



ALEXANDER CAMPBELL AND THE DILEMMA  
OF REPUBLICAN MILLENNIALISM

by

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To My Parents

Daniel S. and Deanna S. Alexander

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## CHAPTER ONE

### ALEXANDER CAMPBELL, REPUBLICAN MILLENNIALISM AND AMERICAN IDENTITY

"'Flee to the West,'" Alexander Campbell exhorted Irishman Isaac Tener, newly arrived in the United States in 1832. "This is the region of health, and peace and plenty . . . and this vast country is yet to give laws to the whole continent." Several years later when the disenchanted Tener and his wife determined to return to Ireland, Campbell implored them to reconsider, admonishing them that he "never knew one person . . . after a short residence in the United States that was ever satisfied to live in Ireland long." He assured Tener of the certainty of the American dream, insisting that if he could not "succeed in one part of this country, or in one vicinity you may in another. This land is wide enough and long enough" to guarantee success in many forms. America remained the land of promise and progress, while the "Old World" lay shackled by tradition and corruption.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Campbell to Isaac Tener, 14 July 1832, Campbell Family Papers (hereafter cited as CFP), Disciples of Christ Historical Society (hereafter cited as DCHS), Nashville; and Alexander Campbell to Isaac Tener, 24 July 1835, CFP, DCHS, Nashville.

Campbell, who wrote from both experience and conviction, illustrates the competing strains of the American outlook, offering a prism which displays the spectrum of the American experience from the early republic to the Civil War. Campbell brought with him from Ireland a profound devotion to God and a growing belief, as he wrote in 1830, that a return to "the ancient order of things," would usher in a true millennial reign where "virtue, innocence, and truth" would dominate the world. Stepping ashore in America, he believed he stood on God's Promised Land. A child of the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment, Campbell also saw in America the promise of science and the implementation of enlightened political designs. Like other Americans, Campbell soon fused his secular and religious beliefs in the deification of America itself, flourishing in a social environment that believed the new republic was the threshold of God's ordained commonwealth, a Millennial Republic.<sup>2</sup>

Alexander Campbell emigrated from Ireland in 1809, and found in the United States the promise of religious,

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<sup>2</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Prefatory Remarks," Millennial Harbinger, n.s., 2, no. 12, (December 1838): 530; Alexander Campbell, "Address, Delivered to the Students of Florence Academy, Washington County, Pa.—At Their Request. The Rank and Dignity of Man," Millennial Harbinger, n.s., 2, (December 1838): 530.

political, and material success, eventually reaping rewards in all three. Progenitor of the religious Restoration Movement in America, delegate to the 1829-1830 Virginia Constitutional Convention alongside such luminaries as John Randolph, John Marshall, James Madison, and James Monroe, and a respected voice on major antebellum social issues, Campbell died one of Virginia's wealthiest men. He not only progressed from near poverty to notable wealth, but emerged as one of his generation's more important "men of influence." Through the lens of his own success, he viewed America as God's dominion, free from an Old World plagued by "swarms of little autocrats," bound by "law crimsoned with the blood of martyrs in the cause of liberty" and doomed by "the horrors of revolution, to all the tremendous agitations which are assigned the dynasties and monarchies of Europe."<sup>3</sup>

For Campbell and men like him, America seemed more than the land of promise; it was God's chosen estate. Raised in the rigidly conservative faith of Scotch-Irish Presbyterianism and steeped in the ethos of Calvinistic contract theology, he easily embraced the belief that on this blessed continent the Creator would fulfill His

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<sup>3</sup> Campbell to Tener, 24 July 1835, CFP, DCHS, Nashville.

covenant with His people, and, with the help of the faithful, transform the world. Yet Campbell had also been schooled, both by his father and at the University of Glasgow, in the pervasive ideas of John Locke and the Scottish Enlightenment. He believed he had found in America the fulfillment of the Lockean ideas of free will while unconsciously embracing and espousing a republican millennial ideology.

Campbell's world-view merged the apparently irreconcilable ideas of Calvin and Locke; Providence had contracted with American civilization to grant mortal men the freedom to reform society. This dualistic new world of Calvin and Locke would harbor the transcendent conditions essential for the flowering of the Christian millennium. The land embraced and rewarded his optimism as Campbell deftly navigated the economic transformations moving through the Age of Jackson even as he marched in the advance guard of the Christian revivalism sweeping the land.<sup>4</sup>

Campbell's relationship with God, and his conviction that an intimate association with the Creator held out the

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<sup>4</sup> Edward Scribner, "The Lockian Influence on Campbell," The Christian Evangelist, 8 September 1938, 976.

promise of more than personal salvation, remained his deepest passion. He judged the moment ripe for a new age, and if all heeded the call for the restoration of the ancient gospel and embraced Christian unity, a "true millennial reign of intelligence, righteousness, and peace shall have begun." In the fullness of time, Campbell avowed, God created the United States of America as His chosen new Eden, a wilderness that would become the Millennial Republic.<sup>5</sup>

Campbell's articulation of his cosmology, perhaps not entirely new in substance, resonated in the context of the Jacksonian Age because it meshed with the major philosophical themes of the era. American identity echoed with the Puritan belief in "chosenness" and the anticipation that American society stood uniquely positioned to usher in a golden age for all civilizations. This deep-seated belief in an imminent millennium and

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<sup>5</sup> Campbell, "Rank and Dignity of Man," 530; Robert H. Abzug, Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 5, 7, 19, 255b 6, 55; Catherine L. Albanese, America: Religion and Religions (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), 110, 156, 224; Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," Daedalus 134, (Fall 2005), 40-56; Nathan O. Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 168; and Richard T. Hughes, "From Primitive Church to Civil Religion: The Millennial Odyssey of Alexander Campbell," Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 44 (March 1976): 87-106.

America's special mission to bring that age to fruition, lay at the foundation of both religious and secular ideology in the new republic. In consequence, much of the religious rhetoric of the age, including that of Campbell, reflected political and societal expectations of a uniquely American identity fusing both the secular and spiritual ideal. In this new land, God's kingdom would be established, both a perfect republic, and heaven on earth - a Millennial Republic.<sup>6</sup>

American citizens in the Jacksonian Era inherited a rich and complex ideology that wove disparate strands of thought into a singular American mentality. The Puritan legacy, the Enlightenment, and the assertions of the American Revolution deeply influenced them both consciously

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<sup>6</sup> In this context, and throughout this work, the word cosmology denotes a philosophical orientation that places man and nations in the context of God's universe. For Campbell this overarching view of religious ideology both encompassed God, mankind, and the cosmos, and transcended time as he focused on an ahistorical perspective of Christianity in his Restoration message. See for example Stuart McConnell's use of the term cosmology in Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900 (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1992) xiv; and Erik R. Seeman, "Reading Indians' Deathbed Scenes: Ethnohistorical and Representational Approaches," in Journal of American History, Vol. 88, No. 1 (June 2001), pp. 17-47. Richard T. Hughes discusses American identity and "chosenness" in his chapter "The Myth of the Chosen Nation," Myths America Lives By (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 19-44; Abzug, Cosmos, 55; and Daniel Walker Howe, What God Hath Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848, The Oxford History of the United States, David M. Kennedy general ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 6-7, 304-312.

and unconsciously. Henry Steele Commager posited in 1950 that "Puritanism, rationalism, and idealism were the major sources of American philosophy." The Puritan covenant with God, Enlightenment rationalism and optimism, and the republican ideal converged and underwent transformation on the American frontier, producing a distinctly American *weltanschauung*. This in turn engendered an American identity which allowed the citizenry - whether Jacksonian or Whig, antiauthoritarian or federalist, secular reformer, utopian communitarian, or religious crusader - instinctively to claim an unparalleled position in the world, inculcating them with a profound sense of Republican Millennialism.<sup>7</sup>

Almost two centuries prior to Campbell's arrival, the Puritans had brought with them to Britain's North American colonies a radical Calvinism suffused with its elements of mission and responsibility. Incontrovertibly convinced of their role as God's chosen instrument, the Puritans relished the frontier experience, and, as Catherine Albanese asserts, the new colonists from Europe "felt as if they were walking in the Garden of Eden again." Convinced

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<sup>7</sup> Henry Steele Commager, The America Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880s (Toronto: Bantam Books, Matrix Edition, 1970), 26.

that God had provided them with a fresh start, the Puritans internalized an awareness of chosenness, adding a sense of obligation. As Puritan leader John Winthrop famously articulated, the Puritans were, by the grace of God, "a city upon a hill," one charged also to embrace the opportunities He placed before them. In time this commitment to their contractual obligations to God transmogrified into the patriotic duties incumbent upon citizens of the republic.<sup>8</sup>

The Puritan's fundamental religious orientation did not leave them unaware of the major intellectual currents sweeping the West. While still in England they embraced both religious scholarship and Renaissance humanism with its scientific and rational outlook, finding common ground with the Scientific Revolution and the Age of Reason in their mutual rejection of medieval religious mysticism. Puritan excesses of the Civil War epoch of 1642-1660, however, led the English Enlightenment to reject religion generally and radical Calvinism particularly. Due to this powerful anti-Christian dynamic no synthesis of Puritan theology and Enlightenment humanism materialized in

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<sup>8</sup> Albanese, Religion, 152; David A. Hollinger and Charles Capper, eds., The American Intellectual Tradition, Volume I: 1630-1865, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1:3.



England; however, the less intense a-Christian characteristic of the American Age of Reason allowed a fusion of Puritan theology and Enlightenment thought.<sup>9</sup>

Freed from the restraints of the Old World and untainted by the failed Puritan experiment of the Interregnum, American Puritans transformed the culture of both Calvinism and classical humanism, developing a singular intellectual outlook that fused both sacred and secular world views. As they looked to God for meaning and purpose the Puritans expected from Him a rational response. This synthesis allowed basic elements of Enlightenment thought to infiltrate Puritan cosmology relatively unchecked.<sup>10</sup>

The American version of the Enlightenment, while deeply influenced by the political liberalism of its patrimony, seemed mild in comparison to its European counterpart, providing a rational foundation for the American identity without the anguish which accompanied its Old World equivalent. The nature of colonial development, both the imprint of the frontier experience and the perception that Old World restraints had been cast off,

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<sup>9</sup> Hollinger and Capper, Intellectual Tradition, 3-4, 89, 90.

<sup>10</sup> Hollinger and Capper, Intellectual Tradition, 1:3-4, 89; and Albanese, Religion, 122.

allowed the Enlightenment to permeate American society, as Commager asserted, "without setting class against class or past against future" and permitted "opposites to fuse" merging "the virtues of Puritanism without its effects [and] the illumination of the Enlightenment without its heat."<sup>11</sup>

While Puritanism, with its covenant theology, initially appeared antithetical to the Enlightenment's anti-Christian roots, the two cosmologies reveal a common structure. American Puritans believed incontrovertible laws easily understood by mankind governed their relationship with God, and ultimately that this compact with God held the potential to change society. Enlightenment philosophy similarly argued that understandable, ubiquitous rules governed the cosmos and that if followed, these must transform civilization. Removed from the turmoil of the European stage, a smoother melding of these two mentalities was made possible by men as diverse as Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and Charles Grandison Finney as they maintained the sense of mission and covenant inherent in Puritanism while embracing the rationality of

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<sup>11</sup> Commager, American Mind, 11.

the Enlightenment.<sup>12</sup>

The Enlightenment in America, however, failed to break the hold of religion on the imaginations of the people. Though Puritanism gradually lost its dominance in New England through the demise of political monopoly, the growth of competing religious sects, and the challenge (though subdued) from the Enlightenment, a sense of religious wonder and mission still infused the emerging American identity. Its tie to God was particularly underscored by a sense that Nature had constituted a new Eden in this vast land swelling with riches and promise, a place where, as explicated by Catherine Albanese, a "new order of the ages could emerge unparented out of universal nature." This identity internalized a belief that God and His mission for America successfully combined two seemingly antithetical forces - the Puritan God and the Enlightenment's deistic view of Nature. The latter became, consequently, the touchstone for both social order and religious truth, the confirmation of America's status before God. Nature stood then, as the perfect symbol for

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<sup>12</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The Age of Alexander Campbell," in The Sage of Bethany: Pioneer in Broadcloth, Perry Gresham, ed. (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1960), 32; Hollinger and Capper, Intellectual Tradition, 1:3-4, 89.

both religious and secular millennial thought.<sup>13</sup>

The American Revolution solidified the relationships between the Puritan sense of religious mission and the rationality of the Enlightenment, between Nature and national identity, giving birth to Republican Millennialism. Politically this melding of purpose and reason, Nature and millennialist fervor, translated to an all-encompassing embrace of republicanism. Seemingly both God and Nature smiled upon both the American and the republican experiment, and Americans perceived their successful break from England as a turning point in world history.<sup>14</sup>

As with the Enlightenment, however, Americans interpreted republicanism through the lens of their own experience providing them with a distinct legacy. Americans combined their intellectual development - their religious obligations and the belief in the perfectibility of society - with the republican ideal of a virtuous citizenry, meshing their political philosophy with a pious and

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<sup>13</sup> Catherine L. Albanese, "Whither the Sons (and Daughters)?," in The American Revolution: Its Character and Limits, Jack P. Greene, editor (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 365-377; and Hollinger and Capper, Intellectual Tradition, 197. See also Hughes' chapter "The Myth of Nature's Nation," in Myths, 45-65.

