAllister stated, “The story of this heresy circulated rapidly....”¹²⁶ Twenty years later McAllister and Tucker spoke of Campbell offering the Lord’s Supper at Cannamaugh and proposing that “all persons present were to be free to partake of the elements when they

¹²³ *Minutes of the Associate Synod of North America*, 32.

¹²⁴ Hanna, 9. See Chapter II, “Heretical Teachings Discovered,” and Chapter III, “Presbytery Upholds Heresy Libel.”

¹²⁵ W. E. Garrison and A. T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ, A History* (St. Louis, MO: Christian Board of Publication, 1948), 130.

¹²⁶ McAllister, 74.

were offered, regardless of presbyterial connection.”¹²⁷ They continue by stating, “The story of this heresy circulated rapidly.”¹²⁸ Jay Smith, relying upon McAllister, added his voice to that of previous historians in 1961 by affirming, “Many of the charges of heresy brought against him are almost *verbatim* statements of affirmation in the Declaration and Address.”¹²⁹ The next year James DeForest Murch, citing Hanna and quoting McAllister, states, “A Seceder minister, William Wilson, who accompanied him on his trip, reported this heresy.”¹³⁰ Hiram J. Lester, similarly spoke of “...the heresy trial.”¹³¹

It should be clearly noted that neither Alexander Campbell (*Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell*, 1861) nor Robert Richardson (*Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1897) apply the term ‘heresy’ when writing of the elder Campbell’s trial or of the accusations that were made about him. Both biographers, however, are familiar with the word, ‘heresy’ and employ the term liberally in reference to the charges that were leveled against Alexander Campbell by the Redstone Baptist Association. As early as 1826, Alexander Campbell wrote in *The Christian Baptist* (1823-1830) that he had been the target of heresy charges and that

¹²⁷ Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker. *Journey in Faith, A History of the Christian Church - Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1975), 107.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Jay Smith, “Notes on Thomas Campbell’s Declaration and Address, *Restoration Quarterly* V, 3, (1961, Abilene, TX, accessed July 6, 2007) available from http://acu.edu/sponsored/restoration_quarterly/archives/1960s/vol_5_no_3_contents/index.html.

¹³⁰ James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing Company, 1962), 39.

¹³¹ Lester, “A Dream Still Lives,” 12.

his message had been referred to as a “new heresy.”¹³² During the eight-year period that *The Christian Baptist* was published, the word ‘heresy’ appears thirty-three times (including one index reference) within its pages. Four of the references apply to Alexander Campbell and the accusations made about him. None of the references refer to Thomas Campbell. Richardson makes use of the term a total of eight times in *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* (1897), naming Alexander as the subject three times. Each time Richardson uses the term, it is in reference to the charges of heresy that were made against Alexander Campbell by the Redstone Baptist Association.¹³³

It should be remembered that the Seceder Presbyterians were dedicated to doctrinal precision. That doctrinal exactitude was communicated by an emphasis upon accurate language and terminology. Since the Presbytery and Synod did not use the word ‘heresy’ in the trial of Thomas Campbell, it may be correctly concluded that he was not accused of any heretical teachings – traditional views notwithstanding. The misleading and erroneous interpretations regarding the nature of the accusations against Thomas Campbell have unfortunately propagated a church tradition that does not reflect the historical reality. This meticulous examination of primary documents and early secondary sources corrects the historical record.

Campbell’s departure from the Presbyterian Church came exceedingly slowly and only as a result of the lingering animosity on the part of the ones who had initiated his trial.

¹³² Alexander Campbell, *The Christian Baptist* 4, no. 2 (September 7, 1826): 32. See also *The Christian Baptist* 6, no. 4 (November 3, 1828): 97 and Vol. 7, no. 7 (February 1, 1830) 168-69; Vol. 7 no. 11 (June 7, 1830): 271-72.

¹³³ Richardson, I, 479-478, 489, Vol. II, 68.

Had he not encountered such malignant opposition from his religious peers and superiors, would he have been content to continue his ministry among them? Had he not been forced to endure the indignation of the trial, would he have felt compelled to put into writing his views contained in the *Declaration and Address*? Had the members of the Presbytery not maligned him with such arrogant disdain, would he still have felt conscience-bound to withdraw from the Synod and Presbytery? Had he been accepted by the Pittsburgh Synod into the non-Seceder branch, what would have become of the Christian Association of Washington? The answers to these questions cannot be known with absolute certainty. What is known is this: as a minister in Ireland, Campbell held the same views that he held in America, and he argued them publicly; yet he never spoke of withdrawing from the Presbytery. Even when faced with the restrictions that were placed upon him by the Irish Synod, Campbell made no mention of leaving the Presbyterian Church. While in the company of Independents in northern Ireland, he steadfastly remained a Seceder Presbyterian. In America, when the Associate Synod rebuked and admonished him, he agreed to receive their discipline, accept their authority, and resume preaching in their churches. Campbell was also willing to return to preaching in the churches of the Chartiers Presbytery, had the Presbytery been willing to assign churches to him.

Campbell's leaving was tantamount to being forced out by the religious leaders of the Chartiers Presbytery who could not see beyond the self-imposed limits of their own minuscule spiritual fiefdoms and who vehemently opposed any one who did. Campbell's ability to see salvation in religious groups other than his small sect developed while he was still in Ireland. He fervently desired to unite believers within common bonds of faith based

upon the teachings of Scripture. However, after the humiliating experience of the trial and the Presbytery's intractable determination to exclude him in spite of the declarations of the Synod, Campbell was convinced he had no other option. He no longer considered himself aligned with his Seceder brethren. It was only then that Campbell formed the Christian Association of Washington and wrote the *Declaration and Address*. Without a doubt, the trial of Thomas Campbell was a monumental event in Restoration history. It marks the definitive experience that set in motion a series of events which eventually resulted in the Campbell branch of the American Restoration Movement, a movement based upon the principles contained in the *Declaration and Address* and destined to become not only "that most American of denominations,"¹³⁴ but indeed "the largest religious body of American origin."¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Hatch, 220.

¹³⁵ Batton, 136.

CHAPTER 5

THE DECLARATION AND ADDRESS: IRISH ROOTS AND TRANSATLANTIC HERITAGE

The desire for Christian union was conceived in the breast of Thomas Campbell before he left Ireland. It was in the New World that it was given birth.

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When the nineteenth century opened, there were no fewer than four different bodies of Seceders in Ulster, each adhering to its own testimony, yet all professing to adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith. Dismayed by the religious divisions he observed, Thomas Campbell was a proponent for unifying the fractured church. Campbell's plea for unity among Christians, as expressed in his 1809 *Declaration and Address*, did not originate in western Pennsylvania. Prior to emigrating from Ulster, he had worked within an environment that was afflicted with religious animosity, bitter sectarian strife, and political discord.

As an Anti-Burgher Seceder minister in Ireland, Campbell tried to unite the Burgher and Anti-Burgher factions within the Seceder denomination of Presbyterianism.² In 1804 he prepared a report with propositions for union between the two factions of Burghers and Anti-Burghers and presented the propositions before the Synod at Belfast. In that address,

¹ Leslie W. Morgan, "Thomas Campbell and the Principles He Promulgated," *One Hundredth Anniversary of the Disciples of Christ, Pittsburgh, October 11 – 19, 1909* W. R. Warren, ed. *Centennial Convention Report* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1910), 362-66. (Willett's address was delivered at Carnegie Hall, Saturday Morning, October 16, 1909).

² Campbell, *Memoirs*, 9

Campbell argued for union between the Burgher and the Anti-Burgher groups saying, “There exists no real difference between them in doctrine, worship, discipline, or government.”³ He spoke of “a plan of union between the two bodies,” stressing, “This, our unhappy division, appeared to us [the Committee of Consultants meeting at Richhill to discuss a plan to restore unity within the Seceder denomination] an evil of no little magnitude.”⁴ Campbell set forth these reasons why the schism within the Presbyterian body should be healed:

1. For has it not exposed the zealous contenders for a reformation, on both sides, to the contempt and jeer of the scorers, and filled the mouths of scoffers with reproach and obloquy?
2. Has it not been fraught with the awful consequence of distracting, disturbing, and dividing the flock of the Lord's heritage, and of sowing discord among the brethren?
3. Has it not been productive of a party spirit, both among ministers and people, stirring up and promoting an unhappy disposition of evasion and reprisals upon the boundaries of their respective communities?
4. Has it not had an awful tendency to relax discipline, or render it abortive, by opening a door of escape to the delinquent, or by its dissuasive influence upon ministers and sessions, for fear of losing the subject, in case he should take offense?
5. Has it not had a very embarrassing tendency with respect to many of the serious and well-meaning, when they, seeing our division, upon inquiry, find that the subject-matter of our difference is not to be found either in the Old or New Testament?⁵

He then made a statement of remarkable clarity that led to a *seemingly* logical conclusion:

1. [F]inding no existing difference either in faith or practice between the two bodies of Seceders in this kingdom, we could not reasonably affirm that there was any

³ Ibid., 210. See Appendix A, “Address to the Synod of Ireland, 1804”.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 211.

existing cause of division; and that, of course, no manner of necessity for continuing in a state of actual separation where there was no actual existing cause;

2. [M]ore especially as that branch of the secession Church in this kingdom known by the name of Burghers exists in an independent and separate capacity from those of the same denomination in Scotland, and so, of course, no longer influenced by their decisions or administrations.⁶

Upon these grounds Campbell reasoned the lamentable division was “at best, a distinction without any real difference.”⁷ Campbell concluded his address to the Synod with five propositions from the committee for which he was spokesman:

PROPOSITION 1. That it is the opinion of this Committee that a union of both denominations of Seceders in this kingdom would, through the Divine blessing, contribute much to the edification of the Church, and to the credit of religion.

PROPOSITION 2. That while we recollect with sorrow the melancholy consequences of our unhappy divisions, which have alienated affections on both sides, and tended rather to exaggerate our mutual infirmities than to heal and cover them, being heartily desirous that these evils may proceed no further, we are of opinion that, in existing circumstances, it is our incumbent duty to avoid all animadversions, or all direct or indirect criminations of either party, with regard to the past ground of differences, which might tend rather to gender strife than to edify one another in love.

PROPOSITION 3. That the circumstances in which the Lord has placed the secession Church in this kingdom do not render a judicial decision concerning oaths, disputed in Scotland, a necessary part of testimony-bearing in this land.

PROPOSITION 4. That seeing both denominations of Seceders in Ireland are of one sentiment in the grand abstract or covenanted system of doctrine, worship, discipline, and government contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, Presbyterian Form of Church Government, and Directory for Worship; and seeing that the judicial decision about oaths in Scotland can be no actual subject of testimony-bearing here, much less a term of communion among us; therefore, it appears that there is nothing to prevent the two bodies of Seceders in this land to unite in a bond of a common testimony adapted to their local situation.

⁶ Ibid., 211-212.

⁷ Ibid., 212.

PROPOSITION 5. That such a testimony should be emitted and adapted to our circumstances, as a branch of the secession Church in this part of the United Kingdom, as would, at the same time, preserve every article in the original testimony emitted by the Associate Presbytery, in so far as said articles may appear in any wise effective of the grand object of testimony-bearing among us.⁸

The closing sentence of Proposition 4 summed up the committee's urgent recommendation: "[I]t appears that there is nothing to prevent the two bodies of Seceders in this land to unite in a bond of a common testimony adapted to their local situation."⁹ On one hand, Campbell possessed strong, personal views regarding inherent evils of the unavoidable and undeniable consequences of religious division. On the other, he held just as fervently to the conviction that Christians living and worshipping together in unity was the "genius and spirit of the Christian religion."¹⁰

Campbell's endeavors in 1804, which were directed at reconciling the Burgher and Anti-Burgher bodies of the Seceder Presbyterians, indicate his intense desire for unity. The fact that he was selected by his fellows to deliver the address to the Synod is testimony of the esteem and respect he enjoyed. In 1805 representatives from the two factions met and expressed their unanimous desire for union. However, in 1806 the General Associate Synod of Scotland dissented, and the reunification proposal failed. A few year later, a student in the University of Glasgow, who had attended the General Assembly and had heard the elder Campbell argue for unity between the Burghers and the Anti-Burghers, spoke to Alexander

⁸ Ibid., 213-214.

⁹ Ibid., 213.

¹⁰ Ibid., 211.