<sup>14</sup> Harry L. Watson, Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 43, 54; and Hughes, Myths, 100.

millennial outlook. They shrugged off the traditional religious and political dogmas, melding their desire for a more perfect society with their yearning for a more pristine relationship with God, one free from the accumulated detritus of centuries of tradition and corruption. This blending of secular and spiritual systems fostered a Republican Millennialism which sanctified and substantiated America's mission to the world, a vision allowing both the godly and the worldly to espouse a singular American cosmology.<sup>15</sup>

Like those who came before him, when Alexander Campbell disembarked in 1809 he brought his faith with him. In addition, his religious journey mirrored the same spiritual and intellectual trends that had long been fermenting in his newly adopted homeland. Raised a Presbyterian, Campbell nourished a religious faith molded by the theology of John Calvin, though he would come to reject many of the tenets of the Genevan reformer. Further, he was an educated man schooled in Lockean Enlightenment thought, and influenced by the Scottish school of Common Sense. Convinced of the progress of man, he identified this with America, and politically espoused republican virtues.

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<sup>15</sup> Hollinger and Capper, Intellectual Tradition, 89; Commager, American Mind, 29; and Abzug, Cosmos, 15, 19.

Over the course of his American Journey, Campbell struggled to synthesize the contradictory strains of Puritanism and the Enlightenment, and ultimately interwove them with a republican and millennial outlook.

Across Campbell's lifetime America moved through prodigious change and upheaval. Shedding the constraints of a barter/land-based economy, the age embraced the seminal market revolution which upended American society. By the eve of the Civil War, the economic, political, and social structure would scarcely have been recognized by the founding fathers.<sup>16</sup>

The years following the War of 1812 especially brought rapid changes to American society. Historians of this era have identified revolutions in transportation, economics, technology, politics, agriculture, finance, law and religion, as well as a profound cultural re-direction. The country nearly tripled its size from 1815-1860, as the imperatives of Manifest Destiny powered the American thrust to the Pacific. The industrial revolution, fueled by both

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<sup>16</sup> For an in-depth examination of the market revolution and the tremendous change in American Society, 1815-1850 see: Charles Sellers, The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Sean Wilentz, "Society, Politics, and the Market Revolution, 1815-1848, in Eric Foner, ed., The New American History, revised and expanded edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997); Watson, Liberty and Power; and Abzug, Cosmos Crumbling.

American energy and a flood of immigrants seeking better lives, sculpted both the rural and urban landscape. No aspect of American life remained untouched by the transformation sweeping the land. While the extent of change might seem to pale in comparison to the latter half of the nineteenth century, this age put down the foundation for America's leap to economic prominence by century's end.<sup>17</sup>

Imbued with immense optimism, nineteenth-century Americans "saw themselves as standing between a receding heroic past and a wonderful future just beginning to unfold." Yet a dark side shadowed America's promise. For all those who profited from the changes wrought by the market revolution, many others felt betrayed, disenfranchised, and left behind as progress eroded the traditional sense of community. Women, Native-Americans and minorities of all types found themselves increasingly marginalized. Subsistence farmers suffered particularly,

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<sup>17</sup> Douglas T. Miller, The Birth of Modern America, 1820-1850 (New York: Western Publishing Company, 1970), 19-41; Daniel Feller, The Jacksonian Promise: America, 1815-1840 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 3-10; Stuart Bruchey, "The Early American Industrial Revolution," in Sean Wilentz, ed., Major Problems in the Early Republic, 1787-1848 (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1992), 212-220; Robert V. Remini, The Revolutionary Age of Andrew Jackson (New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Row, 1976), 4-6; and Abzug, Cosmos, 31.

their way of life increasingly threatened as they found themselves forced into market-based farming to survive. This dramatic transformation of American life and the disenfranchisement of large parts of society engendered "sources of real and imagined disorder" and an endemic need to find direction in an increasingly bewildering world.<sup>18</sup>

Shaken by the pell-mell metamorphosis rending life in the early nineteenth century, many turned to religion for succor as well as social order and identity. In this post-revolutionary age the orthodox religions of the past such as Calvinism and Anglicanism attempted to consolidate their position in society; they viewed the new age as an opportunity to create the future as a replica of a more perfect past. Using religion as a method of reasserting their ecclesiastical authority and imprinting their values upon society, the traditional religious elites faced a crisis of dominion in the post-revolutionary age as "ordinary people asserted their right to act on the religious scene."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Feller, Jacksonian Promise, 4; Abzug, Cosmos, 6; and Sellers, Market Revolution, 8-19; Remini, Revolutionary Age, 6-8; Wilentz, "Society," 62-70; and Hatch, American Christianity, 6.

<sup>19</sup> Albanese, Religion, 5, 100; and Hatch, American Christianity, 170, 225.



Into this cauldron stepped what historian Nathan O. Hatch calls "insurgent movements": Methodists, Disciples, and Baptists who challenged the old order, fostering a more democratic religious experience and a return to the more simple church of the first century. Fearing a "self-appointed aristocracy" was attempting to "control the soul of the nation," and objecting to the anti-humanist elements of Calvinist doctrines, the insurgents asserted that Calvinism provided little assurance, as "people at the bottom end of the social scale have rarely warmed to the doctrine of predestination." The common man wanted more from religion than spiritual limbo, especially in an unstable and perplexing world. These groups, proclaiming that a relationship with God was immediately available to all, offered a more active, personal, immediate and democratic religious experience, in keeping with the frontier experience and American republican ideals.<sup>20</sup>

For some, neither the old orthodoxies nor the newer Arminianistic (or, free will) denominations, proffered sufficient solace in a tumultuous world or guaranteed entry into the calm of heaven. Sectarian groups such as Mormons

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<sup>20</sup> Hatch, American Christianity, 173, 171; Abzug, Cosmos, 5; Commager, American Mind, 29; and Schlesinger, "Alexander Campbell," 26, 30.

and Adventists looked to new prophets, claiming direct revelations from God and forming brand-new societies in a land that "looked fresh and original - like the Garden of Eden before the fall of Adam and Eve." Still others, such as Shakers, Rappites, and Oneida perfectionists, those who felt left behind by the new age, attempted to escape the tide of change by retreating from the world and recreating in closed societies that which they believed was good about the past. Each of these groups pulled away from American society in an attempt to prevent the corruption of their salvation. Still they shared with both old and new Protestants a belief that America offered humanity its "last best chance" for salvation and nurtured an environment that allowed them to live out their beliefs with God's blessing.<sup>21</sup>

While religion framed the national landscape for the majority of Jacksonian intellectuals, a minority of them viewed the New World as a potential secular Eden. Among these were Transcendentalists, socialists, and a-Christian utopianists. Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Transcendentalists looked to the inner man for in their search for utopia believing "humans were using only part of the full range of

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<sup>21</sup> Albanese, Religion, 224.

powers they possessed," and stressed individuality and self-reliance, finding in nature "the symbolic statements of deeper realities." Emerson's America and the frontier offered a unique opportunity to attain perfection. Robert Owen and the adherents of Charles Fourier took a different path, discerning in America unparalleled opportunities to found utopian societies which would encourage the development of mankind's fullest potential. These secular communitarians dedicated themselves to this world, focusing on mankind's ability to apply enlightened, scientific reasoning to human interaction and to this end they formed visionary, perfectionist communities as examples to the rest of civilization. Men like Owen stirred the American "imagination with visions of a perfect, practical future," as they endeavored to craft a "new moral world based on 'fundamental laws of nature' and the 'science of man.'"<sup>22</sup>

No matter whether the market revolution brought Americans promise and prosperity, or prompted fear and foreboding, whether they sought refuge in the old orthodoxies, new insurgencies, sectarianism, transcendentalism, or religious or secular communalism,

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<sup>22</sup> Albanese, Religion, 129; and Ronald G. Walters, American Reformers, 1815-1860, revised ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997), 63, 64.

Americans all shared a sense that they were living, for good or ill, in a new age, looking to a new millennium. Foundational to millennialist thought lay the belief that "the end of history as people knew it" approached and Americans "sensed that events of truly apocalyptic significance were unfolding before their eyes."<sup>23</sup>

This belief in the "chosenness" of the American people and the uniqueness of their American experiment, reached back to the inception of the colonies. Both Christian and secular idealists adhered to the concept of a "city upon a hill," looking westward "to begin civilization afresh in the New World 'wilderness.'" Poised on the edge of history, Americans had answered their destiny in the Revolution, severing their ties to the Old World and embarking on a bold Republican experiment. As Nathan O. Hatch stresses, Americans believed that "Democracy was the cause of God," and "only the history of the United States bore the hallmarks of God's grand plan." Through time Americans meshed their Protestant heritage with a sense of nationalism to formulate a uniquely American millennialist

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<sup>23</sup> Albanese, Religion, 110; and Hatch, American Christianity, 184.

cosmology - a singular Republican Millennialism.<sup>24</sup>

As Campbell struggled to define his vision of a Millennial Republic, other contemporary religious leaders also developed variations on the same theme. William Miller, Joseph Smith and Charles Grandison Finney were but a few of the diverse interpretations of millennialism. While some were other-worldly, or prophesying a literal new Israel set apart, others gravitated to the belief in human agency melded with national identity. Each of these men, and their many followers, believed they and the American republic occupied a singular moment in time when God would usher in His reign. And while the republic's religious pluralism provided the freedom for these differing interpretations to flourish, each of these groups sought, within their particular theology, reassurance that they had found the true path to righteousness.

Miller's anticipation of Christ's immediate return struck a responsive chord among Americans looking for the advent of the new kingdom. Interpreting prophetic passages from the Bible's book of Daniel, he predicted the moment for Christ's return was literally at hand. Embracing an otherworldly perspective, Miller and his adherents (also

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<sup>24</sup> Albanese, Religion, 164; Hatch, American Christianity, 188; and Abzug, Cosmos, 55.

known as Millerites), embraced a pre-millennial view that assumed that Messiah's immediate return signaled the advent of a thousand year Christian kingdom. Confident that the end of time was imminent, they looked to the skies from March 1843 to October 1844 anticipating Christ's physical return. While they shared many traits with other religious millennial ideologies - a presumption that a monumental struggle between good and evil was being waged on earth and that America represented the opportune time and place for the fulfillment of God's plan - historian George M. Marsden attests that pre-millennialists such as the Millerites "were prone to a more literal interpretation of the scripture and were less hopeful concerning progress" of the secular world.<sup>25</sup>

Joseph Smith and the Mormons shared the Millerites apocalyptic and adventist cosmology, however their millennial frame-of-reference was of this world. Smith and his followers, driven westward by a society fearful of growing Mormon power and repelled by their sexual practices, looked to build a New Jerusalem in the American

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<sup>25</sup> George M. Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 51. See also Albanese, Religion, 231; and Paul Conkin, American Originals: Homemade Varieties of Christianity (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 117-125.

wilderness. Smith's spiritual revelations, a complicated theology which had Jewish remnants finding their way to the North American continent and Jesus appearing in America after his resurrection, placed the republic unequivocally at the center of God's plan to redeem His creation. These revelations, which brought the Creator back into direct contact with His chosen people, squared firmly with the nation's confidence that America was at the nexus of decisive historical events and convinced the Mormons they were God's instruments on earth.<sup>26</sup>

Charles Grandison Finney shared Smith's belief that America was the centerpiece of God's plan for mankind, but Finney's view was at once smaller and larger than that of the Mormons. His cosmology was decidedly Northern and middle/upper class in orientation, designed to propagate Protestant values to the nation at large. He was in essence a proto-Calvinist who rejected predestination on the one hand but embraced the Puritan/Calvinist concept of God's contract with America on the other. Finney's perfectionism bridged the divide between the populist revivalism sweeping America and traditional Protestant institutions. Finneyite perfectionism rejected the pessimistic determinism of New

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<sup>26</sup> Hatch, American Christianity, 169; Albanese, Religion, 225-230; and Conkin, American Originals, 162-225.