Campbell regarding the exchange. “In my opinion,” the student offered, “while he clearly out argued them, they outvoted him.”¹¹

In spite of this public rejection and his disagreement with the Synod, unlike some of the other Presbyterian ministers in the vicinity of Richhill (e.g., Reverends John Gibson and Alexander Carson, each of whom became Independents), Campbell determined to remain in the Market Hill Presbytery and the Synod of Belfast. This commitment would evaporate, however, following his trial before the Chartiers Presbytery and the Associate Synod of North America. In its place would be revealed an unwavering commitment to the authority of the Scriptures – a commitment that was nurtured and cultivated during his years at Ahorey and his association with Richhill. Campbell had no way of understanding the extent of his influence for Christian unity, nor could he know of the height and breadth of praise that would be lavished upon him during the twentieth century as a result of his labors. Respecting his unceasing determination to work for the unity of Christians, the words of H. L. Willett are as poignant today as they were when they fell from his lips one Saturday morning in the autumn of 1909: “One feels like paraphrasing the cry of Wordsworth, in the words, ‘Campbell, thou should'st be living at this hour. The world hath need of thee.’”¹²

As previously noted, in 1806 Campbell was rebuffed by the General Associate Synod in Scotland for his efforts at reconciling the schism that had fractured the Seceders into

¹¹ Ibid., 9.

¹² H.L. Willett, “Thomas Campbell and the Principles He Promulgated” *One Hundredth Anniversary of the Disciples of Christ, Pittsburgh, October 11 – 19, 1909* W. R. Warren, ed. *Centennial Convention Report* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1910), 358.

Burgher and Anti-Burgher factions.¹³ The Synod, “hearing of the incipient movements in reference to union, took occasion to express their dissent in advance of any application, and the measure consequently failed for the time being.”¹⁴ Before the decade’s close, Campbell would find the realities of religious dogmatism among the Presbyterian establishment in America to be even more rigid and intolerant than that which he experienced at home in Ireland. In Ireland, Campbell and his notions of uniting two factions were rejected by the Synod. In America, his efforts to unify Presbyterians on the western frontier would be grounds for the Chartiers Presbytery to bring charges of libel against him.

In 1800 the Parliament in Dublin passed the Act of Union, and Ireland, like Scotland, became subject to Westminster. As in Scotland, however, the kingdom was far from being united. Of the 658 members of the House of Commons, only 100 represented Irish constituencies. The Irish Catholics called for full emancipation. The Irish Presbyterians resented paying rents to English landowners, and Irish Catholics and Presbyterians alike objected to the tithes collected by the state church.¹⁵ Living and ministering within the often violent vortex of social, political, and religious turmoil that was Ulster during the closing years of the eighteenth century exacted a physical toll upon Campbell. Bodily fatigues, as well as emotional strain are evidenced in a portion of Thomas Campbell’s diary dated from June 1 to July 4, 1800. In writing the *Memoirs* of his father, Alexander stated,

¹³ McAllister, 52 -56.

¹⁴ Richardson, I, 56, 57.

¹⁵ T. W. Moody and F. X. Martin, *The Course of Irish History*, “The Age of Daniel O’Connell, 1800 - 1847” (Lanham, MD: Roberts Rinehart, 2001), 204, 205.

That our readers may form their own judgment of the character and spirit of Father Campbell, we present to them a specimen of his diary, which he kept for some period of his early life in the Christian ministry. This diary, now over sixty years old, reveals much of the mind and the character of its subject and author in one personality.¹⁶

Although spanning a very brief time period, a disposition of melancholy is evident and may account for his physician's advice that Campbell take "a sea voyage as the most promising, if not the only restorative of his enervated system."¹⁷ Perhaps it was these personality attributes to which Rev. James B. Scouller referred in 1881. In his article appearing in *The United Presbyterian* dated Thursday, August 25, 1881, Scouller wrote, "This erratic minister has been so overshadowed by his able and distinguished son that he does not get his true place in history."¹⁸

By the spring of 1807, Campbell heeded the advice and determined to sail for America, assuring his family that if he were pleased by his stay in America, he would send for them; if not, he would return to Ireland.¹⁹ On April 8, 1807, the *Brutus* sailed from Londonderry, bound for Philadelphia. As the vessel rounded Malin-Head, the northernmost tip of Ireland, "Thomas Campbell gazed for the last time upon his native shores as they faded from his sight in the dim mists of the eastern sky."²⁰ The Campbell family remained in

¹⁶ Campbell, *Memoirs*, 194.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁸ Rev. Jas. B. Scouller, D.D. *The United Presbyterian*, Pittsburgh, Thursday, August 25, 1881, Volume XXXIX, Number 34, Page 579-80.

¹⁹ Richardson, I, 78,79.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 81. Historians have echoed Richardson's claim that a Miss Hannah Acheson was accompanied to America by Thomas Campbell. However, the examination of the list of passengers who sailed on the *Brutus* and arrived in Philadelphia between 1800 – 1819 reveals no Hannah Acheson on board for any of those voyages. See Appendix C, "Passengers Arriving at Port of Philadelphia May 15, 1807 on the *Brutus*."

Ireland, awaiting either the return of their husband and father or his summons for them to join him in America.

As Campbell traveled to his preaching appointments among the Anti-Burghers within the Seceder denomination in western Pennsylvania, he was keenly aware of the divisions that existed among his Presbyterian brethren. It evidently was a division that the hierarchy of the Associate Synod of North America was committed to maintaining, for the Associate Synod prohibited “‘occasional communion,’ or communion with other bodies of Christians.”²¹ The Presbytery was very precise in setting the prerequisites for acceptance within the Seceder body: “That the profession of faith required by those who desire communion with us shall be an adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Form of Presbyterial Church Government, and Directory for the Public Worship of God.”²²

On the extremities of the Pennsylvania border, the realities of the frontier had created a motley blend of settlers from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. For most of them, church rules that had originated from disputes within uniquely European contexts had little, if any, relevancy in the New World. On the American frontier, the staunch orthodoxies of the Old World religions were often viewed as being either impractical or irrelevant. Yet in the

Hanna Acheson was reunited with her brothers at some point, as court records of Washington County, Pennsylvania indicate her part in the filing of certain legal instruments dated October 16, 1809.

²¹ McAlister, 72.

²² Acts of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania concerning the admission of church members to communion. Passed at Philadelphia, April 28, 1791. Church Communion, Art. II, 112-116, 169. See *Declaration and Testimony for the Doctrine and Order of the Church of Christ and Against the Errors of the Present Time, Acts of the Associate Presbytery Approving the Declaration and Testimony*, Pequea, Pennsylvania August 25, 1784.

Associate Synod, the institutional structure of Seceder church authority did not recognize the realities of the frontier.

After the Erskine-led secession from the Established Church in 1733, the Seceders in Scotland and Ireland gained a reputation for being narrow-minded hair-splitters. The subdivision of the denomination into Burghers and Anti-Burghers, the New Light versus Old Light divisions within each faction, and the inflexible practice of exclusionism in regard to all who were other-minded reinforced that opinion in the minds of many. The commitment to religious rigidity apparently followed the Seceders across the Atlantic, for in America they were seen as the ultra-conservative Scottish Secession Church.²³ Wesley Walters, in his analysis of the Presbytery of Chartiers, concluded, “it is apparent on nearly every page of the minutes that doctrine played a major part in the life of the Chartiers Presbytery.”²⁴ In America, as in the British Isles, the Seceder hierarchy always seemed ready to take offence with people who were not in agreement with them.

Because Campbell believed Christian unity is God’s desire and is exemplified by the New Testament writers, it was inevitable that he would endeavor to apply principles he had advocated in the Old World to the frontier of the New World. It is ironic that in America – a bastion of liberty and freedom – the obdurate Presbyterian chains of religious exclusionism were harsher than those similar branches in the monarchical United Kingdom. Regarding this

²³ See Leonard J. Trinterud, *The Forming of an American Tradition: A Re-examination of Colonial Presbyterianism* (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for the Libraries Press, 1949), 207, 263. For an observation from the perspective of an individual Scotsman, see John Ramsay, “Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century,” *Scottish Diaries and Memoirs, 1746 – 1843*, J.G. Fyfe, ed. (Stirling, Scotland: The Observer Press, 1942), 163.

²⁴ Wesley P. Walters, “The Early Years of Chartiers Presbytery” (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1952, photocopied), 8.

ambiguity, McAlister commented, “The church in the western wilderness became even more exclusive and intolerant than the church in either Ireland or Scotland.”²⁵

Richardson sheds light on Campbell’s sentiments regarding unity among Christians and on the incident leading up to the charges of libel that would later be presented at the trial:

Mr. Campbell's sympathies were strongly aroused in regard to the destitute condition of *some in the vicinity who belonged to other branches of the Presbyterian family, and who had not, for a long time, had an opportunity of partaking of the Lord's Supper, and he felt it his duty, in the preparation sermon, to lament the existing divisions, and to suggest that all his pious hearers, who felt so disposed and duly prepared, should, without respect to party differences, enjoy the benefits of the communion season then providentially afforded them* [emphasis mine]. Mr. Wilson did not, at the time, publicly oppose these overtures, but finding, from these proceedings and from his conversations and discussions with Mr. Campbell, that the latter had but little respect for the division walls which the different parties had built up with so much pains [*sic*], his sectarian prejudices became fully aroused. He felt it his duty, therefore, at the next meeting of the Presbytery, to lay the case before it in the usual form of "libel," containing various formal and specified charges, the chief of which were that Mr. Campbell had failed to inculcate strict adherence to the Church standard and usages, and had even expressed his disapproval of some things in said standard and of the uses made of them.²⁶

Several conclusions may be drawn from this account. First, Campbell invited those in his vicinity who were members of other branches of the Presbyterian family to participate in the Lord’s Supper with him. Second, some people in the vicinity had not had the opportunity to partake of the Lord’s Supper for a long time. Third, in his sermon Campbell lamented the divisions that existed in the Presbyterian churches. Fourth, he invited all in attendance who wished to and felt prepared to “enjoy the benefits of the communion season.” Finally,

²⁵ McAlister, 72.

²⁶ Richardson, I, 224.

Campbell felt anyone in attendance should be allowed to partake “without respect to the party differences.”²⁷

A striking similarity exists between this event and Campbell’s 1804 appeal to the Synod of Ireland. Campbell’s words to the Associate Synod also give an accurate description of the divisions plaguing members residing in western Pennsylvania in 1807:

Has it [the party division] not been fraught with the awful consequence of distracting, disturbing, and dividing the flock of the Lord’s heritage, and of sowing discord among brethren? Has it not been productive of a party spirit, both among ministers and people...?²⁸

With Ulster factionalism as a backdrop, Campbell’s 1809 *Declaration and Address* was an “early manifesto of American Restorationism.”²⁹ In its original printed form, the document was a pamphlet of fifty-six pages consisting of three parts. The *Declaration*, printed on three pages, briefly states the reasons for the organization, its core principles, and its purposes. Concepts such as the right of the individual to exercise private judgment and the responsibility to extend to others those same prerogatives are evident in the introduction to the *Declaration and Address*. Within his words there is a reminder of the address to the Associate Synod of Ireland and the echo of his more recent statement to the Associate Synod of North America.

First, the right of private judgment is claimed:

From the series of events which have taken place in the Churches for many years past, especially in this Western country, as well as from what we

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Campbell, *Memoirs*, 211.

²⁹ Noll, *America’s God*, 380.

know in general of the present state of things in the Christian world, we are persuaded that it is high time for us not only to think, but also to act, for ourselves; to see with our own eyes, and to take all our measures directly and immediately from the Divine standard.

Second, the exclusive authority of the Word of God is declared:

We are also of opinion that as the Divine word is equally binding upon all, so all lie under an equal obligation to be bound by it, and it alone; and not by any human interpretation of it; and that, therefore, no man has a right to judge his brother, except in so far as he manifestly violates the express letter of the law. To this alone we feel ourselves Divinely bound to be conformed, as by this alone we must be judged. We are also persuaded that as no man can be judged for his brother, so no man can judge for his brother; every man must be allowed to judge for himself, as every man must bear his own judgment – must give account of himself to God.

Third, the inherent evil of religious strife and division is expressed:

Moreover, being well aware, from sad experience, of the heinous nature and pernicious tendency of religious controversy among Christians; tired and sick of the bitter jarrings and janglings of a party spirit, we would desire to be at rest; and, were it possible, we would also desire to adopt and recommend such measures as would give rest to our brethren throughout all the Churches: as would restore unity, peace, and purity to the whole Church of God.

Fourth, the means to attain Christian unity is proposed:

This desirable rest, however, we utterly despair either to find for ourselves, or to be able to recommend to our brethren, by continuing amid the diversity and rancor of party contentions, the veering uncertainty and clashings of human opinions: nor, indeed, can we reasonably expect to find it anywhere but in Christ and his simple word, which is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Our desire, therefore, for ourselves and our brethren would be, that, rejecting human opinions and the inventions of men as of any authority, or as having any place in the Church of God, we might forever cease from further contentions about such things; returning to and holding fast by the original standard; taking the Divine word alone for our rule; the Holy Spirit for our teacher and guide, to lead us into all truth; and Christ alone, as exhibited in the word, for our salvation; that, by so doing, we may

be at peace among ourselves, follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.³⁰

The curse of religious divisions, the exclusive authority of the Scriptures, and the individual responsibilities inherently possessed by all were recurring themes in the birth and expansion of the American Restoration Movement. The method of attaining a restoration of Christianity, as given to the world by Christ and his apostles, was clearly set forth, and it gave definition to the motto: *Speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent.*

In his *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell*, Alexander Campbell included a version of the *Declaration and Address* with this note regarding the *Declaration* section:

This "Declaration and Address" was not the constitution of any Church existing then or now, but a "Declaration" of a purpose to institute a society of "Voluntary Advocates for Church Reformation." Its sole purpose was to promote "simple Evangelical Christianity," and for this end resolved to countenance and support such ministers, and such only, as exhibited a manifest conformity to the original standard, in conversation, doctrine, zeal, and diligence; such as practiced that simple, original form of Christianity expressly exhibited upon the sacred page; without inculcating anything of human authority, of private opinion, or of inventions of men, as having any place in the constitution, faith, or worship of the Christian Church; or anything as matter of Christian faith or duty for which there cannot be expressly produced a "*Thus saith the Lord, either in express terms, or by approved precedent.*"³¹

Realizing the enormous ability of the printing press for the transmission and circulation of ideas, Campbell's Christian Association of Washington commissioned the printing of the *Declaration and Address*. Eventually the ideals for unity found within the document were being discussed and applied on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

³⁰ Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address*, 3. See also McAllister, 107-108; Kershner, 32-33.

³¹ Campbell, *Memoirs*, 25-26.

Transatlantic awareness of religious ideas and occurrences was not unique to the nineteenth century. During the ‘Awakening’ of the mid-eighteenth century, printed information swept across denominational lines, and newspapers and journals heralded the revival news. Through the information that was often submitted in the form of letters, readers quickly became acquainted with the preachers’ names. News, literature, and personal messages did not simply convey information to readers; they communicated “standards by which men and events were judged.”³² This communication of religious ideas initially grew out of the correspondence between ministers, who frequently saw themselves as “co-workers and ‘friends in God.’”³³ Inspired by the results of their fellow ministers, many clerics examined their own spirituality and began to experiment with sermon styles and preaching methods, in efforts to bring new souls to Christ.³⁴ There is evidence to suggest that revival correspondence not only communicated practical information regarding preachers’ schedules, but also helped in shaping attitudes by discussing revival topics. In this way, the international letters were useful in bringing the unconverted into an awareness of the message of salvation.³⁵ The transatlantic network enabled the exchange of devotional literature, as well as the discussion of relevant theological questions. During the middle decades of the eighteenth century, the revivalists created a web of exchange linking a community of faith that transcended not only geographical boundaries, but frequently cut

³² Clive and Bailyn, “England’s Cultural Provinces: Scotland and America,” 209.

³³ O’Brien, “A Transatlantic Community of Saints,” 818.

³⁴ Marilyn Westerkamp, “Division, Dissention, and Compromise: The Presbyterian Church during the Great Awakening,” *Journal of Presbyterian History*, 78, 1 (Spring 2000): 3.

³⁵ O’Brien, 820.

across theological divisions as well.³⁶ This method of exchange would be duplicated and expanded upon by Restorationists on both sides of the Atlantic during the opening decades of the nineteenth century.

Religious freedom, expressed in ‘freedom of the press’ and ‘freedom of speech,’ reflected the conviction that conscience was, as Madison put it, the most sacred of all rights and that no political authority should influence or punish the exercise of conscience.³⁷ The availability of printed materials “engendered a felt *need* to read, write, and compute in order to carry out one’s work, interact with merchants and traders, and connect with society.”³⁸ The sheer volume and availability of printed materials “was the most important force of the spread of literacy both in America and in Europe.”³⁹ In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, literacy rates among whites expanded significantly in America. In New England, for example, where the literacy rate reached only 60 percent for white men and 40 percent among women by 1650, it soared to 90 percent for men and 60 percent for women by the 1790s.⁴⁰ In the seventeenth-century Chesapeake Bay area, indications are that perhaps 30 percent of men and 15 percent of women were literate. However, by the early nineteenth century, the literacy rate was probably 70 percent for men and 50 percent for women.⁴¹

³⁶ Ibid., 813.

³⁷ Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, 27.

³⁸ Linda Kerber, “The Revolutionary Generation: Ideology, Politics, and Culture in the Early Republic,” *The New American History*, ed. Eric Foner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 46.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, 277.

⁴¹ Butler, 277.

During this same time period, from 1790 to 1810, the number of newspapers in the United States grew exponentially from 90 to 370.⁴²

In addition to newspapers, there was a similar growth in the number of religious papers, as well. Populist religious leaders saw the powerful potential of the print media and were quick to take advantage of it in reaching a wider audience.⁴³ Hatch views the transformation of the religious press as “a central theme in the growth of popular literature in the early republic.”⁴⁴ After the Revolution, religious books and literature in the form of tracts, pamphlets, journals, devotional books, and hymnals as well as periodicals and newspapers helped to circulate denominational teachings to even the most remote parts of the country. American independence and denominational proliferation drove religious groups to use printed materials more enthusiastically than ever before. In 1790 there were fourteen religious newspapers being published in America. The number grew to 600 by 1830.⁴⁵

The ability to put words into print for mass distribution, the growth in literacy, and the development of a democratic religious culture after 1800 gave otherwise obscure preachers a larger following than would have been possible by preaching tours alone. Additionally, the printing press put lesser-known figures on an equal footing with the well-

⁴² Hatch, 25.

⁴³ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 141.

⁴⁵ Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, 277-278.

known national personalities.⁴⁶ “Virtually nonexistent in 1800, religious periodicals had by 1830, become the grand engine of a burgeoning religious culture, the primary means of promotion for, and the bond of union within competing religious groups.”⁴⁷

As the networks for the communication of religious ideas expanded from clerical authority to include other voices, the opportunities to exchange ideas within the religious groups broadened. Ideas were examined and debated, and could be either accepted or rejected. Thomas Campbell had recognized the value of publishing his *Declaration and Address* in order for his concepts to be carefully considered. Alexander Campbell, likewise, realized the value of the printing press. In 1823 Alexander became an editor, and for the remainder of his life he vigorously attended to what Garrett calls, “the forte of his ministry.”⁴⁸ To facilitate the circulation of the Restoration ideals, Alexander started his first journal, *The Christian Baptist*, which he published from 1823 to 1830. He arrived at the title after some debate. Since the term ‘Baptist’ was clearly a denominational designation, there was not a unanimous agreement on the advisability of using the term. However, because he identified at that time more closely with the Baptist churches than with any other group, Alexander decided including the word ‘Baptist’ would be expedient in avoiding religious prejudices and aid in appealing to a wide audience of readers.⁴⁹ He qualified the term ‘Baptist’ by adding the word ‘Christian,’ and in the preface to the first edition, Campbell

⁴⁶ Hatch, 11.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 125-126.

⁴⁸ Leroy Garrett, “Alexander Campbell,” *Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, 121.

⁴⁹ Richardson, II, 50.

candidly set forth the goals of the publication. “We now commence a periodical paper, pledged to no religious sect in Christendom, the express and avowed object of which is the eviction of truth and the exposure of error....”⁵⁰ Within the pages, Campbell advised congregations on how to shed human innovations and return to the simplicity of New Testament Christianity. He warned that following the Scriptures would require casting off all human creeds – Catholic and Protestant alike.⁵¹ *The Christian Baptist* had a tone that was extremely critical of the clergy of the period. With essays and articles that were frequently sarcastic, the small magazine quickly became a popular and effective medium for circulating his views.⁵² *The Christian Baptist* “furnished a rallying point for those who accepted his ideas of reformation, precipitating the separation from the Baptists, and setting the pattern of thought among his followers for many years thereafter.”⁵³ The ultimate goal remained the union of all Christians; however, in Alexander’s mind this required the clearing away of religious corruption that had grown up within Christianity over the centuries.⁵⁴ Alexander Campbell viewed the restoration of the New Testament church necessary to ensure the coming of the kingdom of Christ.⁵⁵ In the February 7, 1825 issue of *The Christian Baptist*, in unambiguous terms, he wrote of the Restoration Movement and the successful return to the

⁵⁰ Alexander Campbell, *The Christian Baptist*, I, (Cincinnati: D.S. Burnet, 1835), 1.

⁵¹ Hatch, 167-168.

⁵² McAllister and Tucker, 127.

⁵³ Garrison and DeGroot, 175.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Hatch, 168.

New Testament practices as being vital to the establishment of the millennial kingdom.⁵⁶

This emphasis can be discerned by the title of his next publication, *The Millennial Harbinger*, which was published from 1830 to 1870.

Within the pages of *The Christian Baptist*, the principles set forth by Thomas Campbell were clearly in evidence. The denunciation of creeds was a continuation of the attitude which had been unmistakably presented in the *Declaration and Address*.⁵⁷ Alexander fervently addressed the two goals his father had outlined in the *Postscript to the Declaration and Address*: to develop from the New Testament a complete system of “doctrine, worship, discipline, and government” and to produce “a periodical publication detecting and exposing the various anti-Christian enormities, innovations and corruptions which infect the Christian church.”⁵⁸ Virtually every religious practice and doctrine was scrutinized for scriptural authentication, as the plea for a *Restoration of the ancient order of things* was proclaimed:

[Musical instruments, such as] organs must not be used in public worship because the churches at Jerusalem and Corinth did not have them.

“Reverend George Johnson” is an inadmissible form of speech because “Reverend Simon Peter” would be ridiculous.

The unimmersed must not be admitted to Communion because their admission does not have New Testament authority.

“It is not enough that it is not forbidden – it is not *commanded*.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Alexander Campbell, ed., “A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things,” *The Christian Baptist*, II, No. 7 (February 7, 1827):126-128.

⁵⁷ Garrison and DeGroot, 178.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Occasionally, essays by Thomas Campbell appeared within the publication. Seeing the value of the printing press, although not in favor of the iconoclastic tone of the publication, he eventually succeeded in persuading Alexander to adopt a less abrasive policy. In 1830 Alexander discontinued *The Christian Baptist* and began publication of another, more irenic journal. *The Millennial Harbinger* continued for forty years, espousing the principles of restoration and the program of restoration that was being accomplished within Protestantism.

On the other side of the Atlantic, similar Restorationist efforts were occurring in the British Isles. There was a web of interconnectedness that was spun by a common religious language and shared rituals. This web was continuously reinforced by itinerant revivalists, the press, and the migration of people. In spite of these elements, however, religious movements were not transplanted in their identical forms from one side of the Atlantic to the other.⁶⁰ In Britain, during the mid-eighteenth century, evangelicalism remained a subordinate influence within the Protestant culture and state, as loyalty to the monarchical constitution, the institutional authority of the Established Church, and a deferential attitude within the political and social structures persisted within the British social system.⁶¹ In contrast to the British pattern, by the middle of the nineteenth century, evangelicalism had attained the status of cultural mainstream within the religious fabric of American Protestantism.⁶²

⁶⁰ Michael Gauvreau, "The Empire of Evangelicalism: Varieties of Common Sense in Scotland, Canada, and the United States," *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700–1990*, Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, George A Rawlyk, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 219,220.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁶² *Ibid.*

Challenges to evangelicalism and restoration within the British system notwithstanding, efforts continued to be put forth by determined leaders. In January 1798, Robert and James Haldane, in a pledge to advance undenominational evangelism, founded the Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home.⁶³ The Haldanes secured the services of Rowland Hill, a British preacher who carried the evangelical message to any churches who allowed him to speak. In Ulster, the Independents had an important influence upon the religious views of Thomas Campbell and his son Alexander.⁶⁴ Rowland Hill visited in the area and preached at the Richhill congregation during Thomas Campbell's ministry at Ahorey.⁶⁵ Alexander Carson, who left the Presbyterians and joined the Independents in 1803, also preached about this same time at Richhill. During this time, Campbell occasionally visited the Richhill church for the purpose of hearing the various preachers.⁶⁶ It is not surprising that Campbell would have received insight into principles and ideas that he, in turn, would incorporate into his own belief system.

In Britain, however, Protestantism consisted of more than a belief system and church attendance. Indeed, it was a major organizing principle within which other areas of life were organized and processed.⁶⁷ Always in the background of Protestant affirmation was the undercurrent of anti-Catholicism, which was much more than mere religious bigotry. Anti-

⁶³ Ferguson, 229-230.

⁶⁴ Richardson, *Memoirs*. I, 59.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 60, 160-164.

⁶⁷ David Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland from the Glorious Revolution to the Decline of Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 146-147.