England's Puritan predecessors but remained Calvinist in its belief in America's mission, and the responsibility of the Christian to address the sin they saw around them. Finney insisted that devotion to God required more than commitment to one's own salvation but also carried a responsibility to society. His militant perfectionism extended from the sacred to the secular as he called on Christians to remake both their lives and their government, asserting that "the Christian Church is designed to make aggressive movements in all directions . . . to reform individuals, communities, and government." Finney's theology especially appealed to the middle classes as it placed their salvation squarely in their own hands at the same time that it provided them the means with which to regain power in a society being transformed by the market revolution and insurgent religious organizations.<sup>27</sup>

Campbell shared many basic tenets with Miller, Smith and Finney - including a belief in divine agency, and the

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<sup>27</sup> Paul E. Johnson, A Shopkeepers Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 3. In A Shopkeeper's Millennium Johnson examines Finney's message and impact on Rochester, as well as the social, political, and economic trends that converged to give power to Finney and the Second Great Awakening. Finney quoted in Marsden, Fundamentalism, 86. Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in 19<sup>th</sup> Century America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 8; Conkin, American Originals, 280-281; Hatch, American Christianity, 196-200; Marsden, Fundamentalism, 74, 86-87.



judgment that America stood at the center of God's plan for mankind - but his cosmology was most closely aligned with that of Finney. Both, for example, asserted that education must train the individual for secular and sacred roles in society and spent a major portion of their lives supporting and participating in higher education. Additionally, Finney and Campbell were post-millennial humanists. They believed that a thousand year Christian Age would precede the Messiah's return. While overtly rejecting Puritan Covenant Theology in their denial of man's helplessness, they maintained a modified form of Calvinism which emphasized responsibilities between man and God and glorified a contract between the Creator and America. Nonetheless, despite these important similarities, Campbell and Finney's theology differed in critical areas.<sup>28</sup>

Finney's use of emotionalism in his evangelistic efforts contrasted starkly with Campbell's rational approach to salvation. Finney's sermons appealed directly to the heart as he stirred up emotional fervor in his listeners and provided a prayer bench near the pulpit for sinners whose enthusiasm moved them to confess their sins

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<sup>28</sup> Johnson, Shopkeeper, 103; Conkin, American Originals, 280-281; and Louis Cochran and Leroy Garrett, Alexander Campbell: The Man and His Mission (Dallas: Wilkinson Publishing Company, 1965), 24.

and accept the Lord. Campbell on the other hand rejected passion for a more measured, common sense approach to salvation asserting God's plan could be understood by anyone who read the Bible and applied sound judgment to the written word of the Lord. While Finney seemed to reduce salvation to an "immediate spiritual experience," Campbell insisted that the Christian walk was based on carefully thought out actions and percepts. Each individual, he asserted, could read, understand, and act on the Word of God in a rational manner; an emotional or "salvation experience" was not necessary. Additionally, Finney continued to hold a Calvinistic view of the Christian's relationship to government, going beyond social and political responsibilities to advocating the passage of laws to ensure righteous behavior from society. Campbell, however, while acknowledging the value of a government based on Christian principles, was careful to separate church and state. "The State," he averred, "is the world, not the Church," and while the Church "may seek to convert the citizens" it "can never assume, by any political expedients, to reform the State." While these areas delineated essential differences in theological methodology, Finney and Campbell's most important point of

divergence was in their respective views of America itself - views which directly impacted application of their ideology.<sup>29</sup>

Finney's blending of the sacred and the secular was decidedly narrower than Campbell's. While they shared a love of America that melded with their religious cosmology, Finney was Northern in orientation while Campbell was more expansive, eager to unite the Republic under one Christian standard. Finney propagated Northern - particularly Puritan values, and worked to transmit those principles to the nation at large. As such, while he loved the nation as a whole he desired to bring the South, spiritually wayward in its slave-based culture, back to the path of republican righteousness. Conversely, Campbell fused his faith with a holistic vision of the republic, a nation tolerant of differences in northern and southern culture. He pursued an ecumenical approach to unite God's children under one Christian, albeit American, banner, that allowed both the North and the South to hold variant attitudes toward the peculiar institution. On the surface this disagreement is

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<sup>29</sup> W. Clark Gilpan, "The Doctrine and Thought of Alexander Campbell and John W. Nevin," Midstream, An Ecumenical Journal, XIX, no. 4 (October 1988); Alexander Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery, No. III," Millennial Harbinger, series III, 2 (February 1845): 108; Marsden, Fundamentalism, 86-87; and Conkin, American Originals, 280-281.

subtle but consequential. In application the difference was enormous.

Finney, in his struggle to define the national identity, was supremely confident in the righteousness of his position. Consequently when he spoke out on issues of national importance, such as slavery, he took a Northern point-of-view, and it mattered little to him if he angered other sections of the country. Conversely, Campbell's Republican Millennialism was predicated on the unity of Christian America, and as result he was generally more circumspect on social and political controversies. As a result, Finney spoke out unequivocally against slavery, ignoring the feelings of the South, and making slavery an issue of national urgency. Finney and the Second Great Awakening divested the abolition movement of any desire for gradual reform.

Campbell, on the other hand, weighed his personal feelings about slavery against his desire to promote unity and uphold the Republican Millennium. Though personally opposed to slavery, Campbell was more judicious in his discussion of the issue, asserting that it was not a sin, should not be made a condition of fellowship, and condemning abolitionists for threatening the solidarity of

the American commonwealth. National questions, such as slavery, were not, in Campbell's estimation, salvation issues, and he believed that the advent of the Millennial Republic would make all secular concerns moot.<sup>30</sup>

In Campbell's mind, his appeal for a restoration of Primitive Christianity would bring about Christian unity and usher in the millennium, bringing salvation and perfection to America, and then the entire world. His message appealed to a broad spectrum of Americans because of his articulation of God's covenant with the United States, his belief in progress, and his message that the ahistorical environment of the republic allowed for religious and political development free of the shackles of European traditions - all of which resonated with the frontier experience. Americans believed, despite the upheavals brought about by the market revolution and religious pluralism, that all things were possible; Campbell assured them all things were indeed possible with God, through unity. He pointed out that it was evident in their history, in God's favor, and the limitless opportunity on the American frontier.

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<sup>30</sup> See Alexander Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery," Millennial Harbinger, series III, 2 (February 1845): 49-53, 67-71, 108-112, 193-196, 232-240, 257-264; and Alexander Campbell, "Rank and Dignity of Man," 530.

Millennialist thought comfortably accommodated the American psyche in the nineteenth century, and the linking of religion and national identity seemed a natural progression. The unparalleled transformation of society by the market revolution, the rapid advancement of science and technology, the religious and reform movements sweeping across the land, and a growing belief in the "manifest destiny" of the United States, all lent themselves to both a religious and secular belief in the coming millennium. For some it meant "the literal return of Christ," for others the millennium signified an "age of perfect peace in which Christ's spirit would inform every act and thought," and for still others it denoted the beginning of human perfection through enlightened and scientific thought. All believed either God or Nature had singled out America to fulfill mankind's highest calling. This Republican Millennialism formed the core of the American animus and the basis of a national secular and religious mission.<sup>31</sup>

Seeking a sense of order and an identity assuring them of a place of preeminence in a tumultuous world, Americans found in their history, their ideology and the American Revolution a sense that both God and Nature were validating

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<sup>31</sup> Abzug, Cosmos, 19; and Daniel Walker Howe, What God Hath Wrought, 6-7.

the American path. However, this blending of the secular and the religious had its limitations, as Americans failed to see the inherent dilemma posed by the fusion of secular and spiritual cosmologies. Many in society remained marginalized, bereft of any sense of community in the midst of dramatic change. Certainly, few caught up in the rapture of American millennialism cared to consider rationally the conundrum of slavery. Additionally, those in the path of American expansion and mission, particularly persons of color, found themselves shoved aside, unfairly treated, or simply killed.

Perhaps more importantly, in a world of immense change truth seemed the loser. The conditions that promoted religious liberty and supported American ideals of freedom, individuality and equality also encouraged drift, and furnished an ambiguous moral compass. If religious liberty "made the world an arena of competing truths," then where was the moral and ethical lynchpin for the American mission? How could the United States be the light and salvation of civilization with no agreement on the Truth that must bring about the millennium? American Republican Millennialism was too religious to be truly secular, but too secular to be a true moral foundation. Faced with the

imponderable questions raised by slavery, imperial expansion and war, the religious and secular synthesis failed. Americans would see their millennial aspirations dashed by the horrors of the Civil War, and their optimism and the millennialist vision would never be the same.<sup>32</sup>

Campbell's millennial outlook and complementary conviction that America was God's chosen land, geographically, politically and religiously, led him from a narrowly religious life into the public arena. As a consequence, Campbell was respected for more than his theological pronouncements; many looked to him as a guide on the fundamental social issues of his day such as slavery, education, the role of women, Manifest Destiny, war and the responsibility of Christian citizens to their country.

Campbell's synthesis of the secular and the religious reflected American values and may account in part for his popularity and success. As with Americans in general, however, Campbell's blending of the profane and the divine fell tragically to pieces when tested. While questions of

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<sup>32</sup> Abzug, Cosmos, 5, 31-32, 55; Albanese, Religion, 151, 156, 164, 224, 234, 466; Walters, Reformers, 16-17, 26; Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630-1875 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 109, 186; and Hughes, Myths, 6.



Indian rights, education, woman's rights and class tried the secular/religious synthesis, the issues of slavery and war ultimately destroyed Campbell's millennial optimism as the Civil War fractured his country and cast deep doubt on America's vision of itself as the harbinger of the new millennium.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Hughes and Allen, Illusions, 170-187.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ALEXANDER CAMPBELL'S BAPTISM INTO THE REPUBLICAN MILLENNIUM

Separated by the Atlantic Ocean and nearly a century, both James Madison and David Lloyd-George found much to praise in Alexander Campbell. Reflecting on the proceedings of the Virginia Constitutional Convention upon returning to his Montpelier home in 1830, Madison remarked that "the greatest man" at the convention was "Alexander Campbell of Brooke County." He was a "constant surprise," demonstrating his skill in debate, showing great insight and a commanding grasp of "the great questions." Furthermore, Madison proclaimed that "as an expounder of Scriptures," he had "never heard [Campbell's] equal." So eloquently did Campbell argue for equality, wider suffrage, equal representation and a more equitable judiciary, that nearly 100 years later David Lloyd-George, British Prime Minister reflected, "I learned all my democracy from Alexander Campbell and Abraham Lincoln."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas C. Campbell, "Alexander Campbell Among Some Giants of History," Discipliana, 52, no. 2 (Summer 1992) 23; William Mervin Moorhouse, "Alexander Campbell and the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829-1830," Virginia Cavalcade 24 (Spring 1975), 190; Leroy Garrett, "Campbell, Alexander (1788-1866)," in Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement, Douglas A. Foster, et al, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 113; and "Alexander Campbell," newspaper clipping, no date, collected by F. M. Rains, CFP, DCHS, Nashville, TN.

Lloyd-George's comment reflected the extent to which Campbell shared in the shaping of democracy in America and how, at the same time, the new Republic had molded the ideas of the Scot-Irish immigrant. Campbell arrived in an America marked by a growing faith in "the worth and possibility of the ordinary individual." Its citizens harbored an innate trust in both the "rationalistic and optimistic," believing that any person could attain both salvation and felicity during their earthly sojourn. This New World optimism rejected the bleak strictures of Calvinism instead looking toward a halcyon new age, both religious and secular. Campbell's theology and social ideology consequently blended seamlessly with the pervasive mood of the new Republic. In America Campbell perceived all the requisite conditions for restoring "the ancient order of things," while simultaneously producing a "state of society far superior to anything yet established on earth." He dedicated his life to facilitating the birth of both.<sup>2</sup>

Born in Antrim, Ireland on September 12, 1788,

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<sup>2</sup> Schlesinger, "Age of Alexander Campbell," 25-29; Alexander Campbell and Robert Owen, The Evidences of Christianity: A Debate Between Robert Owen, of New Lanark, Scotland and Alexander Campbell, President of Bethany College, VA. Containing an Examination of the "Social System" and all the Systems of Skepticism of Ancient and Modern Times, held in the city of Cincinnati, Ohio, in April 1829 (Nashville: McQuiddy Printing, 1946, 1829), 428; and Eva Jean Wrather, "Alexander Campbell—Portrait of a Soul: A Search for Freedom," Christian Evangelist, 8 September 1838, 966.