Catholicism included historical memory, anti-Irish prejudices, bourgeois social control, British chauvinism, evangelical fervor, and economic competition. Hence, at different times and in different places, the various forms of anti-Catholicism served political and theological purposes.⁶⁸

Although Protestantism in Britain was historically associated with the institutional church as mandated by the monarchy, nevertheless, many Protestants in Britain were attracted to the principles of restoring New Testament Christianity. Presbyterians in England, Scotland, and Ireland were influenced in the early eighteenth century by Glas, who denounced the covenants of the Church of Scotland upon concluding Christ's kingdom was purely spiritual.⁶⁹ After being deposed by the Church of Scotland in 1728, he went on to attract a following and had a wide influence upon Presbyterian thought throughout the British Isles. Through his son-in-law Robert Sandeman, his teachings, which encouraged a spiritual communion of the Christian life, and weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, spread to America.⁷⁰ Independent congregations possessed many of the characteristics that were later identified with churches of the American Restoration Movement. Practices such as the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, recognition of local church autonomy, reliance upon the Scriptures as the sole authority in religious matters, rejection of all human creeds and oaths, and immersion as the scriptural mode of baptism were teachings propounded by the American Restorationists.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 147. See D.G. Paz, *Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England* (Stanford, Calif., 1992) for an examination of the complexities interlaced within British Anti-Catholicism.

⁶⁹ William Ferguson, *Scotland 1689 to the Present* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), 131.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 132.

During the same approximate time period of the mid-eighteenth century, America was experiencing what would be termed ‘The Great Awakening.’ Susan O’Brien speaks of the transatlantic communities of faith that existed on both sides of the Atlantic and argues that during the religious revivals of 1735 – 1750 the Calvinist evangelicals were acutely aware of one another’s activities.⁷¹ Gradually, in keeping with their commitment to follow biblical practices, some of the British Independent churches began to refer to themselves as *churches of Christ*. When Alexander Campbell became aware of them, he referred to several of the churches in *The Christian Baptist* and commended them in their quest to restore New Testament Christianity in Britain. In the December 1827 issue of *The Christian Baptist*, Alexander Campbell informed his readers that nine years earlier, on March 1, 1818, a church in New York had published a circular describing their attempts at restoring the teaching and practice of the New Testament. In the circular, the New York congregation solicited historical sketches from churches “scattered over the earth” who were seeking to follow the same apostolic precedent.⁷²

In *The Christian Baptist*, Campbell published three letters from churches which had responded to the circular. The first letter, dated July 31, 1818, was from the Church of Christ in Leith Walk, Edinburgh, to the Church of Christ in New York.⁷³ In the letter, the church in Leith Walk gave a brief history of themselves, affirming their desire “in all things to observe

⁷¹ O’Brien, “A Transatlantic Community of Saints,” 813.

⁷² Alexander Campbell, ed., “Attempt at the Restoration of the Ancient Order,” by the Church of Christ at New York, *Christian Baptist*, Vol. 5, No. 5 (December 3, 1827): 389.

⁷³ Alexander Campbell, ed., “Attempt at the Restoration of the Ancient Order,” by the Church of Christ at Leith Walk, Edinburgh, *The Christian Baptist*, Vol. 5, No. 5 (December 3, 1827): 389-390.

the instructions of the New Testament.”⁷⁴ Established in about 1808, they numbered about two hundred fifty by 1818, having three elders and four deacons. At first they observed the Lord’s Supper monthly. However, “Our first step towards scriptural order,” they wrote, “was our beginning to break bread every Lord’s day.”⁷⁵

A similar letter from the Church of Christ meeting in Morrison’s Court, Glasgow, was dated May 10, 1818.⁷⁶ In their correspondence, the Glasgow church described their belief in Jesus Christ as Savior and their reliance upon the Word of God in all matters. They met “on the first day of the week to glorify God and edify one another.”⁷⁷ In their meetings they participated in praise, prayer, singing, reading from the Scriptures, a fellowship meal, a discourse by one of the pastors or preachers, and observance of the Lord’s Supper.⁷⁸ Their members numbered about one hundred and eighty, with similar numbers in their nearby sister church at Paisley. They wrote of the history of their particular movement, saying, “Such churches as ours have existed in Scotland, at Edinburgh and Glasgow, from thirty to forty years.”⁷⁹ That timing would place churches following Restoration principles in Scotland as early as 1778. The date is well before similar movements began in America and supports the argument that Restoration ideas were transplanted in Ireland and then America

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ “Attempt at the Restoration of the Ancient Order by the Church of Christ Meeting in Morrison’s Court, Glasgow,” *The Christian Baptist*, Vol. 5, No. 5 (December 3, 1827): 390 – 391.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

after first taking root in Scotland.

In another response to their circular, the Church of Christ in New York received a letter dated May 6, 1819, from the Church of Christ at Tubbermore.⁸⁰ Carson was minister for the Presbyterian Church at Tubbermore,⁸¹ and in the January 7, 1828 issue of *The Christian Baptist*, Alexander Campbell printed the letter from the Church of Christ at Tubbermore in which they confirmed that “whatever time a church meets to observe the institutions of the first day of the week, the Lord’s Supper ought to hold a distinguished place.”⁸² In a departure from Presbyterian practice, Carson advocated the immersion of believers as the biblical form for baptism. However, the Tubbermore church’s statement regarding baptism indicated that they did not view it as a term of fellowship, much less a condition for salvation.⁸³ As to their numerical strength, the church at Tubbermore stated their number at that time was about two hundred and fifty, with a sister congregation prospering about six miles away in Cavindaisy.⁸⁴

In February 1819, not long after the aforementioned churches in Scotland and Ireland had sent their responses to the church in New York affirming their commitment to the Scriptures and to restoring Christianity as set forth in the New Testament, David King was born in London, England. In adulthood, King became a Wesley Methodist and was dedicated

⁸⁰ “Attempt at the Restoration of the Ancient Order by Church of Christ at Tubbermore,” *The Christian Baptist* Vol. 6, No. 1 (January 7, 1828): 407 – 408.

⁸¹ Also Tubbermore or Tobermore, as noted earlier.

⁸² *Ibid.* 408.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 407.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 408.

to the pursuit of godliness and truth. In 1840 he became aware of a group of Christians in America who rejected all denominational and sectarian names, calling themselves simply Christians or Disciples of Christ. An acquaintance gave him a book, *Baptism and the Remission of Sins*. Not long after that, King was introduced to *The Christian Baptist* containing articles written by Alexander Campbell on the topic of baptism. King studied the topic and in 1842, at the age of twenty-three, he and his wife were both baptized and became members of the church in Cambden Town.⁸⁵ Within a few years, was preaching the message of restoration and converting entire congregations to “Primitive Faith and Practice.”⁸⁶ King’s reputation and influence increased dramatically among the British congregations, and in 1852 he was named Chairman of the Annual Meeting. By then, the number of restoration churches was listed at seventy-six, with a total membership of 1,981.⁸⁷

In a striking parallel to Alexander Campbell’s *Millennial Harbinger* in America, 1835 saw the beginning of *The British Millennial Harbinger*. The magazine, an obvious tribute to Alexander Campbell’s influence, was begun by James Wallis; however, editorial responsibilities for the publication passed to David King in 1861.⁸⁸ The British publication was not unknown in America, and Alexander Campbell used his periodical to raise awareness and support for his British counterpart:

⁸⁵ Frank Worgan, “The Life of David King: A Brief Biographical Sketch,” in *Historical Survey of Churches of Christ in the British Isles*, Joe Nisbet, ed. (Aberdeen, Scotland: Joe Nisbet, 1995), 73-74.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 77.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement*, 350. See also Nesbit, *Historical Survey of Churches of Christ in the British Isles*, 79.

The columns of this invaluable religious periodical are enriched, from time to time, with talented essays contributed by British and American writers, pleading for a complete return to the faith and manners of the Primitive Christian congregations, the progress of which enterprise, in various parts of the world, it reports. Cannot and ought not our brethren in America patronise the *British Millennial Harbinger*? I am persuaded that they would aid the cause in Great Britain by extending its circulation in this country.⁸⁹

The word *Millennial* was dropped from the publication in 1866, and the magazine became *The British Harbinger*.⁹⁰ It continued to be dedicated to publishing the ideals of the Restoration Movement throughout Great Britain.

Nineteenth-Century Expansion

Statistics buttress the claim that there was strong support in the early days of the new American nation for the ‘anti-traditional, lay-oriented, self-starting religion’ represented by Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone and observed in the Disciples of Christ and Christian Church, respectively.⁹¹ Upon the uniting of the two groups, followers of Campbell typically identified themselves as ‘Disciples’ and Stone’s group preferred the name ‘Christian.’ Their congregations were known respectively as ‘Disciples of Christ’ and ‘Christian Churches,’ and soon the terms were used interchangeably. The expression ‘restorationist’ eventually emerged and was used in reference to their goal of restoring the

⁸⁹ Alexander Campbell, *The Millennial Harbinger* Vol. 7, No. 4 (April 1857): 238.

⁹⁰ Nesbit, 151.

⁹¹ Noll, *The Work We Have To Do*, 58.

pattern of the New Testament church.⁹² The growth of the movement continued unabated, and by 1850, it is estimated there were as many as 118,000 adherents.⁹³ By the time of the Civil War, the Disciples of Christ / Christian Church claimed 200,000 adherents and was “the fifth largest Protestant body in the United States,”⁹⁴ having about as many congregations (2,100) as the Episcopalians (2,150) and the Congregationalists (2,240).⁹⁵ In the four decades following the Civil War, the Restoration Movement experienced a phenomenal increase in adherents. Statistics on church growth during that time show the popularity of a religion that was anti-traditional and lay-oriented.⁹⁶ As the plea for a return to the pattern and practice of New Testament Christianity was heralded across the nation, the message appealed to receptive listeners who eagerly accepted it. By 1890 there were 7,246 churches with 641,051 members.⁹⁷ Although the center of power and influence in the United States was situated in the urban areas, Disciples remained primarily a fellowship of rural and small-town

⁹² Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer, *Religion in America: A Short History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 216.

⁹³ Ahlstrom, 452. Statistics for the Disciples prior to 1860 are derived primarily from evangelists’ reports. McAllister and Tucker cite Joseph Belcher, *Religious Denominations in the United States* (Philadelphia: John K. Potter, 1957), p. 811. Reporting figures obtained from Alexander Campbell, Belcher shows 225,000 members, 2,700 congregations, and 2,225 ministers in 1857. Other sources, say McAllister and Tucker, indicate “by 1860 the Disciples most probably had a membership of no more than 195,000 persons (including 5,000 black members) located in 2,100 congregations, with 1,800 ministers.” McAllister and Tucker, *Journey in Faith*, 188.

⁹⁴ Hatch, 71.

⁹⁵ Noll, *The Work We Have To Do*, 58.

⁹⁶ Mark A. Noll, *The Old Religion in the New World: A History of North American Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 66.

⁹⁷ Ahlstrom, 452.

congregations.⁹⁸ In 1890 less than seven percent of the membership lived in cities with populations of 25,000 or more. McAllister and Tucker assert

[A]s late as 1917 over half of their members and eighty-two percent of their congregations were located in the country or in towns of 2,500 or less. Failing to develop an urban strategy, they stood little chance of attracting a significant following among the millions of immigrants other than English-speaking Protestants.⁹⁹

During the post-Civil War era, the Disciples grew at a rate twice that of the nation's population. From a membership of 192,000 in 1860, they increased to 400,000 in 1875.

When the nineteenth century ended, the American branch of the Campbell / Stone movement had surpassed the one million mark.¹⁰⁰ The dynamics of the American religious and political system, in conjunction with the uniquely American environment, combined with the transatlantic networks in the exchange of materials and ideas to allow Thomas Campbell's principles of Christian unity and restoration to develop and circulate not only in America, but in England, Scotland, and Ireland as well. The transatlantic exchange of religious concepts and methodologies produced a web of interconnectedness. The result was a religious movement with growing communities of adherents on both sides of the Atlantic.

⁹⁸ McAllister and Tucker, 235.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER 6

THE DECLARATION AND ADDRESS AND THE ENDURING LEGACY OF THOMAS CAMPBELL

As one approaches the Declaration and Address, one great fundamental principle rises everywhere into view, as some great mountain peak, like Fujiama in Japan, dominates the landscape from every point of view, and that is Thomas Campbell's doctrine of the word of God – its divinity, authority and sufficiency.

– W. J. Loos, Owenstown, Kentucky ¹

In the minutes for the May 1809 meeting of the Associate Synod of North America, two short but significant sentences are recorded: “A letter enclosing a Fifty Dollar note, refunding a like sum given him by the Synod in May, 1807, was received from Mr. Thomas Campbell. The clerk was directed to give him a receipt.”² With an economy of words, Campbell’s separation from Presbyterianism was complete. Two years after immigrating to America and aligning himself with the Associate Synod, at the age of forty-six Thomas Campbell was a minister without a church. For many years Campbell had pronounced the inherent evils of religious division. From his address to the Synod of Ireland at Belfast in 1804 to his statements to the Associate Synod of Philadelphia in 1808, his convictions

¹ W. J. Loos, “Thomas Campbell and the Principles He Promulgated,” *One Hundredth Anniversary of the Disciples of Christ, Pittsburgh, October 11 – 19, 1909*, in W. R. Warren, ed. *Centennial Convention Report* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1910), 362-66. (Loos’ address was delivered at the Sixth United Presbyterian Church, Saturday Morning, October 16.

² *Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod of North America*, May 23, 1809, 213-14.

regarding the unnecessary and frequently unscriptural nature of human creeds was unmistakable. Alexander Campbell, in affirming his father's passion on this principal, said,

He objected not so much to the doctrines of the Secession creed and platform, as a doctrinal basis, but to the assumption of any formula of religious theories or opinions, as the foundation of the church of Christ; alleging that the holy Scriptures, Divinely inspired, were all sufficient and alone sufficient for all the purposes contemplated by their Author, in giving them; especially as the great apostle to the nations had so commended them; affirming that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good work." 2 Tim. iii: 16, 17.³

Campbell's agreement with the Reformation leaders that the Scriptures provide the only inspired and infallible guide in religious matters would become manifestly evident. Ironically, whereas the Reformation leaders appealed to *sola Scriptura* in their opposition to the unscriptural practices that had risen within Catholicism, Campbell, as well as subsequent Restoration leaders, pointed to the equally unscriptural doctrines that had spawned within the Protestant churches in the aftermath of the Reformation and proclaimed a return to the simplicity of New Testament Christianity.

Campbell's legacy of working to promote Christian unity was based upon his conviction the Scriptures represent the sole authority in matters of religion. It was a conviction that was born in Ireland, bred in America, and matured into a full-fledged religious movement on the frontier of western Pennsylvania.

Campbell set forth his proposals, saying:

Let none imagine that the subjoined propositions are at all intended as an overture toward a new creed or standard for the Church, or as in any wise design to be made a term of communion; nothing can be further from our intention. They are merely designed for opening up the way, that we may come fairly and firmly to

³ Campbell, *Memoirs*, 11.

original ground upon clear and certain premises, and take up things just as the apostles left them; that thus disentangled from the accruing embarrassments of intervening ages, we may stand with evidence upon the same ground on which the Church stood at the beginning. Having said so much to solicit attention and prevent mistake, we submit as follows:

PROPOSAL 1. That the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else; as none else can be truly and properly called Christians.

PROPOSAL 2. That although the Church of Christ upon earth must necessarily exist in particular and distinct societies, locally separate one from another, yet there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions among them. They ought to receive each other as Christ Jesus hath also received them, to the glory of God. And for this purpose they ought all to walk by the same rule, to mind and speak the same thing; and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.

PROPOSAL 3. That in order to do this, nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith; nor required of them as terms of communion, but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them in the word of God. Nor ought anything to be admitted, as of Divine obligation, in their Church constitution and managements, but what is expressly enjoined by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles upon the New Testament Church; either in express terms or by approved precedent.

PROPOSAL 4. That although the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are inseparably connected, making together but one perfect and entire revelation of the Divine will, for the edification and salvation of the Church, and therefore in that respect can not be separated; yet as to what directly and properly belongs to their immediate object, the New Testament is as perfect a constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament Church, and as perfect a rule for the particular duties of its members, as the Old Testament was for the worship, discipline, and government of the Old Testament Church, and the particular duties of its members.

PROPOSAL 5. That with respect to the commands and ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, where the Scriptures are silent as to the express time or manner of performance, if any such there be, no human authority has power to interfere, in order to supply the supposed deficiency by making laws for the Church; nor can anything more be required of Christians in such cases, but only that they so observe these commands and ordinances as will evidently answer the declared and obvious end of their institution. Much less has any human authority power to impose new

commands or ordinances upon the Church, which our Lord Jesus Christ has not enjoined. Nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the Church, or be made a term of communion among Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament.

PROPOSAL 6. That although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore, no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the Church. Hence, it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the Church's confession.

PROPOSAL 7. That although doctrinal exhibitions of the great system of Divine truths, and defensive testimonies in opposition to prevailing errors, be highly expedient, and the more full and explicit they be for those purposes, the better; yet, as these must be in a great measure the effect of human reasoning, and of course must contain many inferential truths, they ought not to be made terms of Christian communion; unless we suppose, what is contrary to fact, that none have a right to the communion of the Church, but such as possess a very clear and decisive judgment, or are come to a very high degree of doctrinal information; whereas the Church from the beginning did, and ever will, consist of little children and young men, as well as fathers.

PROPOSAL 8. That as it is not necessary that persons should have a particular knowledge or distinct apprehension of all Divinely-revealed truths in order to entitle them to a place in the Church; neither should they, for this purpose, be required to make a profession more extensive than their knowledge; but that, on the contrary, their having a due measure of Scriptural self-knowledge respecting their lost and perishing condition by nature and practice, and of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, accompanied with a profession of their faith in and obedience to him, in all things, according to his word, is all that is absolutely necessary to qualify them for admission into his Church.

PROPOSAL 9. That all that are enabled through grace to make such a profession, and to manifest the reality of it in their tempers and conduct, should consider each other as the precious saints of God, should love each other as brethren, children of the same family and Father, temples of the same Spirit, members of the same body, subjects of the same grace, objects of the same Divine love, bought with the same price, and joint-heirs of the same inheritance. Whom God hath thus joined together no man should dare to put asunder.

PROPOSAL 10. That division among the Christians is a horrid evil, fraught with many evils. It is antichristian, as it destroys the visible unity of the body of Christ; as if he were divided against himself, excluding and excommunicating a part of himself. It is antisciptural, as being strictly prohibited by his sovereign authority; a direct violation of his express command. It is antinatural, as it excites Christians to contemn, to hate, and oppose one another, who are bound by the highest and most endearing obligations to love each other as brethren, even as Christ has loved them. In a word, it is productive of confusion and of every evil work.

PROPOSAL 11. That (in some instances) a partial neglect of the expressly revealed will of God, and (in others) an assumed authority for making the approbation of human opinions and human inventions a term of communion, by introducing them into the constitution, faith, or worship of the Church, are, and have been, the immediate, obvious, and universally-acknowledged causes, of all the corruptions and divisions that ever have taken place in the Church of God.

PROPOSAL 12. That all that is necessary to the highest state of perfection and purity of the Church upon earth is, first, that none be received as members but such as having that due measure of Scriptural self-knowledge described above, do profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures; nor, secondly, that any be retained in her communion longer than they continue to manifest the reality of their profession by their temper and conduct. Thirdly, that her ministers, duly and Scripturally qualified, inculcate none other things than those very articles of faith and holiness expressly revealed and enjoined in the word of God. Lastly, that in all their administrations they keep close by the observance of all Divine ordinances, after the example of the primitive Church, exhibited in the New Testament; without any additions whatsoever of human opinions or inventions of men.⁴

PROPOSAL 13. Lastly. That if any circumstantial indispensable necessary to the observance of Divine ordinances be not found upon the page of express revelation, such, and such only, as are absolutely necessary for this purpose should be adopted under the title of human expedients, without any pretense to a more sacred origin, so

⁴ It is interesting to note that Thomas Campbell at this point still held to the common Presbyterian view that ministers in the Church of Christ were to be ordained and recognized as qualified by virtue of their lives and education. Alexander Campbell, was “ordained” by the Brush Run Church in order to be legally authorized to perform marriage ceremonies and also in keeping with his studied conviction that he had a duty to be “set apart to the office of ministry.” Thomas renounced the title “Reverend” as being an unacceptable designation for a preacher (since it was applied in Scripture only to God). Occasionally he affixed to his name the initials V.D.M. (*Verbi Divini Minister* – “Minister of the Word of God”). Alexander applied the initials V.D.S. to his name (*Verbi Divini Servus* – “Servant of God”). See Richardson, I, 335 n., 389 – 391.

that any subsequent alteration or difference in the observance of these things might produce no contention nor division in the Church.⁵

The *Address* closes with additional words of explanation and encouragement. The document bears the signatures of Thomas Campbell, Secretary, and Thomas Acheson, Treasurer.

The thirteen proposals contained in the *Address* have been accurately and concisely summarized as follows. The church is essentially one by the very nature of its work, intentionally by its founder's intent, and constitutionally with its constituents being brethren. Kershner maintained Campbell's first proposal ranks "along with Chillingworth's maxim, 'the Bible and the Bible alone is the Religion of Protestants,' and the still more famous word of Melindus, 'in things essential, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.'"⁶ Although necessarily separated by space and time, the church is united in its nature. The Scriptures are *all sufficient* and *alone sufficient* to serve as the exclusive authority in religion. Therefore, only what is expressly taught in the New Testament can be considered to be authoritative. Opinions, inferences, deductions, and interpretations by human reasoning are not to be bound upon Christians. Divisions in the church are the result of two grievous errors: neglect of the Bible and binding human authority on the church. Unity within the church may be attained by applying certain scriptural principles. First, accept only those who possess faith and are obedient to Christ in all things according to his Word. Second, keep in membership only the ones who demonstrate the genuineness of their faith in their conduct

⁵ Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address*, 30-60. Frederick D. Kershner provides a lengthy analysis of the *Address* in his 1923 work, *The Christian Overture, An Interpretation of the Declaration and Address of Thomas Campbell*; as does Lester McAllister *Thomas Campbell, Man of the Book*. William Herbert Hanna, believing the resolutions to be too lengthy to print in full, provides "a leading sentence or two from each one" in *Thomas Campbell, Seceder and Christian Union Advocate*.

⁶ Kershner, 81.

and life. Third, make only those articles of faith that are expressly taught and enjoined upon the New Testament church binding upon Christians. And fourth, emulate the New Testament church without adding to or subtracting from the inspired, revealed Word.⁷

There is a very faint tenor of premillennialism seen in the *Address*, where Campbell made references to Napoleon's Europe:

The auspicious phenomena of the times furnish collateral arguments of a very encouraging nature, that our dutiful and pious endeavors shall not be in vain in the Lord. Is it not the day of the Lord's vengeance upon the antichristian world – the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion? Surely, then, the time to favor her is come; even the set time. And is it not said that Zion shall be built in troublous times? Have not greater efforts been made, and more done, for the promulgation of the Gospel among the nations, since the commencement of the French revolution, than had been for many centuries prior to that event? And have not the Churches, both in Europe and America, since that period, discovered a more than usual concern for the removal of contentions, for the healing of divisions, for the restoration of a Christian and brotherly intercourse one with another, and for the promotion of each other's spiritual good, as the printed documents upon those subjects amply testify?⁸

Hatch refers to Campbell's comments on this point as discussions of “revolutionary and apocalyptic affairs” published within the first manifesto of the Disciples movement.⁹

Kershner also sees a “distinctly premillenarian color to his appeal for Christian union.”¹⁰

Campbell wrote the *Declaration and Address* in 1809, the time when Napoleon's power was significant. Napoleon was proclaimed emperor of France in 1804 and defeated

⁷ Ford, *A History of the Restoration Plea*, 23-24. The thirteen articles have been summarized by many historians. Here Ford provides one of the finest evaluations and distills the articles to a simplified form.

⁸ Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address*, 34, 35.

⁹ Hatch, 185.

¹⁰ Kershner, 57.

the Austrians and Russians at Austerlitz in 1805. The same year he was crowned King of Italy. In 1806 Napoleon's Berlin Decree began the Continental System, thus closing Continental ports to British vessels, and crushed Prussia. In 1807 he ensured his dictatorship by suppression of the Tribune and the same year invaded Portugal, forcing the dethroned royal family to flee to Brazil. In 1808 Napoleon's army occupied Rome and invaded Spain. The following year in 1809, he annexed the Papal states. In the eyes of many Christians, the Beast spoken of by John in Revelation was none other than the French emperor. Campbell seemed to be alluding to those events as being the fulfillment of prophetic announcements:

Who among us has not heard the report of these things, of these lightnings and thunderings and voices; of this tremendous earthquake and great hail; of these awful convulsions and revolutions that have dashed and are dashing to pieces the nations, like a potter's vessel?¹¹

The third section of the *Declaration and Address* is the *Appendix* of thirty-one pages which answers actual or anticipated criticisms directed at the Association and explaining several points in the *Address*. The fourth section is the *Postscript* which consists of three pages and was written three months later. Here Campbell suggested immediate steps to be taken.¹²

Several significant points stand out in reading the *Declaration and Address*. First, Campbell displayed a deeply profound knowledge of the Scriptures as well as the world around him. Second, there is a theme of optimism. He was optimistic in his emphasis upon the possibilities of New Testament Christianity being reborn in the New World, and he was

¹¹ Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address*, 44, 45.