Campbell sprang from profoundly pietistic stock, a religious heritage which would inform his entire life. His parents, Thomas and Jane Campbell, of like heritage, imbued young Alexander with their beliefs. His grandfather, born into a Roman Catholic family, had converted to Anglicanism as an act of both faith and politics, "to serve God according to act of Parliament," but Campbell's parents would lead the family into a more intense religious tradition. Inheriting his father's searching heart, Thomas abandoned the Church of England, an institution he found sterile and unfulfilling, for the Church of Scotland, the deeply Calvinistic Presbyterians. Jane's family, French Huguenots, had fled to Ireland to escape persecution on the Continent. From these influences Alexander developed both the spirit of a religious seeker, a love of the Holy Scriptures, and a lifelong antipathy toward Catholicism.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Alexander Campbell is a daunting figure who has achieved an almost "saint-like" status within the religious movements that sprang from his Restoration teachings. Consequently, while many have examined elements of his life and teachings—such as slavery, education and his primitive theology—no one has developed a modern full-fledged study of his life. Some of the most useful works on Campbell's life are: Robert Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, Embracing a View of the Origin, Progress, and Principles of the Religious Reformation Which He Advocated, 2 vols. (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 1897-1898); Eva Jean Wrather, Alexander Campbell: Adventurer in Freedom: A Literary Biography (Ft. Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2005); and Benjamin Lyon Smith, Alexander Campbell (St. Louis Press, 1930). See also Paul Conkin, American Originals; Henry E. Webb, In Search of Christian Unity: A History of the Restoration Movement, revised ed. (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2003); Richard T. Hughes, Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America (Grand Rapids, IL: William Eerdmans Publishing, 1996); David

Campbell grew up in an erudite family. His religious and secular education drew primary influence from his father who had studied at the University of Glasgow, imbibing Common Sense philosophy. Striving to shape Alexander into a classical scholar, Thomas taught him Greek, Latin, and French languages, English literature and philosophy, and also required that he memorize passages of scripture, prose and poetry each day. Thomas imparted a deep love of learning, intellectual openness and Enlightenment expectations to his son, traits Alexander never abandoned. As a deeply Calvinistic Seceder Presbyterian who studied at seminary, Thomas also inculcated Alexander with his deeply felt Puritan orientation, filling his son's early years with the contradictory perspectives of Puritan theology and Enlightenment principles.<sup>4</sup>

By the time Alexander was ten years old, the family

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Edwin Harrell, Jr., Quest for a Christian America, 1800-1865, Volume I (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1966); and Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ: A History (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1948). Many of the biographical materials, historical and ideological, are drawn from these sources; additional sources are noted. Quoted in Richardson, Memoirs, 1:24.

<sup>4</sup> Webb, Christian Unity, 62-62, 97; Lester G. McAllister, "Thomas Campbell-Man of the Book," The Christian Evangelist, 24 February 1954, 176 and "Thomas Campbell-The Man," The Christian Evangelist, 4 October 1959, 8; Richardson, Memoirs, 1:31-37; Archibald McLean, Thomas and Alexander Campbell (Cincinnati, OH.: Foreign Christian Missionary Society, 1910), 9; Royal Humbert, "Puritan Shadows on Bethany Walls," Christian Evangelist, 8 September 1938, 987; and Hughes, "Primitive Church," 44.

farm in Northern Ireland no longer provided an adequate living. Consequently Thomas accepted an appointment as minister to the community of Ahorey. However, he moved his family to Rich Hill, a town four miles away, where he also opened a school. A congregation of Scotch Independents met in Rich Hill and Thomas joined their services on Sunday evening after fulfilling his pastoral duties in Ahorey. The Presbyterian Synod allowed but did not encourage their adherents the privilege of "occasional visiting" of other church services if there was not a Presbyterian religious service held at the same hour. In such ways both Thomas and Alexander were exposed not only to fresh ideas concerning church structure and man's role in salvation, but they also heard and discussed theology with leaders of the Congregational movement, such as Roland Hill, John Walker and James Alexander Haldane.<sup>5</sup>

The Rich Hill congregation belonged to the Independent movement in Scotland which began in 1728 when John Glas left the Presbyterian Church and adopted independent views

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<sup>5</sup> Hill was an evangelist and friend of George Whitefield. Walker believed that all Christians should minister, opposed a professional clergy and was philosophically Calvinist. James and his brother Robert devoted their time and fortune to spreading the independent message, including a call for a return to the patterns of the New Testament; they supported a preaching school, in Glasgow, for lay preachers, which was run by Greville Ewing. Ewing and his school would have a great impact on Alexander Campbell the year he studied in Scotland. Webb, Christian Unity, 66-68; and Richardson, Memoirs, 1:31-76.

such as congregational autonomy, weekly communion and financial offerings, while renouncing creeds and the need for a formal clergy. Robert Sandeman and James and Robert Haldane carried Glas' movement forward, but the followers of Sandeman tended to stir up controversy. They pressed for a stricter adherence to the New Testament Church model (including love feasts, feet-washing and a qualified community of goods) denounced all denominations as "popular" Christianity, and closed their community to outsiders. The Haldanes, in their urge to restore the purity of New Testament Christianity, promoted, as characterized by Restoration historian Henry E. Webb, a "warm, evangelistic type of preaching," and provided a more welcoming and open environment. The Rich Hill congregation followed the Haldanes footsteps "free from the dogmatic and bitter controversial spirit so characteristic of Sandeman."<sup>6</sup>

Troubled by the religious divisions of the day, Thomas and Alexander Campbell were impressed with the Rich Hill congregation's observance of individual conscience and acceptance of individual opinions. In addition to the multiple schisms within the Presbyterian Church - Seceders and anti-Sceders, Burghers and anti-Burghers, "New Lights" and "Old Lights" - Ireland was also beset by the

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<sup>6</sup> Conkin, American Originals, 17; Webb, Christian Unity, 67; and Richardson, Memoirs, 1:31-76.

Catholic/Protestant divide. In 1795 in Armagh County, the county in which the Campbell's lived, the Society of Orangemen was founded with the sole purpose of driving out, by any means, the Catholic populace. Although many Presbyterians joined the secret organization, Thomas opposed both the Orangemen and secret societies in general.<sup>7</sup>

For the Campbells, the appeal of the theology of the Independents reached beyond the call for a return to primitive Christianity; they were deeply impressed by the movement toward unity the Independents professed. Thomas had left the Anglican Church for the Church of Scotland attracted by Presbyterian piety and feeling they represented the most scriptural form of Christianity. Yet even the Presbyterians divided over various issues, among them the method by which a congregation chose its own minister, leading to formation of the Secession Church, or Seceders. Subsequent divisions concerning whether Christians must swear oaths to the local Burgher (a public official), led to Burgher and anti-Burgher parties; a controversy over the Westminster Confession and the power of civil magistrates added "Old Light" and "New Light" factions. Thomas, while technically an "Old Light," Anti-Burgher, Seceder Presbyterian, was profoundly disturbed by

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<sup>7</sup> Webb, Christian Unity, 63-65; and Richardson, Memoirs, 1:52-53.



these divisions and spent many years before he immigrated to America attempting to reconcile the schisms, particularly in Ireland where many of the divisive issues did not apply practically. These schisms, and Thomas' own desire for unity, would lead to his own break from the Presbyterian Church shortly after his arrival in America.<sup>8</sup>

There are no overt indications that the Rich Hill congregation directly impacted Thomas and Alexander Campbell's theological development. In fact, Robert Richardson, Alexander's son-in-law, sometime editor of Campbell's religious journal the Millennial Harbinger, and author of the two-volume biography Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, asserted that it did not "appear that [Alexander] acquired . . . anything more than a general knowledge" of the Independents and their history from his association with Rich Hill. It is apparent, nonetheless, that the seeds of reform were planted in both the elder and younger Campbells' minds, as much of the theology they encountered

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<sup>8</sup> For further discussion of the various factions see Garrison and DeGroot, Disciples of Christ, 127; and Foster, et al, Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement, 561, 609-611; 679-680. A copy of the Westminster Confession of Faith can be found at [http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf\\_with\\_proofs/](http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/). The Presbyterian penchant for division may, in part, explain why a large number of Restoration Movement's leaders—the Campbell's, Walter Scott, and Barton Stone, to name a few—religious background was Presbyterian. Richard Tristano, Origins of the Restoration Movements: An Intellectual History (Atlanta: Glenmary Research Center, 1988), 53-79; Webb, Christian Unity, 65; and Richardson, Memoirs, 1:39-40, 53-57.

in Rich Hill reappeared as the basis for their movement in America.<sup>9</sup>

Citing ill health, desiring greater opportunities for his children, and perhaps hoping to enjoy greater religious latitude, Thomas Campbell journeyed to America in 1807. Alexander and his mother and his siblings attempted to follow in 1808, but their ship, the Hibernia, grounded off the coast of Scotland. The family lost many possessions and records but Campbell salvaged a good portion of his many books. It was too late in the season to sail safely for America, but the wreck benefited Campbell in many ways. While waiting for rescue he reflected on the "the vanity of the aims and ambitions of human life" and as "he thought of his father's noble life, devoted to God and to the salvation of his fellow-beings," he determined at that moment to commit his life to ministry. The delay in travel also afforded him the opportunity to study at Glasgow University. It had always been Thomas' wish that Alexander might attend a university, so Campbell was amply prepared by his father to pursue the school's curricula.<sup>10</sup>

In later years Campbell would acknowledge Thomas as

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<sup>9</sup> Richardson, Memoirs, 1:71; and Webb, Christian Unity, 66-68.

<sup>10</sup> Richardson, Memoirs, 1:101, 113-114; Webb, Christian Unity, 97; and McLean, Thomas and Alexander, 10.

the single most important force in his life, whose character and industry imprinted themselves upon Alexander. The father passed on to the son the benefit of university training and imparted his admiration for Common Sense philosophy. Under his father's tutelage, Alexander learned to admire Locke and his religious and secular philosophy, and Locke's treatise, "Letters on Toleration" informed his ideological construct of religious and civil liberty. At Glasgow University his inclination toward Locke and Scottish Common Sense philosophy found reinforcement, even as his piety challenged and fused with Enlightenment cosmology.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from the educational opportunity afforded Campbell at the university, presenting his letters of introduction to Greville Ewing, an evangelist in Glasgow, was of great importance; Ewing introduced the young Campbell to professors at the university and helped the family obtain suitable housing for their stay in Glasgow. More significantly, he took a particular interest in Alexander and primarily through this association the seeds of independent religious thought took root. Richardson

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<sup>11</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1:33-34; Richard Pope, "Alexander Campbell: Bold Dreams for a Time of Crisis," *The Disciple*, 17 July 1977, 38; Gilpan, "Doctrine and Thought," 421; Ames, "Lockian Influence," 947-976; McLean, *Thomas and Alexander*, 9-10; and Conkin, *American Originals*, 15-16.

would assert that "Alexander's stay at Glasgow . . . was destined to work an entire revolution in his views," compelling him to "disengage his sympathies entirely from the Seceder denomination and every other form of Presbyterianism."<sup>12</sup>

Ewing left the Presbyterian Church in 1800 and soon identified with the work of the Haldane brothers. He subsequently opened a school to train lay preachers for the Scotch Congregational Churches - as the Haldane's congregations were now known - and preached in the Glasgow Tabernacle. Ewing's home became a focal point for the students who attended his school, and he greatly impressed Campbell, encouraging the youth to participate in the spirited religious discussions held by the enthusiastic pupils. Campbell also availed himself of his right to "occasional hearing," attending the Seceder Presbyterian Church on Sunday mornings and attending Ewing's congregation on Sunday evenings.<sup>13</sup>

The discussions with Ewing and his students, the visiting at differing denominations and his increasing study of the Independent movement stirred unrest in

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<sup>12</sup> Richardson, Memoirs, 1:128, 146: and Webb, Christian Unity, 98-99.

<sup>13</sup> Garrison and DeGroot, Disciples, 141-143; Richardson, Memoirs, 1:148-150; Tristano, Intellectual History, 80; and Webb, Christian Unity, 98-99, 100.

Campbell's mind. University and church on Sunday mornings exposed Campbell to Reform orthodoxy, but at Ewing's house he heard very different ideas about church structure, doctrinal authority, and the role of ministry. Campbell found that the theology of the Independents appealed to his own sense of free-will and belief in the ability of man to respond to God rationally. In addition, their anti-clericalism, stress on Biblical authority, and rejection of creeds particularly drew him, as they dovetailed with his strong affinity for Common Sense philosophy and the religious liberty espoused by Locke. He found himself increasingly critical of the Seceder Church he attended on Sunday mornings and began questioning whether the Presbyterian Church represented the true church of Christ.<sup>14</sup>

This fecund period of theological fermentation raised particular difficulties for Campbell; forsaking the Presbyterian Church meant turning his back on his religious upbringing and, more importantly, to break with his father whom he held in highest esteem. But for Campbell these new ideas provided him with not only a clearer path to God, but also resolved critical conflicts between the Calvinist faith of his upbringing and the rational outlook he so

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<sup>14</sup> Garrison and DeGroot, Disciples, 141-143; Richardson, Memoirs, 1:148-150; Tristano, Intellectual History, 80; and Webb, Christian Unity, 98-99, 100.

readily embraced in the course of his education. The Scotch Independents, though not rejecting a Calvinist church structure, did reject the passive nature implied in the doctrine of election which removed man from the free will to choose salvation. Although they desired, like the Puritans, to reform and restore God's 'one true Church,' their rational outlook gave man a larger role in his own redemption and his ability to perfect society. Like their American cousins, they sought to return to the purity of the past while at the same time making God relevant to the intellectual, political and social trends of the present. Campbell found Enlightenment thought appealing in its mirroring of his own intellectual nature. As a consequence, the theological and social implications of the Independents spoke to him on a fundamental level.

As the Presbyterians' season for taking communion drew near, Campbell's crisis of faith reached its apex. Still unwilling to make a complete break with the past, he completed a series of examinations to prove his worthiness for the Lord's Supper and received the required token for participation. Still, Campbell found it difficult to reconcile his personal beliefs, now reinforced by his association with the Independents, with the creeds of the Presbyterian Church. Ultimately he found himself unable to

partake of communion because he no longer regarded the Seceder Presbyterians emblematic of Christ's Church. Consequently he placed his token in the communion tray but refused the sacraments, and at that moment made his break with tradition and orthodoxy. Even as Campbell wrestled with his faith, unknown to him, his father was reaching the same conclusions in America.<sup>15</sup>

Thomas Campbell's arrival in Philadelphia coincided with the meeting of the Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian Synod. Campbell presented his credentials and was promptly assigned to the Presbytery of Chartiers in the area of western Pennsylvania where many of his neighbors from Ireland had settled. With only about 300,000 Americans living on the frontier, Thomas found the souls there scattered and bereft of adequate spiritual leadership. The shortage of ministers left many on the frontier without clergy to administer sacraments, so Campbell opened the Lord's Supper to all Presbyterians. This action, and his unorthodox stand on creeds, rational faith, and the role of the clergy, caused the Synod to charge Campbell with heresy. The clerical court barred him from preaching, but the Associate Synod of North America reinstated him,

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<sup>15</sup> Garrison and DeGroot, Disciples, 143-144; Richardson, Memoirs, 1:189-191; Tristano, Intellectual History, 80-81; and Webb, Christian Unity, 100.

finding him guilty of the charges but reversing his suspension, deciding to "rebuke and admonish" Campbell if he agreed to this censure. Eventually he submitted to the Associate Synod, but when he returned to western Pennsylvania he found himself without a congregation.<sup>16</sup>

Richard Tristano locates the embryo of the Restoration Movement in the charges brought against Thomas Campbell and his response to them. Tristano suggests a motivating factor for Campbell's journey to America might have been an expectation of greater freedom to practice his religion in a manner in keeping with his conscience. His hostility toward division, his belief in private judgment concerning the Bible, his rejection of creeds, his belief in a rational faith and his vigorous opposition to ties between church and state, all contributed to his confrontation with the Presbyterian power structure. The Synod rightfully recognized that in his reply to the charges against him Campbell deviated from the orthodox view, and his theological stance threatened the basis of their authority. His statements concerning unity, primacy of the Bible, and the role of the laity later became the theological

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<sup>16</sup> Tristano, Intellectual History, 64-65, 68-69; and Richardson, Memoirs, 1:224-225.



underpinnings of the Restoration Movement.<sup>17</sup>

Within weeks of his return to his home in Washington, Pennsylvania, Thomas Campbell broke with the Presbyterians, formally removing himself from the authority of the Presbytery and began to minister in the Washington and Allegheny area disregarding the party or church affiliation of those who came to hear him preach.

Campbell found no lack of interest in his message and as the numbers of his auditors increased he suggested, in the summer of 1809, a meeting to discuss organizing an association, not a church, to formalize their reforming efforts. It was at this meeting that Campbell formally enunciated the basic tenet of the Restoration Movement - "WHERE THE SCRIPTURES SPEAK, WE WILL SPEAK, AND WHERE THE SCRIPTURES ARE SILENT, WE ARE SILENT." For Campbell this declaration embodied his entire religious cosmology - it reiterated the primacy of the Bible, claimed the Bible as the basis for unity among Christians, and implied a call back to primitive, biblical, Christianity. In Richardson's words "It was from this moment . . . that the more intelligent ever afterward dated the formal and actual commencement of the Reformation."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Tristano, Intellectual History, 66-69.

<sup>18</sup> Richardson, Memoirs, 1: 236, 237 (Capital letters are Richardson's).

The reformers created "The Christian Association of Washington [Pennsylvania]" and laid plans to construct a meetinghouse. The structure was not intended to be used as a house of worship, as many of the reformers continued to fellowship with their home congregations; they envisioned it as a gathering place to debate biblical issues and to provide a common school. To outline and delineate the purpose of the association, a committee charged Campbell to draft a clarifying document. The resulting product, the "Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington, Washington County, Pennsylvania," became the foundational document of the Restoration Movement.<sup>19</sup>

Ordered to the printer on September 7, 1809, the pamphlet reiterated the fundamental tenets of the movement and laid out the form, membership and economic structure of the association, stressing the aim of affiliation as "for the sole purpose of promoting simple, evangelical Christianity, free from all mixture of human opinions and inventions of men." The members did not regard themselves as a church "but merely as voluntary advocates for Church reformation," coming together for the common cause of Christ. Campbell and his followers believed ardently that

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<sup>19</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1:242; Tristano, *Intellectual History*, 69-73; and Harrell, *Quest*, 1:6.

the validity of their movement was self-evident and would promote unity among the various Protestant factions. They clearly expressed an unwillingness to start a new sect but wished to stir a reform movement within existing congregations; they wanted to unify Christendom, not assert a new creed.<sup>20</sup>

The "Address" articulated Campbell's heartfelt appeal for unity and suggested how unity within the Kingdom of God could be achieved. Of the thirteen propositions contained in the "Address," the first succinctly summed up the essential foundation for Christian consensus: "[The] church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one," a body consisting of all who "profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the scriptures." The rest of the propositions reiterated the call for Christian harmony, the Bible as the sole source of God's authority on earth, and the right to private opinion.<sup>21</sup>

Alexander Campbell and the rest of the family arrived

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<sup>20</sup> From the "Declaration and Address," quoted in Richardson, Memoirs, 1: 242-244; Webb, Christian Unity, 73-76; and Harrell, Quest, 1:6.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Webb, Christian Unity, 80. A complete copy of the "Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington County, Washington, PA." can be viewed at [www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/tcampbell/da/DA-1ST.htm](http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/tcampbell/da/DA-1ST.htm). Webb, Christian Unity 79-81; Harrell, Quest, 1:6; Tristano, Intellectual History, 69-73; Conkin, American Originals, 15.

from Scotland just as Thomas was sending the "Declaration and Address" to the printer, and Alexander was "captivated" by the clarity of the document and its "decisive call to duty." The short pamphlet seemed to embody his spiritual walk to that point, and Alexander immediately pledged his life to its principles. Both father and son had traveled the same spiritual path on opposite sides of the Atlantic, but now that the family was reunited it would be the son who would assume the leading role in the Movement.<sup>22</sup>

The Campbells' choice of a radically different spiritual path marked a perhaps unwitting congruence with their new homeland's political and social milieu. Just as the American Revolution had cast off old political dogma and begun anew in a "new world," the Campbells were advocating a spiritual revolution forsaking "old world" creeds and clericalism in the hopes of ushering in a new religious age. For Alexander and Thomas, America personified their own ideology. Edward Ames notes the Campbell's religious vision flourished in America "because their democratic, common sense views of religion were so much akin to common sense notions of a democratic

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<sup>22</sup> Richardson, Memoirs, 1:274.

society."<sup>23</sup>

Alexander in particular was a product of the Enlightenment, deeply influenced by John Locke. Locke's explication of natural rights, democracy and enlightened Christianity allowed Campbell to reconcile his theology and his intellect to the age in which he lived. As Alexander saw the ideas of Locke played out in the young nation, the *novus ordo seclorum* of America promised not only a pristine secular age for mankind but also a new religious awakening as well.<sup>24</sup>

Resuming his education under the tutelage of his father, Alexander focused on his ministerial vocation. Shortly thereafter the Christian Association of Washington formed the Brush Run Church in 1811 and designated Alexander as their minister. Basing its authority solely on the right of the members to form a voluntary association, the movement melded with the Lockean imperatives of American republicanism.<sup>25</sup>

As the reformers grew in number the leadership of the movement gradually shifted from Thomas to Alexander owing

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<sup>23</sup> Ames, "Lockian Influence," 976; Louis Cochran, "Alexander Campbell and the Declaration Address," (delivered at the Convention of Christian Churches, August 31, 1959) DCHS, Nashville, 3.

<sup>24</sup> Hughes and Allen, Illusions of Innocence, 176.

<sup>25</sup> Tristano, Intellectual Origins, 82; and Webb, Christian Unity, 92, 101-103.

both to the movement's underlying contradictions, and to the personality differences between father and son. The call for unity in the "Declaration and Address" presupposed that Christians could examine the scriptures and agree on what constituted essentials; the Campbells apparently failed to appreciate the conflict inherent in their call to restore the primitive church and the necessity of defining essentials. Thomas, the gentler of the two men, believed that Christians, when confronted with the reasonable and analytical arguments of the "Declaration and Address," would readily reject centuries of heresy and traditions and unite as one body under the Restoration banner. Alexander, more contentious and aggressive than his father, believed that traditional religious institutions would be loathe to accept any framework for reform that threatened their power base. So as Thomas took a more peaceable and subdued approach to reform, Alexander assumed a more confrontational and aggressive stance, leading father and son down somewhat different paths toward Christian unity.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Discussion of the transfer of leadership from Thomas to his son Alexander is not intended to dismiss the importance of other leaders, such as Barton Stone, within the Restoration Movement. The focus of this work, however, is to examine to what degree Alexander Campbell's religious and personal journey parallels the ethos and developing identity of Jacksonian America. For an historiographic overview of the Restoration Movement, including how historians are re-evaluating the importance of Barton Stone within the movement, see Paul M. Blowers, Douglas A. Foster, and D. Newell Williams' "Stone-Campbell History Over

Richard Tristano, in The Intellectual Origins of the Restoration Movement, argues that two underlying themes, unity and truth, characterized the movement. He asserts that from the beginning the personalities of Thomas and Alexander and their personal choices of emphasis - unity or truth - took them down divergent roads. Although each defined their cosmology by an urge to unite Christendom, Alexander's desire for truth - specifically the restoration of the ancient church - often overshadowed, or at least obscured, his hope for the unification of God's people. Though Alexander believed unity would usher in a Christian Millennium, friction and division were implicit in his desire to define essentials and lead God's people back to the primitive church. The issue of baptism sharply illustrated this paradox.<sup>27</sup>

The birth of Alexander's first child in March 1812 precipitated questions concerning the definition of the rite of baptism. No longer able to "'Let it slip.' - to pass it by as a matter of little relative importance," Campbell scoured the scriptures and found no precedent for infant baptism. Remaining faithful to the movement's

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Three Centuries," in Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement, xxi-xxxv. Tristano, Intellectual Origins, 83-84.

<sup>27</sup> Tristano, Intellectual History, 83-84.

directive to "speak where the scriptures speak," Campbell not only rejected infant baptism, but in light of the New Testament dictum that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," was convicted of the necessity of adult immersion as the appropriate method of this sacrament.<sup>28</sup>

Once Campbell made up his mind of the necessity of baptism by immersion as a requirement of his walk with God, he contacted a local Baptist minister to perform the sacrament. Campbell stopped at his father's house to discuss his decision and as a result Campbell, his wife Margaret, his parents, and his sister Dorothea were baptized by Matthias Luce in the waters of Buffaloe Creek. While this act appeared to put the Restoration Movement squarely in the camp of the Baptists, Campbells' baptism differed in important aspects; Alexander instructed Luce that in accordance with the precise "pattern given in the New Testament," no recounting of a "religious experience" would be required of the initiates; they would be accepted for baptism solely on their simple confession of their faith in Jesus Christ as the son of God.<sup>29</sup>

The decision to adhere to baptism as described in the New Testament - the immersion in water of believing adults

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<sup>28</sup> Richardson, Memoirs, 1:393, 396.

<sup>29</sup> Richardson, Memoirs, 1:395-398.



- had momentous ramifications for the Restoration Movement. Many historians mark Thomas' decision to follow his son's decision on the issue of baptism as the moment leadership passed to Alexander, a change that would have profound and permanent consequences for the movement's direction and tenor. And although Alexander Campbell did not recognize it at the time, the family's immersion sowed the first seeds of dissension in the movement.<sup>30</sup>

As Alexander took the first tentative steps in defining the essentials of Christianity, he unwittingly undermined his thrust toward unity. Some disciples bridled at abandoning infant baptism, others quarreled with the essentiality of immersion, while still others questioned the appropriateness of baptizing adults who could cite no discernable transforming religious experience to confirm a call from the Lord. From the days of Martin Luther's summons to reform, the subject of baptism held a place of contention, and for the Restoration Movement it would cause internal discord as it led them further away from orthodox Protestantism. Two other important events followed Campbell's baptism: the establishment of formal fellowship with the Baptists, and Campbell's pursuit of the definition

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<sup>30</sup> Tristano, Intellectual History, 83; Conkin, American Originals, 19; Webb, Christian Unity, 106; and Harrell, Quest, 7.

of essentials in his journal, the Christian Baptist.<sup>31</sup>

In the fall of 1813, Campbell's Brush Run congregation joined the Redstone Baptist Association, with the caveat that they rejected all creeds, regardless of any creeds adopted by the member congregations. It is not entirely clear why Campbell and his followers felt it necessary to join an association, but whatever the reason, their relationship with the Baptists remained strained at best even though Campbell quickly rose to prominence among the Baptist hierarchy by virtue of his education, oratorical skills and sharp intelligence. Internal opposition to Campbell's theology and his role quickly grew within broader Baptist ranks. Campbell's "Sermon on the Law," delivered in 1816, illustrates this tension.<sup>32</sup>

The Redstone Association held a large gathering in September 1816 and Campbell was initially invited to speak, but resistance from Baptists ministers forced the invitation's retraction. Needing to fill a last minute opening, the group again invited Campbell to speak on September 1. At this meeting Campbell delivered his

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<sup>31</sup> Richardson, Memoirs, 1:237-238; Tristano, Intellectual History, 84-85; and Hughes, Ancient Faith, 22-28.