¹² Garrison and DeGroot, 145.

optimist in reliance upon the human response.¹³ Campbell was convinced “all who truly desired to be followers of Christ would likewise long for fellowship with each other.”¹⁴ A third point of significance was Campbell’s emphasis upon unity, but not unity at *any* price:

You are all, dear brethren, equally included as the objects of our love and esteem. With you all we desire to unite in the bonds of an entire Christian unity—Christ alone being the head, the centre, *his word the rule* [emphasis added]—an explicit belief of, and manifest conformity to it, in all things—*the terms*. More than this, you will not require of us; and less we cannot require of you; nor, indeed, can we reasonably suppose, any would desire it; for what good purpose would it serve?¹⁵

Noll correctly terms Campbell’s *Declaration and Address* as “an early manifesto of American Restorationism.”¹⁶ The principles contained within the document launched a movement not to create a new denomination, but to *restore* the church of the New Testament based solely upon the Scriptures and excluding all human opinions and decrees. In 1904, nearly one hundred years after the *Declaration and Address* was published, Charles Alexander Young, managing editor of *The Christian Century* (a Disciples of Christ publication) said of Campbell, the principles he set forth “have contributed more than anything else to the formation of a separate body of Christians, calling themselves simply Christians or Disciples of Christ.”¹⁷ Young continued,

He coined the great watchwords, “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where they are silent, we are silent.”

¹³ Kershner, 58.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁵ Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address*, 11.

¹⁶ Noll, *America’s God*, 380.

¹⁷ Charles Alexander Young, *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union* (Chicago: The Christian Century Company, 1904), 33.

Thus saith the Lord either in express terms or by approved precedent, for every article of faith, and item of religious practice.

Nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the church, or be made a term of communion among Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament.

The restoration of primitive Christianity.¹⁸

When Alexander and the Campbell family arrived in Pennsylvania in October 1809, the reunion signified the end of two years of separation. On October 19, about three days out of Washington on the road from Philadelphia, Thomas and his friend John McElroy met the wagon with Jane and the family.¹⁹ Jane and the children related to Thomas the incidents of the two years since his departure. Upon receiving his letter urging them to join him, they were first delayed by illness; then their ill-fated ship was wrecked off the coast of Scotland. Surviving the shipwreck, the family made the decision to stay in Glasgow for the winter, allowing Alexander to take courses at the university. In August 1809 they boarded a ship for New York. Thomas, in turn, apprised the family of his experiences in America, especially his trials before the Presbytery and Synod.

In the course of their conversations both father and son realized each had changed considerably in their religious views during this time apart. At Glasgow University Alexander became acquainted with the thoughts of Glas, Sandeman, the Haldanes, and other

¹⁸ Ibid., 33.

¹⁸ McAllister, 101.

Independents. As he examined the doctrines of the Seceder church, he slowly began to question the religious teachings. At the semi-annual communion service, as time drew near for his departure for America, Alexander made a crucial decision. It was customary for partakers of communion to receive a metallic token as evidence of their worthiness to participate in the Lord's Supper. Because he had come from Ireland with no letters or recommendations, it was necessary for him to first be questioned by the elders in order to establish his eligibility to partake. He passed the examination, but the next day, plagued by his conscience, he put his token into the plate and left the communion service.²⁰ Alexander and Thomas Campbell, although an ocean apart, had each come to the same conclusion. They were no longer Seceders.

Upon reading the newly published *Declaration and Address*, Alexander, now twenty-one years old, expressed not only his agreement with the principles contained within the document but also his determination to devote his life to proclaiming those principles.²¹ In the months that followed, Thomas Campbell was busily engaged in the duties of visiting the members of the Association and in the pursuit of advancing the cause of unity among the people. Additionally, he resumed his responsibilities of instructing his family in their spiritual development. He also began to train his own son in ministerial studies, providing him occasional speaking opportunities. Two other men came under the tutelage of Thomas Campbell during this time. James Foster and Abraham Altars, members of the Christian

²⁰ West, 52.

²¹ Ibid., 53.

Association and eager to promote its work, began a course of study with a view to ministry.²² Foster was well acquainted with the Bible and well known for his ability to accurately quote and make application of long passages of Scripture.

With the encouragement of his father, Alexander Campbell preached his first sermon on July 15, 1810, at the home of Jacob Donaldson.²³ Thomas Campbell's influence and the "novelty of the plea urged by the Christian Association" stirred up considerable interest throughout that region of the country.²⁴ Alexander, now twenty-two years old, began to be assigned preaching appointments. In time, the son would eclipse the father and become identified as the primary figure in the movement to restore New Testament Christianity. This informal and unauthorized assumption of the right to preach exemplified a revolt against the authority of an ordained clergy, an ideal which would become one of the identifying characteristics of the movement.

In order to carry out its purposes and duties, the Christian Association of Washington decided to become an independent church. On Saturday, May 4, 1811, the group met, constituted itself a church, and the congregational form of church government was adopted.²⁵ At this meeting, Thomas Campbell was selected elder and Alexander was ordained to preach the gospel.²⁶ The newly formed congregation also elected James Foster, John Dawson,

²² Hanna, 127. Richardson, I, 277-278, 312ff.

²³ Richardson, Vol. I, 312.

²⁴ Ibid., 313.

²⁵ McAllister, 150.

²⁶ See note 34 this chapter on the Campbell's views of ordination and the use of religious titles. See also Richardson's *Memoirs*, I, 384 – 391 on Alexander's conclusions regarding church organization,

George Sharp, and William Gilcrist as its deacons. The next day being Sunday, the new church met. At the worship service, the Lord's Supper was observed for the first time by the group, and it was observed each Sunday thereafter.²⁷ Thomas and Alexander Campbell were each familiar with this practice as well as with James Haldane's argument that weekly communion was the custom of the first-century church.²⁸ The practice of observing the Lord's Supper each Sunday would become another characteristic feature of churches identified with the Restoration Movement. Richardson points out the European influences that became evident early on in the group's development and comments on further similarities they shared with the Haldanes:

It will be seen, further, that the positions taken by the Christian Association at this period were almost identical with those held by the churches established by the Haldanes, with which Alexander had become familiar during his residence in Scotland. The independence of each congregation; its government by its own rulers; the Scriptures as the only authoritative guide; the practice of lay preaching, and the toleration of infant baptism, were all points of agreement. But in other respects, there were differences, due to the differing circumstances attending these efforts at reform. The Haldanean reformation spent much of its force in battling with infidelity and Socinianism in the Established Church and in seeking to restore the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith in the work of Christ; and although, in making its appeal to the Scriptures, it was gradually led to the adoption, in part, of primitive Church government and order, it was essentially an effort to expose the doctrinal errors which had crept into the Church, and to give a wider range and greater efficiency to the means employed for the spread of the evangelical doctrines.²⁹

congregational authority, abuses of power by presbyteries and ministers, and proper purpose for ordination into the ministry.

²⁷ McAllister, 151.

²⁸ Garrison and DeGroot, 156.

²⁹ Richardson, I, 349.

The congregation decided immediately upon the necessity of building another meetinghouse. The new site was on Gilcrist's farm in the valley of Brush Run. The new location gave the congregation its historical name, Brush Run Church.³⁰ The first service was conducted in the unfinished structure on June 16, 1811, and it served as a house of worship for the Brush Run congregation until about 1828.³¹

Before the writing of the *Declaration and Address*, the question of infant baptism had surfaced as a major concern among Thomas Campbell's supporters and followers. When Campbell issued his now-famous decree, affirming that they would speak where the Scriptures speak, Andrew Munro, a bookseller, concluded that dictum would eliminate infant baptism. One of Alexander Campbell's first responses upon reading the *Declaration and Address* in October 1809 was to question whether or not the principles stated by his father would mean giving up infant baptism, for there was neither express scriptural precept nor a scriptural example for the practice. Alexander ordered all the available books on the subject of infant baptism from Munro, and he entered into an intense and comprehensive study of the subject. After searching the Greek New Testament, he concluded immersion was the mode of baptism authorized in the New Testament and practiced by the New Testament church. Furthermore, he asserted infant baptism and sprinkling were not the practice of the early church.³² Thomas Campbell, however, was not yet persuaded that the subject was crucial to the Christian faith. Out of deference to his father, Alexander said nothing further until the

³⁰ Garrison and DeGroot, 155-156. McAllister, 152.

³¹ Garrison and DeGroot, 157.

³² Garrison and DeGroot, 159; McAllister, 153.

birth of his first daughter on March 13, 1812. When the baby was born, the immediate question raised was whether to baptize her. Alexander began to re-study the topic and search out the meaning of the word *baptize* in the Greek. He became further convinced the sprinkling he had received as an infant was unauthorized by Scripture. He concluded sprinkling of infants did not constitute baptism because it is “the application of an unauthorized form to an incompetent subject.”³³ He also concluded he was, in fact, an unbaptized person.³⁴ Furthermore, he realized his inconsistency in preaching immersion while remaining unimmersed himself.³⁵

On June 12, 1812, Alexander Campbell and his wife; Thomas Campbell and his wife and daughter, Dorothea; and two other members of the Brush Run Church, upon a simple confession of their faith that Jesus is the Son of God, were baptized in Buffalo Creek by Elder Matthias Luce, a Baptist preacher.³⁶ At the next meeting of the Brush Run Church, thirteen additional members, including Foster, requested immersion. Thomas Campbell baptized each person upon their confession of Christ as the Son of God. In the weeks that followed, other members were immersed, and soon the congregation consisted almost entirely of immersed believers. However, not everyone shared the conclusion reached by the Campbells, and as a result, some former members of the Christian Association “abandoned

³³ Garrison and DeGroot, 160.

³⁴ McAllister, 156.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Garrison and DeGroot, 160. McAllister, 159.

the cause, being unwilling to follow the reformatory movement any further.”³⁷ Richardson reveals Thomas Acheson, who had placed his signature upon the *Declaration and Address* and who had earlier voiced his disapproval of abandoning the practice of sprinkling infants, was among the members who parted ways with the Brush Run Church at that time.³⁸

In adopting immersion as the mode of baptism, Alexander Campbell was “definitely the leader, and his father the follower.”³⁹ Richardson suggests, “From the moment that Thomas Campbell concluded to follow the example of his son in relation to baptism, he conceded to him in effect the guidance of the whole religious movement.”⁴⁰ According to Richardson, the father had accomplished his unique purpose of developing and promulgating the basis of Christian union.

But it was difficult for him to advance beyond the general principles laid down in the *Declaration and Address* to the practical and unforeseen results which those principles involved. . . from this hour, therefore, the positions of father and son were reversed and each tacitly occupied the position allotted to him.⁴¹

In his writing and speaking, the father would continue to exert his energies in promoting unity; however, history would reveal it was the son’s ministry that secured the legacy of Thomas Campbell.

The transition in leadership from father to son was incremental, but by the middle of

³⁷ Richardson, 1, 403.

³⁸ Ibid., 238, 403.

³⁹ Garrison and DeGroot, 160.

⁴⁰ Richardson, 1, 401. McAllister, 170.

⁴¹ Ibid., 402.

the second decade of the century, Alexander Campbell had established himself as the spokesman for the Brush Run Church. As the younger Campbell matured in his knowledge and experience, his personality thrust him to the forefront.

Thomas, continuing in his efforts at promoting unity, gladly turned over the reigns of leadership to his son. The rejection of sprinkling and the adoption of immersion as the mode of baptism was a defining moment. That incident brought Alexander into a new position of respect, not only within the Brush Run church, but in the religious community as a whole. His role was strengthened in the fall of 1814 or early 1815 when he guided the Brush Run Church into an association with the Baptists.⁴² Those differences mounted in coming years as Alexander transitioned into the leadership role. When he began to teach the unique position of the New Testament in the Christian faith and the purpose of baptism being *unto remission of sins*, it became even more evident the followers of Campbell did not consider themselves to be Baptist. Just as significantly, most Baptist churches came to look upon Campbell as a heretic and used the derisive name *Campbellite* in reference to those who accepted his teachings.

In 1847 Alexander Campbell embarked on a tour of his native country, and at the behest of churches involved in the Restoration Movement, Campbell toured England, Ireland, and Scotland. By that time, Alexander Campbell's influence had spread across the Atlantic, and he was one of the most famous Americans in Great Britain.⁴³ Campbell took

⁴² Ibid., 169. For a further discussion of the details of the union of the Brush Run Church with the Baptists, see Errett Gates, *The Early Relation and Separation of Baptists and Disciples* (Chicago: R.R. Donnelley and Sons Company, 1904.) 20ff. Gates cites the date as "in the fall of 1813).