<sup>32</sup> A complete copy of the Confession of Faith can be viewed at [www.voxdeibaptist.org/1742\\_philadelphia.htm](http://www.voxdeibaptist.org/1742_philadelphia.htm). Conkin, American Originals, 19; Harrell, Quest, 7; Webb, Christian Unity, 106; and Tristano, Intellectual History, 85.

renowned "Sermon on the Law," a discourse which immediately ignited long-simmering hostilities toward him and his followers. In his sermon, Campbell divided God's law into two dispensations, Mosaic and Christian, arguing that the teaching of Christ and the Apostles superseded those of Moses and the Old Testament. He reasoned, consequently, that the Old Testament held no authority over Christians.<sup>33</sup>

To Campbell the application of Enlightenment principles of scientific method, historical criticism, and Common Sense philosophy to the interpretation of scripture, seemed both self-evident and uncontroversial. But in fact many orthodox Christian traditions selectively used Old Testament precepts to legitimize such diverse doctrines as infant baptism, tithing, and the application of Jewish Sabbath regulations such as restrictions on work, and definitions of acceptable behavior to the Christian's Sunday. The "Sermon on the Law" not only undermined Calvinist creeds, but also further jeopardized Campbell's association with the Baptists.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Hughes, Ancient Faith, 31; Tristano, Intellectual History, 86-87; McLean, Thomas and Alexander, 16; and Lester McAllister, "A. Campbell After 175 Years," The Christian, 8 September 1963, 4-5.

<sup>34</sup> Conkin, American Originals, 19; Cochran and Garrett, Man and His Mission, 12; McAllister, "After 175 Years," 4-5; "Reinterpreting Alexander Campbell," editorial in Christian Evangelist, 8 September 1938, 957; Cochran, "Declaration and Address," 4, and Webb, Christian Unity, 106-107.

By August, 1823, Campbell's relationship with the Redstone Association reached a critical and uncomfortable juncture. The Redstone Association was, as Paul Conkin characterizes it in American Originals: Homemade Varieties of Christianity, loosely Calvinistic, and as Campbell's independent and overtly freewill theology made headway among a number of the congregations, tensions arose between prominent Association members and the reformers. Campbell's opponents within the Association felt confident enough in their position to use the August Association meeting as a vehicle for confronting and extirpating the menace they saw in Campbell. As the meeting began, however, Campbell announced that he and the Brush Run congregation had formally allied with a more freewill confederation in Ohio, the Mahoning Association. This alliance, though more compatible with reform ideology, would also prove to be as tenuous and fractious as the prior affiliation.<sup>35</sup>

Campbell's rapid ascent as a religious reformer was also matched by the extent to which he successfully melded with American society. Campbell exemplified the immigrant ideal, integrating himself into the politics, society and culture of the age. He started a family, pursued several productive business ventures, served in the 1829-1830

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<sup>35</sup> Conkin, American Originals, 18, 22, 23; Webb, Christian Unity, 72.

Virginia Constitutional Convention, lectured extensively, debated the current religious and social issues, established a college, and edited two influential journals, all while solidifying the religious foundation from which he would lead the Restoration Movement.

On March 12, 1811, Alexander married Margaret Brown, the daughter of a prominent Virginia businessman, John Brown. In an effort to bring Alexander and Margaret close to the larger family, Brown deeded a broad tract of land to his new son-in-law. This union, and gift of land that accompanied it, was decisive to the Restoration Movement and the role which Campbell played. Early in his ministry Alexander had determined never to accept any remuneration for his preaching, and Thomas cautioned that this meant a life of poverty. However, his marriage to Margaret provided a financial foundation on which Alexander built his ministry and his many business enterprises. Upon his death, not only had Campbell maintained his oath to ministerial tasks without pay but he also left an estate worth, a then-sizable, \$200,000.<sup>36</sup>

By all accounts the marriage was a happy one;

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<sup>36</sup> Cochran and Garrett, Man and His Mission, 5; Irvin T. Green, "The Influence of the Campbell Home and Farm on the History of the Disciples of Christ," Christian Evangelist, 8 September 1938, 982; McLean, Thomas and Alexander, 60; Cochran, "Declaration and Address," 2; Richardson, Memoirs, 1:175.

Alexander later wrote of his Margaret, "Heaven lent me that precious gift more than sixteen years, of the value of which I never did form an over estimate." Alexander and Margaret had eight children, but only five survived Margaret, none outlived Alexander; "death was a frequent and lingering visitor" in the Campbell home. Margaret died of tuberculosis on October 22, 1827, leaving Alexander to care for five girls under the age of fifteen. Deeply concerned for the future of her family, Margaret had implored Alexander to marry her devoted friend Selina Bakewell, and he complied less than a year later. Selina and four of their six children would survive Alexander.<sup>37</sup>

Selina proved a capable helpmeet to Alexander. She cared for his children, ran the household, supported his ministry, and conducted his financial affairs during his frequent and lengthy absences. Selina also appreciated Alexander's place in history and determined to preserve all her husband's correspondence and writings. Following

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<sup>37</sup> Alexander Campbell to Selina Campbell, 12 March 1839, CFP, DCHS, Nashville; Cochran and Garrett, Man and His Mission, 5, 9. For more information on Selina Campbell see Selina Huntington Campbell, Home Life and Reminiscences of Alexander Campbell by his wife, Selina Campbell (St. Louis: J Burns, 1882) and Loretta Long, The Life of Selina Campbell: A Fellow Soldier in the Cause of Restoration (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001); Louis Cochran, "The Private Life of Alexander Campbell (an address at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society Breakfast, First Annual Assembly, Tennessee Association of Churches, Oak Ridge, TN, April 24, 1966), DCHS, Nashville, 3-4, 7.

Alexander's death, she spent her remaining years guarding his legacy.<sup>38</sup>

After his 1811 marriage Campbell established himself in the several vocations that would mark the remainder of his life. He successfully moved into his adopted nation's vibrant culture, excelling at everything he put his hand to: farmer, land speculator, educator, printer, debater, preacher, author and reformer. He expanded his land holdings from the original 300 acre gift to nearly 2000 acres, including Bethany, his farm in western Virginia, and properties in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. At these holdings Campbell practiced the newest "scientific farming" methods and invested heavily in raising Merino sheep. To care for his flock, one of the largest in Virginia, Campbell brought a shepherd from Scotland and maintained an active interest in sheep-raising, attending wool growers conventions and judging sheep at county fairs.<sup>39</sup>

For Campbell, believing that proper instruction would produce a Christian citizen better equipped to facilitate the coming millennial age, education remained uppermost in

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<sup>38</sup> Cochran and Garrett, Man and His Mission, 5, 9; Cochran, "Private Life," 3-4, 7; H. E. Matheny, "Bishop Alexander, Manuscript Collector's Nightmare," Manuscripts 11, no. 3 (Summer 1959), 37; and McLean, Thomas and Alexander, 60.

<sup>39</sup> Cochran and Garrett, Man and His Mission, 18; Wrathner, "Portrait of A Soul," 965; Matheny, "Bishop Alexander," 37; and Green, "Campbell Home and Farm," 982.

his mind. From 1818 to 1823 he conducted the Buffalo Seminary in his Virginia home, following the lead of his uncles, father, and sister, all of whom presided over schools at one time or another. Moving the family into their home's basement, students occupied the upstairs studying classical and religious subjects. But Campbell closed the seminary in 1823 because it never fulfilled his intended purpose to "train a student in both classical and practical subjects and in the Christian faith," and because of the physical and financial toll it exacted on his family. For the rest of his life Alexander bore a degree of guilt, believing that living in the damp basement hastened the end of Margaret's life. His educational dreams would, however, be revived in 1840 with the foundation of Bethany College.<sup>40</sup>

The same year that Campbell shuttered the seminary he built facilities on Buffalo Creek to house the equipment he had assembled for a printing operation. He hired a printer and commenced publishing religious journals, hymnbooks, transcripts of his debates, his translation of the New Testament, and a variety of tracts and monographs. Although subscriptions and sales supported his printing

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<sup>40</sup> McAllister, "After 175 Years," 5; Green, "Campbell Home and Farm," 982-983; and Matheny, "Bishop Alexander," 36-37.



press, and his position as postmaster allowed him to frank his mail for a few years, a large part of its operating costs came from Campbell's own pocket. The press proved a valuable tool in disseminating his movement's ideas, and from 1823-1830 alone, it churned out 46,000 items. Eventually Campbell's religious journals, other writings, and debates circulated in every state of the union and crossed both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.<sup>41</sup>

Some from across the Atlantic shared Campbell's belief in the unique possibilities of America. In 1828, the British philanthropist and utopian socialist, Robert Owen, challenged the clergy in America to debate him on the question of whether religion could answer the social questions of the age. Like Campbell, Owen wanted to usher in the millennium, but he denied that Christianity was sufficient to address the day's social problems. Campbell, who by now deemed a "week's worth of debating . . . equal to a year's preaching," accepted the challenge, and in

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<sup>41</sup> In 1830 the franking privilege was removed from postmasters all over the country; Campbell remained postmaster for Bethany for nearly thirty years. Gary Holloway, "Alexander Campbell as a Publisher," Restoration Quarterly, 37, (January 1995), 31; Cochran and Garrett, Man and His Mission, 18; McLean, Thomas and Alexander," 26-27; Francis Trollope, Domestic Manners of the Americans, edited with a history of Mrs. Trollope's Adventures in America, Donald Smalley, ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), fn 146; Green, "Campbell Home and Farm," 983-984; and Frederick D. Power, Sketches of Our Pioneers (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1898), 41, 43.

doing so became the "champion of all Christendom."<sup>42</sup>

Robert Owen attained considerable renown for his wealth, his ardent support of social reform, his secular outlook and his practical application of those ideas. His belief that properly applied scientific methods must produce an ideal society precluded any religious component, an anti-Christian perspective reflecting his roots in the European Enlightenment. In an attempt to introduce his rational formula for a perfect society, Owen purchased the community of Harmonia, Indiana, from religious reformer George Rapp and established the social experiment called New Harmony. Touting it as an intellectual and scientific center, Owen designed the community on his template of socialism and secular perfectionism. By the time of the Owen-Campbell debate, however, the experiment had collapsed.<sup>43</sup>

Prior to the debate, Owen and Campbell met in Bethany to hammer out the details of their coming encounter. The men formed an instant friendship as they discovered they

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<sup>42</sup> Richardson, Memoirs, 2:90; Cochran, "Declaration and Address," 6; John Ervin Kirkpatrick, Timothy Flint. pioneer, missionary, author, editor, 1780-1840: the story of his life among the pioneers and frontiersmen in the Ohio and Mississippi Valley, and in New England and the South (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1911), 189; and Cochran and Garrett, Man and His Mission, 12.

<sup>43</sup> Walters, American Reformers, 61-64; Harrell, Quest, 81; Webb, Christian Unity, 121-122; and Feller, Jacksonian Promise, 77-80.

had much in common: both matured as children of the Enlightenment, both enjoyed fine educations and had succeeded in business, and both sought to ameliorate the condition of mankind. Yet their differences remained obvious: Campbell successfully participated in the market revolution and believed ardently in the republican experiment, while Owen held up the socialist ideal. Owen's belief that properly applied scientific methods would produce an ideal society denied any divine element and placed him squarely in opposition to Campbell's dream of a perfect society that could only be realized by the unity of God's people under heavenly direction. To articulate these differences publically, they agreed to meet in Cincinnati on April 13, 1829; the debate lasted until April 21. with a day's hiatus on Sunday.<sup>44</sup>

Although Owens' original challenge was to debate the expediency of Christian principles versus humanistic reform, the question of a theistic versus atheistic millennialism ultimately involved broader issues of capitalism versus socialism and liberty versus utopianism. Campbell found himself defending not only Christianity but

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<sup>44</sup> Eva Jean Wrather, "Campbell-Marx to Jackson," in Lectures in Honor of Alexander Campbell's Bicentennial, 1788-1988, with an introduction by James Seale (Nashville: DCHS, 1988), 150; Webb, Christian Unity, 122-123; and Richardson, Memoirs, 2:241-243.

also the distinctive American commitment to democracy and the market economy against Owen's singular socialist premises. Many of those who attended the contest deemed Campbell the winner. At one point, when Campbell asked the audience to indicate their support for one or the other, Owen's support was minuscule.<sup>45</sup>

A sense of individualism underscored the American identity to a far larger extent than Owen anticipated. Supported by a belief in the essential principles of republicanism and, more importantly, by a conviction of a calling as a people set apart by God, most Americans easily embraced Campbell's themes. While they might align themselves with Owen's belief in the ability of the human race to produce the millennium, most Americans could not relate to an ideal that excluded religious mission or New World republicanism. In short, Owen's outlook seemed, to the American mind, too sterile, too European. Campbell, on the other hand, exemplified the American model; he was convinced that God had chosen this new land to advance a Christian and republican utopia. Defense of the American

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<sup>45</sup> Webb, Christian Unity, 123; Trollope, Domestic Manners, 153; and Howe, What God Hath Wrought, 446-447.

way grew naturally from his core cosmology.<sup>46</sup>

With the help of Owen and a reporter, Campbell published the proceedings, Debate on the Evidences of Christianity, through his press in 1829. By this means the meeting with Owen garnered considerable recognition for Campbell. Already known regionally in western Virginia as an astute businessman, educator and religious reformer, Campbell now earned a national and international audience as a defender of Christianity and of the American economic and political system.<sup>47</sup>

Despite his rise as a religious leader, Campbell never lost touch with his political environment, and in late 1829 he turned from defending America against socialism to fighting for expanded rights for his fellow citizens. As a delegate to the Virginia Constitutional Convention, the initially hesitant Campbell had been prevailed upon by his neighbors in Brooke County to represent their interests at the convention. A rift had opened between the more democratic frontiersman of western Virginia and the eastern seaboard aristocrats, as many in the west judged the

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<sup>46</sup> Eva Jean Wrather, "Alexander Campbell on 'Union of Christians,'" Christian Evangelist, 27 May 1953, 494; Webb, Christian Unity, 123-124; and Walters, American Reformers, 63.

<sup>47</sup> Webb, Christian Unity, 123; and Wrather, "Marx to Jackson," 153-154.

state's constitution too obsolete and ill-framed to represent their interests. Campbell's success in Cincinnati convinced his fellows he should be their champion.<sup>48</sup>

At the convention, which ran from October 1829 to February 1830, Campbell took his place among the notables of Virginia politics. Delegates included such notables as James Madison, James Monroe, John Marshall, John Randolph, and John Tyler. Campbell, the only clergyman to serve as a representative, took the opportunity to preach the gospel and disseminate his reformist theology during the convention's numerous adjournments, but he made it clear he had come fundamentally to pursue a well-defined political agenda.<sup>49</sup>

"Emerging as the most radical democrat among the Western delegates," Campbell three times addressed the assembly and engaged vigorously in its debate. He advocated expanded suffrage, reform of the judiciary, equitable representation, and free public education. He also argued, privately, for the end of slavery through gradual, compensated emancipation. Unfortunately for Campbell and

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<sup>48</sup> Wrather, "Marx to Jackson," 155; Moorhouse, "Virginia Constitutional Convention," 185; and Webb, Christian Unity, 124.

<sup>49</sup> Garrison and DeGroot, Disciples, 196; Wrather, "Portrait of A Soul," 966; Cochran and Garrett, Man and His Mission, 10; and Perry Gresham, "Alexander Campbell—Schoolmaster," in Sage of Bethany, 13-14.

western Virginians, the aristocratic East prevailed and Alexander returned home calling for rejection of the proposed document.<sup>50</sup>

Despite this foray into politics, Campbell's primary focus remained the Restoration Movement. His chief vehicle for disseminating his religious views from 1823 to 1830 was his journal the Christian Baptist. A debate on baptism with Presbyterian minister John Walker in 1820, and the subsequent successful publication of those proceedings, convinced Campbell that a journal provided the ideal platform for reaching a wider audience with the fundamental precepts of the reform crusade. Campbell perceived the necessary first step toward 'oneness in Christ' as the explication and then eradication of the encrustations of centuries of tradition and corruption which, he argued, obscured the simplicity of the Christian message. Campbell used the journal to define the biblical essentials upon which Christian unity and purity must be achieved, while unwittingly exposing the internal tension between the truth and unity motives. The very act of defining essentials undermined the ability of his adherents to unite and fed dissension within the Restoration Movement as it widened the gulf between the reformers and other Christian

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<sup>50</sup> Wrather, "Marx to Jackson," 156.

communities.<sup>51</sup>

It was not, however, simply the definitions of essentials in the Christian Baptist that threatened the unity Campbell espoused; the harsh note struck by the editor had its own distinct impact. For seven years Campbell used the Christian Baptist to attack Calvinism, church hierarchy and the ordained clergy, and to foster a revolutionary brand of religious primitivism and equality among Christians. Though his stated purpose was to provide the basic tenets of a reformed theology which would unite all believers as one body in Christ, his impassioned and often caustic attempts to restore the ancient order served paradoxically to inflame controversy and heighten division, particularly between the Restoration Movement and the Baptists. In Campbell's assessment, however, the journal was a success as it both disseminated his call for a return to the ancient order while sparking widespread debate on the essentials of the Christian religion.<sup>52</sup>

Regardless of the impact of the Christian Baptist, by 1830 both Campbell and the Restoration Movement stood at a crossroads. Campbell began to temper his rhetoric, understanding the need for a broader and more positive

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<sup>51</sup> Tristano, Intellectual History, 93-94; Hughes, Ancient Faith, 21-22, 24-25; and Webb, Christian Unity, 112-113.

<sup>52</sup> Webb, Christian Unity, 113, 419-420.



vehicle for his reformist theology and millennial outlook. In addition, Campbell's increasing identification with republican millennialism, his successful incorporation into the market revolution, his participation in the Virginia Constitutional Convention, and his debate with Robert Owen further moderated his outlook. More and more, Campbell perceived the republican experiment with its American religious pluralism as an ideal vehicle for his millennialist aspirations. The time seemed ripe for a new editorial direction, so Campbell discontinued publication of the Christian Baptist and created a new journal, the Millennial Harbinger.

The Christian Baptist years also dissolved the remaining ties between the reformers and the Baptists, as Campbell's adherents were increasingly forced to leave the various associations with which they were affiliated. Despite their aversion to birthing a new religious faction, it was evident that they were ready to stand alone, and the cessation of the periodical in July, 1830 coincided with the severing of the last bonds with the Baptists.<sup>53</sup>

The Millennial Harbinger which Campbell launched in January, 1830, reflected his renewed focus on unity, his millennialist ambitions for Christ's church and his growing

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<sup>53</sup> Harrell, Quest, 6-7; Tristano, Intellectual History, 93-95; and Webb, Christian Unity, 119.

belief in the promise of American republicanism as the agency by which the new age would be achieved. In his early years he had focused on the narrow construct of radical reformed primitivism, but by 1830 Campbell had moved on to broader avenues. He now embraced an ideology more acceptable to the larger Protestant culture, unconsciously blending it with the secular needs of American society. The new journal reflected this new phase, which paralleled republican millennialism in structure and cosmology as well as in its irresolute tensions.

His burgeoning role as the defender of the nation - both religiously and secularly - and his intimate participation in the American political system, seemed to convince Campbell of the ability of the body politic to achieve unity and pluralism through the "theology of the Republic." America and the Restoration needed one another. Only the ahistorical, primitive environs of America could produce the religious millennium, and only through the Christian millennium could the new Republic fulfill its promise. As his citizenship in America now integrated with his citizenship in God's kingdom, Campbell stood on the verge of accepting a *de facto* American civil religion as he declared "a new age is soon to be born . . . . Expectation

is on tiptoe".<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Preface," Millennial Harbinger 4, (January 1833): 3; Cochran and Garrett, Man and His Mission, 42; Hughes, "Primitive Church," 96; Pope, "Bold Dreams," 39; and Wrather, "Portrait of A Soul," 966.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ALEXANDER CAMPBELL AND THE MILLENNIAL MESSAGE

"Time the great innovator, brings to pass everything," giving "maturity to everything," wrote Alexander Campbell in the inaugural issue of the Millennial Harbinger, debuting January 4, 1830. Time had indeed changed much for Campbell since he had arrived in America in 1809; by 1830 he was no longer a Jacksonian Era man on the make, but a recognized person of influence whose ideas others solicited. While Campbell continued to participate in the market revolution, he enlarged his landholdings and herds, published a library of journals, books and other manuscripts, and pursued such business opportunities as arose, he increasingly left his wife, Selina, to oversee his fiscal affairs to devote himself to expatiating his religious and secular cosmology. With economic independence assured, Campbell focused on the message of the Republican Millennium, blending his religious theology with an abiding love for his adopted country.<sup>1</sup>

Even as time matured Campbell's outlook, moving him

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Prefatory Remarks," Millennial Harbinger, 1 (January 1835): 3.

from the divisive tone of the Christian Baptist to the more ecumenical outreach of his new journal, he also perceived a new maturity in the republic. American Protestantism, within the context of the American state and the religious pluralism it engendered, was making inroads in unifying the populace.<sup>2</sup>

Campbell himself pursued this mission of unity, at least rhetorically, within the Restoration cause. America seemed to be rapidly achieving a singular outlook even as Campbell struggled to bring unity to his movement. As a consequence, Campbell increasingly fused his sacred outlook with his growing belief in America's special calling, emerging not only as a defender of American Protestantism itself, but also of the political and social ethos that it spawned. He used the multiple means at his disposal to forward a religious message of primitive restorationism melded with a faith in the American way of life. Those who came under Campbell's influence, by whatever means, received the same fundamental message: the salvation of the world demanded the ushering in of the Christian millennium, and only in America, God's chosen vehicle for liberty and

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<sup>2</sup> Hughes and Allen, Illusions of Innocence, 172.

freedom, could that dream be achieved.<sup>3</sup>

Campbell's call for a return to primitive Christianity merged with his Enlightenment mentality and his love for country as he called for a rejection of Old World structures, a return to the purity of 'first times,' and a rational, Lockean interpretation of the Bible. In his mind, centuries of Catholic tradition and Protestant division had isolated humankind from their Creator, and a return to the purity of the first century church was the only remedy for redemption, both personal and globally. Campbell's desire to return to the pristine origins of Christianity paralleled the burgeoning American identity. For many, America represented more than just a break from Old World tradition; the American landscape represented a return to the Garden of Eden. In the new republic, consequently, the people came to worship "nature and nature's God," and "viewed their nation as fundamentally natural." As historians Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen point out, Americans envisioned the republic as a "virtual representation of the way God intended things to be from the beginning," asserting a unique locus in the history of the world. The republican experiment, the special blessing of nature, and the unlimited potential of science,

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<sup>3</sup> Hughes and Allen, Illusions of Innocence, 172-173; and Hughes, Ancient Faith, 29-31, 33, 36-37.

positioned America as the conduit to a better world, a millennium of earthly perfection. While this mindset, particularly the deification of nature, was essentially Deist, it melded easily with American Protestant theology, particularly Restorationism.<sup>4</sup>

In common with American cosmology, Restoration theology assumed a special place in the Creator's plan and a return to God's original intent. Campbell was confident that a return to the "ancient order of things" would restore humanity to God's favor and, united under the Restoration banner a monolithic Christendom, would usher in a Golden Age. To attain this, Christians must shed their traditions, dogmas and creeds and conform to the essentials of the biblical Christian walk; the millennium would then commence. Unity became the rallying cry, a revival of primitive Christianity the method, and America the milieu. Campbell's Restoration theology blended nicely with the freedom emblematic of the American Republic. Preached across the Midwest and upper South, his message fell on the receptive ears of people who embraced the frontier and rejected Old World traditions. His words meshed well with American's belief in their unique and special position in the world. Campbell's view of the Bible as a constitution,

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<sup>4</sup> Hughes and Allen, Illusions of Innocence, 209-210.

and his belief that the inherent common sense of ordinary men and women allowed each of them to forge their own personal relationship with their Creator, mirrored their faith in the republican experiment. The Lockean values expressed in the nation's Constitution assured them that the egalitarian values of their nation and their return to the pristine values (both politically and religiously) of pre-Old World times represented hope for global salvation. Campbell, perhaps unwittingly, tapped into what many American citizens believed to be true of themselves and their country.

Campbell initially disseminated his millennial message and call for primitive Christianity in the Christian Baptist which he published from 1823 to 1829. During this phase Campbell focused his career on defining his restoration vision, explicating the essentials upon which all Christians could unite. In this early stage of his career, however, Campbell failed to discern the conflict inherent in his message; defining the framework for oneness in Christ was often antipodal to his call for unity. Consequently the substance of the Christian Baptist proved ultimately divisive.