⁴³ Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1981), 350.

with him a letter of introduction from Henry Clay which gave him access to the American ambassador in London and to both houses of Parliament. He visited more than a dozen English cities, speaking to throngs of people. In Nottingham he visited James Wallis, the editor of the *British Millennial Harbinger*.⁴⁴ In Chester, Campbell presided over the second conference of the British churches of Christ. Eighty churches reported a membership of 2,300. Many of the churches traced their beginnings back to Glas and Sandeman.⁴⁵

The trip, however, turned sour when Campbell arrived in Scotland. The Anti-Slavery Society of Scotland posted derogatory notices of Campbell wherever he spoke, accusing him of “having been a slaveholder and a defender of manstealers.”⁴⁶ Campbell drew a distinction between his position of being anti-slavery and the abolitionist position, which he opposed. Even though Campbell had freed his slaves, the Society attacked him for having been a slaveholder. They challenged him to debate James Robertson on the subject, to which Campbell responded that he would “meet any gentleman whom you may select – even Mr. Robertson himself – provided only that he is not that Reverend James Robertson who was publicly censured and excluded from the Baptist Church for violating the fifth commandment in reference to his mother.”⁴⁷ Robertson immediately sued Campbell for libel, and as a result, Campbell was arrested and taken to Bridewell prison where he was incarcerated for ten days. While in prison, the number of visitors he was permitted to have

⁴⁴ Ibid., 360.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Richardson, II, 553.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 555.

was restricted, and he lectured to as many as eleven people at a time within his small jail cell. The judge in the matter eventually ruled the warrant for his arrest was illegal and he was freed.⁴⁸ Campbell traveled to Ireland for a quick visit, as his speaking appointments had been cancelled due to his confinement in Glasgow. When he arrived in Boston on his return trip, he received a letter with devastating news. While he was in Scotland, his eleven-year-old son Wycliffe had drowned while playing in the millpond.⁴⁹

In his personality and demeanor, Alexander Campbell was well suited to assume the leadership of the movement that had been initiated by his father. Thomas provided the idea for restoration and began the process. Alexander took his father's concepts of restoration to the nation and ultimately the world. Several factors contributed to the son's success in ensuring his father's legacy. First, Thomas Campbell was inclined to continue in his role as preacher and teacher while Alexander received the praises, and the criticisms, as reformer. The examples of sectarian strife, religious confrontations, and emotionally combative experiences he endured in Ireland and in America were sufficient to last a lifetime. He was content for his days as a lightning rod to be over. As his fiftieth birthday approached on February 1, 1813, Thomas Campbell was disposed to live his life in the more peaceable pursuit of unity, allowing Alexander to lead the charge for religious reform. By no means did Thomas retire from the movement. He continued to maintain a rigorous preaching schedule as well as to write articles for *The Christian Baptist* and *The Millennial Harbinger*.

⁴⁸ Leroy Garrett, "Alexander Campbell," *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 128-129.

⁴⁹ Richardson, II, 556.

Second, Alexander Campbell possessed not only the personality of a religious leader, he also possessed the conviction of his beliefs and the skills necessary to communicate his convictions to others. His ideas began to take root while in Scotland, but it was in America that they matured and produced the fruit of religious restoration. After reading his father's *Declaration and Address*, Alexander affirmed his belief in the same principles and his determination to proclaim them. Furthermore, he stated he would never accept any compensation for preaching.⁵⁰

A third factor that contributed to ensuring Thomas Campbell's legacy was the benefit of Alexander marrying the daughter of a wealthy farmer, enabling him to honor his vow of never receiving pay for preaching. Margaret Brown and Alexander Campbell were wed on March 12, 1811. In 1814 when Margaret's father, John Brown, became aware the couple was seriously considering a move to Ohio, he gave them the deed to his farm in Bethany, Virginia (now West Virginia), which was the Campbell home for as long as they lived.⁵¹ Later the land included the family cemetery, the Campbell mansion, and Bethany College.

The fact Alexander saw debating as an effective means of propagating the principles embodied within the *Declaration and Address* was a fourth insurance of Thomas' legacy. Alexander demonstrated keen skills in not only setting forth concepts but practical applications as well. His first debate was in 1820 with John Walker, a Seceder Presbyterian minister of Mount Pleasant, Ohio, about twenty-three miles from Bethany. The issue debated was the proper subject and mode of baptism. Walker argued baptism was the symbol of

⁵⁰ Richardson, I, 275.

⁵¹ Ibid., 461.

membership within the Christian church, just as circumcision had been for Jews. Campbell replied baptism was in no way similar to circumcision because baptism was always preceded by faith. In the debate, Campbell stressed the principles of reform including the supreme authority of Scripture and the necessity of scriptural authority for every practice of the church.⁵² After the debate, Thomas, who had at first opposed debating for its often unseemly and adversarial quality, agreed with Alexander that “orderly discussion on clearly stated propositions was one of the ways by which biblical truth might be advanced.”⁵³

Alexander recognized debate as a means of reaching a wider audience for his views, and over the next quarter of a century, he engaged in four additional debates.⁵⁴ His debate with the famous skeptic Robert Owen attracted international attention.⁵⁵ Owen, of New Lanark, Scotland, and Campbell met in April 1829 in the city of Cincinnati to debate the evidences of Christianity and examine the social system advocated by Owen.⁵⁶ In Owen’s view, religion was a barrier to the promotion of man’s material pursuits and should, therefore, be eliminated from society. In 1824, in a bold experiment intended to establish the superiority of communal living, Owen purchased 30,000 acres of land in New Harmony, Indiana, and attracted several thousand participants. The venture failed after a few years, yet

⁵² McAllister and Tucker, 123-125.

⁵³ Ibid., 125.

⁵⁴ For further information on the propositions affirmed and denied and the texts of the debates, see *Campbell-Walker Debate* (Steubenville, Ohio: James Wilson, 1820); *Campbell-Maccalla Debate* (Buffaloe, Virginia : Campbell and Sala, 1824); *Campbell-Owen Debate* (Bethany, Virginia: A. Campbell, 1829); *Campbell-Purcell Debate* (Cincinnati, Ohio; J. A. James and Co., 1837); *Campbell-Rice Debate* (Lexington, Kentucky: A.T. Skillman and Son, 1844).

⁵⁵ West, 74-75.

⁵⁶ Richardson, II, 266.

Owen's aspirations were undaunted, and he continued to tour the United States, lecturing and promoting his views.

In 1828 Owen was lecturing in New Orleans and challenged the clergy to debate him. The challenge was accepted by Alexander Campbell, and the two men met in debate the following year. The meeting was conducted in the largest Methodist church building in Cincinnati; however, the attendance was so large that many people could not get into the building. On the final day of the debate, an audience of twelve hundred was present to hear "the sage of Bethany" denounce the errors of skepticism and extol the proofs and benefits of Christianity as presented in the New Testament.⁵⁷

Alexander Campbell placed significant emphasis upon circulating his views via the printed page, a fifth contribution by Alexander to his father's legacy. Leroy Garrett succinctly states, "If it was as a debater that he launched his reformation, it was as an editor that he solidified it."⁵⁸ With the emergence of the new republic, there was a simultaneous surge in the free expression of ideas through speech and especially through the medium of print. "Free inquiry" and "free communication" were among the "inalienable rights of free men."⁵⁹ The rights of individuals to express their political opinions was recognized early in the history of the country. Likewise, if opinions regarding politics and society were no longer

⁵⁷ See *The Evidences of Christianity: A Debate between Robert Owen and Alexander Campbell* (Nashville, Tennessee: McQuiddy Printing Company, 1957).

⁵⁸ See the very fine, comprehensive on Alexander Campbell by Leroy Garrett in *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 121.

⁵⁹ Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: Norton and Company, 1998), 43.

monopolized by the few, why could people not also begin to think for themselves in matters of religion?⁶⁰

A sixth factor contributed to Alexander's success in ensuring his father's legacy was the emphasis placed upon education. As Presbyterian ministers, both Thomas and Alexander Campbell had been educated for the ministry. This made them unique among many of the revivalist and reform preachers who were self-taught men. The movement Thomas Campbell launched from the pages of his *Declaration and Address* was founded not upon religious experiences or emotional displays, but upon the studious approach to the Word of God and the careful application of its precepts.

Kerber argues "the establishment of schools *followed* rather than initiated the spread of literacy."⁶¹ As an educator, Alexander Campbell appreciated the role of schools not only for the advancement of society, but also in the cause of the restoration movement. In 1818, in an effort to educate young men for the ministry, Alexander opened Buffalo Seminary at his home in Bethany. The academy attracted a large number of young men and women who wished to study under Campbell and desired to receive an excellent basic education. The seminary, however, was closed in 1823 after failing to attract the desired number of students for the ministry.⁶² By 1839 plans were again in place for another school. This time Alexander envisioned a college "for the training of young men – a college which would emphasize in its curriculum physical sciences and humanities, and include the teaching of the

⁶⁰ Hatch, 24.

⁶¹ Kerber, 46.

⁶² McAllister and Tucker, 122-123.

Bible as a textbook.”⁶³ Bethany College was chartered in March 1840. The board of Trustees elected Alexander Campbell as president with Thomas Campbell serving a president *pro tem*.⁶⁴ Thomas, now seventy-seven years of age and educated beyond most of his contemporaries, realized “the need of both an educated ministry and constituency.”⁶⁵ Not surprisingly, Campbell’s words were very similar to those of Presbyterian clergyman Lyman Beecher. In 1814 Beecher warned of the dangers when uneducated men teach the gospel: “When its chosen advocates are ignorant and unlettered men, the gospel is ‘totally incompetent’ to arrest human depravity.” Beecher argued the twelve disciples were educated by Christ for three years in order to make up for their lack of education. In a statement of hyperbole, he then said, “Illiterate men have never been the chosen instruments of God to build up his cause.”⁶⁶ Education, especially the education of ministers, was an area of emphasis common within the rank and file of Presbyterianism.

Both Thomas and Alexander Campbell implicitly agreed with Beecher on the importance of education. Opening its doors to students in 1841, Bethany College quickly became a respected institution for the education of Disciples ministers and laity.⁶⁷ Soon other colleges associated with the Restoration Movement began to appear on the landscape. Between 1840 and 1866 (the year of Alexander Campbell’s death), 115 educational

⁶³ McAllister, 241.

⁶⁴ McAllister, 242.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Hatch, , 18.

⁶⁷ McAllister and Tucker, 163.

institutions were founded by proponents of the Restoration message. Eighty-three institutions were typical high schools or academies, most of which became obsolete or were replaced by the public school system. Ministers or professional educators who sought to mirror the Bethany model founded thirty-two colleges. The mortality rate among these schools was 80 percent, a rate that persisted into the twentieth century. Between 1867 and 1899, the advocates of the Stone-Campbell movement established seventy-nine colleges. Border states of Kentucky and Missouri had twenty and eighteen colleges, respectively. The South, home to the future churches of Christ, established twenty-five colleges (Tennessee with fifteen and Texas with eight). Twelve colleges were established north of the Mason-Dixon line, with Ohio having eight. The remaining colleges were established primarily in California and Oregon. Significantly, the Restoration Movement originated the concept of campus ministries consisting of Bible chairs, divinity houses, and schools of religion within state university systems.⁶⁸

Alexander Campbell and the Rise of ‘Campbellism’

In the published version of the Walker debate, Alexander issued the challenge to meet in public discussion any reputable pedobaptist minister who believed more remained to be said. It was the only debate challenge ever given by Alexander Campbell.⁶⁹ In May, 1823 he received a response. Reverend W. L. Maccalla, a Presbyterian minister of Augusta,

⁶⁸ For a comprehensive evaluation of the educational institutions of the Restoration Movement, see “Higher Education,” *Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, 390 – 393.

⁶⁹ Garrison and DeGroot, 171.

Kentucky, agreed to debate the issue of infant sprinkling.⁷⁰ In preparing for the Maccalla debate, Campbell began to give serious attention to *the purpose* of baptism. Up to this point, he had been concerned primarily with the mode of baptism (immersion) and the proper subjects (repentant believers).⁷¹ In this debate, Alexander Campbell affirmed for the first time publicly that the purpose of baptism was unto the remission of sins.⁷² Thomas Campbell was in agreement with the conclusions of his son, and in the second issue of *The Christian Baptist* wrote,

Repent, said Peter to the convinced and convicted Jews, (*Acts* ii. 38,) and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins...Such being the gospel testimony concerning the love of God, the atonement of Christ, and the import of baptism for the remission of sins; all, therefore, that believed it, and were baptized for the remission of their sins, were as fully persuaded of their pardon and acceptance with God, through the atonement of Christ, and for his sake, as they were of any other article of the gospel testimony.⁷³

The subject of baptism by immersion was expanded to include baptism *for the remission of sins*. This teaching, which became a signal point within the Restoration Movement, was also the point at which Alexander began to receive a great deal of opposition, as his views on the efficacy of baptism were misrepresented as water regeneration by his opponents. Baptists embracing Campbell's views were mockingly called Campbellites. The derogatory term – *Campbellism* – was used by antagonists, who sought

⁷⁰ Also written as McCalla,. See Richardson, II, 71 ff.

⁷¹ Garrison and DeGroot,, 172.

⁷² Richardson, II, 80 ff.

⁷³ T.W. (Thomas Campbell), "Essay on the Proper and Primary Intention of the Gospel, and Its Proper and Immediate Effects," *The Christian Baptist* 1, no. 2 (September 1, 1823): 11-13.

to disparage Campbell and weaken his growing influence. Eventually, the derisive name Campbellite was applied to anyone who professed to believe in the doctrine of immersion unto remission of sins.⁷⁴

At the age of eighty-three, Thomas Campbell was still preaching among the congregations. Because of advancing age and deteriorating vision, his family persuaded him to live with Alexander and his wife in their home in Bethany. Eventually, total blindness shrouded his life, thus terminating his treasured habit of reading and limiting most of his social activities. In a gesture of respect, some of his close friends remarked how they would like to hear him preach one more sermon. Consenting to their request, on June 1, 1851, at the age of eighty-nine, Campbell ascended the pulpit in Bethany one final time to deliver his farewell address to the congregation. On January 4, 1854, one month short of his ninety-first birthday, Thomas Campbell completed his long life of faithful labor and was laid to rest in the Campbell family cemetery in Bethany, West Virginia.⁷⁵

Although it is now a term that has passed into obscurity, early Disciples' preachers spoke of *the plea*, referring to Thomas Campbell's plea for Christian unity as verbalized in the *Declaration and Address* and Alexander's efforts to apply those principles in the restoration of New Testament Christianity. Now two hundred years removed from the writing of the *Declaration and Address*, the unity of Christians remains a vital concern. "For the conversion of the world, nothing is essential but the union and cooperation of Christians, and nothing is essential to the union of Christians but the Apostles' teaching and

⁷⁴ Garrison and DeGroot, 192-194.

⁷⁵ Richardson, 604-605.

testimony.”⁷⁶ Neither truth nor union alone is sufficient to subdue unbelieving nations, but truth and union together are omnipotent. The “material principle” of the Restoration Movement was the unity of all Christians; the “formal principle” was the restoration of New Testament Christianity.⁷⁷

Later Disciples have not held these principles in the same balance as the founders. Instead, emphasis has often been given to one view or the other. For some, the essential nature of abiding in the revealed truth of the Scriptures has gendered an exclusiveness based upon correct *interpretations* and accurate logical deductions. For others, an emphasis upon unity at any price has wrought an inclusiveness that recognizes virtually no boundaries to fellowship. The former point of view has resulted in divisions within the Disciples of Christ, creating after the turn of the twentieth century the Church of Christ and the conservative Independent Christian Church. Holding firmly to the claim of *speaking where the Bible speaks and being silent where it is silent*, each of these groups has experienced further divisions within their ranks. On the other hand, the latter attitude of unity at any price has seen a renunciation of restorationist views, the abandonment of Thomas Campbell’s principles for biblical authority, and the surrender of any distinct Restoration identity.⁷⁸ For some Christians, the New Testament is considered more as a guide and less as a pattern in spiritual matters. This shift is due in some measure to the changing of hermeneutical

⁷⁶ Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517 – 1948* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), 238. See Hiram Van Kirk, *A History of the Theology of the Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis, 1907).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Bill Humble, *The Story of the Restoration* (Austin, Texas: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1969), 77.

paradigms as well as disparate views regarding the nature and essence of inspiration. Within the three major divergent groups there are a variety of very differing views regarding not only the essence but the validity of the Restoration principle.

According to Rouse and Neill, “there is something deeply and uniquely American about the Disciples movement.”⁷⁹ Its simplicity in organizational structure, warmth and informality in worship, suspicion of clericalism, and staunch insistence upon congregational independence all bear the marks of the American frontier.⁸⁰ Thomas Campbell’s rejection of creedalism and its sectarian divisiveness, while growing out of his experiences within the divided churches of Ulster, was confirmed by the splintered and factious churches in Pennsylvania. His legacy developed out of his lifelong message advocating the casting off of all human creeds and accepting only what was originally practiced by the early church. It was a message that found eager acceptance during the first century of the new nation’s existence.

When did Thomas Campbell arrive at the conclusions that would spark a religious revival and culminate in the establishment of the first uniquely American church? Certainly the views were in his heart and mind as early as his ministry in the Seceder congregation of Markethill, but they were not actuated until the experience of the Chartiers Presbytery trial. Following the experiences of the trial, Thomas Campbell, the *reluctant* restorationist, was thrust to the forefront of a movement that would eventually bear his image and echo his words.

⁷⁹ Rouse and Neill, 238.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 238-239.

Rick Atchley, in his paraphrase that amounted to a sarcastic jab at the conservative wing of the Restoration tradition, has effectively drawn attention once more to the enduring legacy of Thomas Campbell, the basis of the movement he launched, and the legitimate question of whether efforts to restore the unity *and* the doctrine of New Testament Christianity are as valid today as they were in 1807.

APPENDIX A

ADDRESS OF THOMAS CAMPBELL TO THE SYNOD OF IRELAND
AT BELFAST, COUNTY DOWN, A.D. 1804

Address of Thomas Campbell to The Synod of Ireland
At Belfast, County Down, A.D. 1804

Brother Moderator –

Reverend and Dear Sir – At the meeting of the Committee of Consultation in Richhill, on the second Tuesday of October last, according to appointment, for concerting a plan of union between the two bodies of Seceders in this kingdom, the evil nature and tendencies of our unhappy division occupied, for some time, the serious consideration of the Committee.

It appeared to us, indeed, a matter truly deplorable, that, in the circumstances in which the Lord has placed us, there should not exist the most perfect harmony among all the sincere friends and lovers of the truth as it is in Jesus; and that all such were not united in one common, energetic co-operation in the grand cause of truth and righteousness, under the banner of one common, comprehensive, and faithful testimony. More especially that a respectable body of professing Christians, in a declared secession from the surrounding Churches, on *account* of their heterodoxy, and other prevailing enormities, should be divided among ourselves; while, at the same time, there exists no real difference between them in doctrine, worship, discipline, or *government*.

This, our unhappy division, appeared to us an evil of no small magnitude, whether abstractly considered as inconsistent with the genius and spirit of the Christian religion, which has union, unity, and communion in faith, hope, and love, for its grand object upon earth, or whether considered in its hurtful tendencies, *as* marring and embarrassing the cause which it was the grand object of the secession to promote. For has, it not exposed the zealous contenders for a reformation, on both sides, to the contempt and jeer of the scorers, and filled the mouths of scoffers with reproach and obloquy? Has it not been fraught with the awful consequence of distracting, disturbing, and dividing the flock of the Lord's heritage, and of sowing discord among the brethren? Has it not been productive of a party spirit, both among ministers and people, stirring up and promoting an unhappy disposition of evasion and reprisals upon the boundaries of their respective communities? Has it not had an awful tendency to relax discipline, or render it abortive, by opening a door of escape to the delinquent, or by its dissuasive influence upon ministers and sessions, for fear of losing the subject, in case he should take offense? Has it not had a very embarrassing tendency with respect to many of the serious and well-meaning, when they, seeing our division, upon inquiry, find that the subject-matter of our difference is not to be found either in the Old or New Testament?

Alexander Campbell, "Address of Thomas Campbell to the Synod of Ireland," *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell* (Cincinnati: H. S. Bosworth, 1861), 210-214.

APPENDIX B

LETTER BIDDING *ADIEU* TO CHARTIERS PRESBYTERY
AND ASSOCIATE SYNOD OF NORTH AMERICA

Letter Bidding *Adieu* to Chartiers Presbytery and Associate Synod

In bidding adieu to Secederism Thomas Campbell made, on that occasion, the following address:

Taking into my most serious consideration, the present state of matters between this reverend Synod and myself, upon a review of the whole process and issue as commenced and conducted, first by the Presbytery of Chartiers, and as now issued by this reverend court, I cannot help thinking myself greatly aggrieved. For, although this Synod in part redressed the grievance I labored under by the hasty, unprecedented, and unjustifiable proceedings of said Presbytery, in holding me to the issue of a trial contrary to their manifest agreement, under the preliminary that no witnesses should be cited on either side, yet, in the issue, that Presbytery is dismissed from the bar of this Synod without the slightest notice of the sin and scandal of this breach of faith, and avowed dissimulation; for Mr. Ramsey declared, at the bar of this Synod, that it was the intention of the Presbytery to hold me to the issue of a trial, at all events. And also, without any inquiry into the *other* grounds and reasons (though professedly wishing for an accommodation by explications) of my avowed declinature of any further ministerial connection with, or subjection to, that Presbytery in its present corrupt state, (as specified in my reasons of protest and declinature given into this Synod,) yet this Synod, after examining my written declarations to said Presbytery upon the articles of libel, and also after a long and close examination of my principles relative to said articles; and not being able to point out a single error in the former, and declaring themselves satisfied with the latter, (the article upon occasional bearing excepted,) **yet proceeded to find me guilty of evasion and equivocation, in my written declarations, upon great and important articles of revealed religion;** and thence infer that I had expressed sentiments upon these articles very different from the sentiments held and professed by this Church, and upon these presumptions proceed to judge me worthy of a solemn rebuke, while as I have observed above, no notice is taken of the Presbytery's breach of faith and avowed dissimulation and flagrant injustice toward me while acting as a court of Jesus Christ, nor of any act of their maladministration toward others, which I had alleged against them, and referred to, as just grounds for my said declinature, as contained in my reasons of protest, and in other documents read and laid upon the table for the inspection of the Synod. **Surely, if presumptive evasion and equivocation justly infer a censure of rebuke on my part, their manifest breach of faith and avowed dissimulation, (I might add *treachery*,) can not be innocent and unrebukable conduct. Of the justness and propriety of this, let the world judge.**

It is with sincere reluctance, and, at the same time, **with all due respect and esteem for the brethren of this reverend Synod who have presided in the trial of my case, that I find myself in duty bound to refuse submission to their decision as *unjust* and *partial*; and**

also finally to decline their authority, while they continue thus to overlook the grievous and flagrant maladministration of the Presbytery of Chartiers. And I hereby do decline all ministerial connection with, or subjection to, the Associate Synod of North America, on account of the aforesaid corruptions and grievances; and do henceforth hold myself altogether unaffected by their decisions. And, that I may be properly understood, I will distinctly state that, while especial reference is had to the corruptions of the Presbytery of Chartiers, which constitute only a part of this Synod, the corruptions of that Presbytery now become also the corruptions of the whole Synod; because when laid open to this Synod, and protested against, the Synod pass them over without due inquiry, and without animadversion.

"THOMAS CAMPBELL."

Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell

APPENDIX C

PASSENGERS ARRIVING AT PORT OF PHILADELPHIA
MAY 15, 1807 ON THE *BRUTUS*

PASSENGERS ARRIVING AT PORT OF PHILADELPHIA
MAY 15, 1807 ON THE *BRUTUS*

ALLEN, Sam'l.
ANDERSON, James
BEATTY, Charles
BIGLEY, Thomas
BOYLE, John
BOYLE, Sarah
BRADEN, Thomas
* CAMPBELL, Thomas (Rev.)
COCHLAN, Francis
COOPER, John
DAVISON, John
DEALY, John
DEEKY, John (Rev.)
DOGHERTY, Pat
DOHERTY, James
DONAGHEY, Henry
Gallagher, Leslie
GLACHEN, Dennis
HAGAN, John
HAGGARTY, George
HAMILTON, Jesse (Mrs.)
HAMILTON, John
LASAL, Eliza (Record states 18 May, 1807)
LIGHTON, Thomas
LUNGAN, Peter
MALONE, Hugh (Record states 18 May, 1807)
McCAULEY, Robert
McCONNELL, Joel
McCONNELL, Joseph
McGILL, Michael
McLAUGHLIN, John
McMAHAN, John
McNULTY, Ennis
MILLER, David
MILLER, Jacob (Record states 18 May, 1807)
MILLICAN, Edward
MOORE, Nehemiah (Record states 18 May, 1807)
MOPES, Susan (Record states 18 May, 1807)

O NEIL, Bernard
O NEIL, John
O NEIL, Roger
RAMSEY, John
ROGERS, Willm.
STEWART, David
STEWART, James
STEWART, John
WILEY, Isaac
WYLIE, Margaret

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