Despite his rhetorical ecumenism and the golden age he believed Christian solidarity would spawn, Campbell,



Henry E. Webb asserts, believed it was necessary first to expose the "accumulated debris of centuries of Christian history," and used the Christian Baptist to attack old world tradition. Additionally, as he tore down the hoary orthodox institutions, he felt compelled to delineate the essentials upon which Christian unity could be achieved. Believing the "Christian community as having lost all healthy excitability" and stood in need of serious measures to save the body politic, his voice in the Christian Baptist echoed harshly. "Desperate diseases," he maintained, "need desperate measures," and he used "the most severe, sarcastic, and ironical" language to "ascertain whether society could be moved by fear or rage." Unfortunately, Campbell later ruminated, his caustic style reflected "unfavorably to the reputation of the author as respected to his 'Christian spirit'" and deepened the divide between the Restoration Movement and mainstream American religion.<sup>5</sup>

Nonetheless, the Christian Baptist seemed, by Campbell's estimation, a success as "it brought hundreds to their senses," and he argued his ministrations drew "more favorable symptoms" to the Christian body. Still, judging the journal's time had passed, by 1830 Campbell

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<sup>5</sup> Webb, Christian Unity, 113; Alexander Campbell, "Address to Reformers," Millennial Harbinger, 2, (September 1831): 419-420.

began tempering his rhetoric, sensing the need for a broader, more positive vehicle for his reformed cosmology and millennial outlook. Finding their affiliation with the Baptists increasingly hostile the cessation of the Christian Baptist in June 1830 marked the end of the Restoration Movement's formal association with the Baptists. Despite their aversion to launching a new religious faction, it was evident that they were ready to stand alone. Ironically, just as the reformers' cause was breaking with traditional religious structures, the movement found itself identifying more closely with the ideals of American Protestantism.<sup>6</sup>

The advent of Campbell's new journal, the Millennial Harbinger, reflected his renewed focus on unity, his millennial aspirations for Christ's church, and his growing belief in the promise of American republicanism as the agency by which the new age would be achieved. While his early years had been focused on the narrow construct of radical reformed primitivism, Campbell now moved on to new and broader avenues. He now embraced a new cosmology more acceptable to the larger Protestant culture, unconsciously blending it with the

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<sup>6</sup> Campbell, "Address to Reformers," 419-420; Harrell, Quest, 1:6-7; Tristano, Intellectual History, 93-95; and Webb, Christian Unity, 119.

secular needs of American society.

This new phase, which paralleled republican millennialism in structure and cosmology, as well as its irresolute tensions, was reflected in the new journal. From 1830 onward, as Campbell embodied the role of a national opinion maker, as his career artfully blended the man, his medium, and his message. The man Campbell had become the Millennial Republic's prophet and through the mediums of preacher of the gospel, successful publisher, and college president, he publicly articulated the dual messages of American civil religion and the call to the primitive gospel. Citizens great and small pilgrimed to his home seeking truth, and departed admiring his sagacious spirit, often discerning, as did future president James Garfield, that they had met "a living wonder," in whose "company, you feel the shadow of greatness falling upon you." Whether they enjoyed personal interaction with Campbell, listened enthralled to his orations, or read his essays in the Millennial Harbinger, his message beguiled them by its blend of the spirit of Christ's kingdom with America's destiny.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> James A. Garfield, The Diary of James A. Garfield, edited with an introduction by Harry James Brown and Frederick D. Williams (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1967) 205; and Jerry Rushford, "The Stroke of His Pen," Gospel Advocate, 1 September 1988, 19.

Campbell's printing press and his prodigious literary output meshed effectively to propagate his message and enhance his stature. To accommodate his varied and voluminous publications, Campbell augmented his printing facilities and shifted the operation from his western Virginia farm, renamed Bethany in 1827, to a two-story building in the like-named village that sprang up around his home. In addition to his journals, book of hymns, and Bible translation, popularly known as the "Living Oracles," Campbell published his debates, reprints of articles from his journals, and compilations of his works, including speeches and addresses. These ventures assured Campbell a steady income sufficient for him to keep his vow never to accept money for preaching the gospel.<sup>8</sup>

Campbell initially intended his publications as conduits for communicating with his adherents; less importantly he sought to reach a broader audience. The

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<sup>8</sup> Green, "Campbell Home and Farm," 983; Holloway, "Campbell as Publisher," 29-30, 33; McLean, Thomas and Alexander, 26-27; and Rushford, "His Pen," 19. The Living Oracles was the popular title given to Campbell's translation of the Bible. It was originally published under the title- The Sacred Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ Commonly Styled the New Testament. Translated from the Original Greek by Doctors George Campbell, James Macknight, and Philip Doddridge, with Preface, Various Emendations and an Appendix by Alexander Campbell (Buffaloe, VA: Alexander Campbell, 1826.) Lester McAllister asserts Thomas Campbell considered the "publication of the New Testament translation as the most important thing his son ever did." McAllister, "Man of the Book," 178.

Campbell press provided an effective platform not only for himself, but also for his co-reformers within the Disciples of Christ fellowship to exchange information. The Millennial Harbinger, coupled with the Living Oracles and the hymn book, further equipped the Restoration Movement with the semi-liturgical structure and sense of common identity important in a movement emphasizing congregational autonomy. Gary Holloway asserts the Restoration Movement might have been stillborn had Campbell not possessed the means by which to publish and disseminate the movement's writings, providing the reformers the essential tools for a common identity and to touch a wider audience.<sup>9</sup>

James A. Garfield, recognizing the impact of Campbell's prose, predicted that his writings would extend his influence beyond the grave. On a visit to Campbell's Bethany farm, Garfield reflected that the sage's words held sway as they "climbed the massive hills that surround his quiet home," dispersed across the American continent and "crossed the isles of the ocean" with such authority that "today the stroke of his pen is felt over half of the civilized world." Garfield's effusive praise aptly marked

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<sup>9</sup> Holloway, "Campbell as Publisher," 28, 33-34; Rushford, "Stroke of His Pen," 19-20; Green, "Campbell Home and Farm," 983; and Wrather, "Portrait of a Soul," 965.

the extent of Campbell's impact as the Millennial Harbinger not only became the "literary fountainhead" of the Restoration Movement, but also thrust its influence on to a secular world beyond the confines of Campbell's own religious community. Campbell's journals could be found in every state of the union, as well as Australia and Great Britain. Reports surfaced that even Queen Victoria's household read the Millennial Harbinger.<sup>10</sup>

Campbell's writings did much to enhance his stature, as did his personal relationships with powerful and notable Americans. Garfield typifies the multitude of visitors who traveled to Campbell's Virginia farm. Jefferson Davis brought his nephews to Bethany College, and he remained for a time to converse at length with Campbell. Jeremiah Sullivan Black, United States Attorney General under President James Buchanan and later Secretary of State under President Abraham Lincoln, visited Campbell who baptized him in Buffaloe Creek. The Bethany sage also counted William Henry Harrison, Zachary Taylor, James Buchanan, Horace Mann, Henry Clay and Barton Stone as his friends, acquaintances, and correspondents; and many of them found

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<sup>10</sup> Garfield, Diary, 205; and Rushford, "Stroke of His Pen," 19; Holloway, "Campbell As Publisher," 28, 31; Wrather, "Portrait of a Soul," 965. Louis Cochran and Leroy Garrett, also refer to his press as a "fountain-head" in Alexander Campbell: The Man and His Mission, 12.

their way to the little estate.<sup>11</sup>

Together with this illustrious company, a wide array of ordinary citizens passed through Campbell's open door, enjoying the great man's limitless hospitality. When one H. Hussy chanced across the Millennial Harbinger in Adelaide, Australia, he felt compelled to trek to America to meet Campbell who, as was his custom, invited the stranger in. Hussy stayed on with the family for two weeks. So frequent were visitors to the Bethany mansion that the Campbell residence earned the sobriquet "Stranger Inn."<sup>12</sup>

Apart from his writings, eminent friends, and cordial home, Campbell's numerous speaking engagements, debates, extended tours, and preaching bolstered his national reputation while advancing his religious and secular messages. A seemingly indefatigable speaker, Campbell traveled extensively throughout America addressing an unending variety of organizations during his long career. He accepted invitations to speak at lyceums, college commencements and conventions. He addressed on several occasions the College of Teachers in

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<sup>11</sup> Cochran and Garrett, Man and His Mission, 14; and Green, "Campbell Home and Farm," 984.

<sup>12</sup> Leroy Garrett, Alexander Campbell and Thomas Jefferson: A Comparative Study of Two Old Virginians, (Dallas: Wilkinson Publishing, 1963), 4; and Rushford, "Stroke of His Pen," 20.

Cincinnati, and the Bible Union in New York City. Beyond this, his roles as president of both Bethany College and the American Missionary Society offered him still more occasions for oratory.

Campbell's largest audience, apart from the printed word, however, came from his preaching engagements. He missed no opportunity to sermonize, and like the visitors to his home, Campbell's audiences came from all walks of life. He preached at the small congregation near his home, when in Bethany, and he addressed various churches on his wide travels. While Campbell understood his journals and other writings reached a broad audience, he believed people responded best to the power of the personal testimony of a preacher, and to this end he toured his adopted land tirelessly. Between 1831 and 1860 he touched nearly every state east of the Mississippi as well as Canada, an exceptional feat in the antebellum era. After 1840 the tours often included fund-raising for Bethany College, but Campbell seized every opportunity to share his message of primitive Christianity, often associating it with the destiny of the American republic.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Campbell's journeys were covered extensively in the Millennial Harbinger. His travels included: 1831- Tour of Ohio; 1833- Tour of the East from Richmond to New York City; 1836- Tour of the Northeast; 1837- Tour of Kentucky; 1838- Tour of the South; 1842- Tour of Kentucky and Ohio; 1844- Tour of Ohio and Indiana; 1847- Tour of the British Isles;



As Campbell journeyed from place to place, it was often difficult to obtain facilities with adequate space to accommodate the throngs that came to hear him speak; sometimes crowds of 6,000-10,000 people clamored to receive his message. In his autobiography, Mark Twain remembered that during his youthful tenure in the print shop at Hannibal, Missouri, the Bethany evangelist held a gospel meeting which left an indelible impression upon the future novelist. "Farmers and their families drove or tramped . . . from miles around to get a sight of the illustrious Alexander Campbell," he recalled. With no large building in town, the crowd assembled in the public square, and as Twain surveyed the scene he marveled "what a mighty population this planet contains when you get them all together." Afterwards, all the "Campbellites wanted [the sermon] printed . . . so they could read it over and over again," and the crowd raised enough money for a five hundred copy run of the resulting pamphlet. Twain declared this was a "great event for our office" and the small company, often accustomed to payment in kind, had never seen "such mass of actual money . . . [enter] the office on

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1850- Tour of Indiana; 1851- Visits Ohio and Kentucky; 1852- Visits Tennessee and Tour of Missouri; 1853- Tour of the East and Tour of Illinois; 1856- Visits Canada and Tour of Virginia; 1867- Tour of South and Tour of Illinois and Iowa; 1869- Tour of the South; and 1860- Tour of Indiana.

any previous occasion."<sup>14</sup>

Ancillary to Campbell's public discourse, whether through print or personal appearances, was his dedication to education, an issue he closely linked to both his theology and his role as a citizen of the Republic. Campbell insisted on a solid education since literacy provided access to God's word, the bedrock of a Christian life. Speaking to the graduates of Bethany College in 1846, he issued an "appeal in favor of universal common-school education," declaring that "religion is founded upon learning" and without the ability to read and understand the Bible the Christian could not fully understand God's message. He affirmed schooling as a necessity for the moral and social development of mankind. Man, he proclaimed, "is not fully developed, because he is not perfectly educated." Cultivate "the minds and enlarge the powers of the citizens," he declared, and "you promote the glory and increase the influence of the Republic."<sup>15</sup> Underscoring such foundational beliefs, Campbell poured time, money, and

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<sup>14</sup> Mark Twain, The Autobiography of Mark Twain, Including Chapters Now Published for the First Time, arranged and edited with an introduction and notes by Charles Neider (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1917, 1959) 90; and Carroll B. Ellis "A Master Communicator," Gospel Advocate, 30, (September 1, 1988), 17.

<sup>15</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Baccalaureate Address- No. III," Millennial Harbinger, series 3, 3 (July 1846): 409; Alexander Campbell, "Schools and Education. No. 1," Millennial Harbinger, n.s., 3 (May 1839): 233; and Alexander Campbell, "Education," Millennial Harbinger, ns, 7 (October 1843): 447.

effort into championing all levels of academic development, maintaining that education must be available to all, including women and slaves. William Maddox, in his study of education in Virginia, acknowledged Campbell's influence on the common school movement within the Old Dominion. Maddox assured his readers that Campbell, known for his "democratization of the Christian church," was also instrumental "in democratizing elementary education."<sup>16</sup>

While this "democratizing" remained dear to Campbell, it was the establishment of his college at Bethany which fulfilled his long-held dream for an academic institution designed to produce citizens capable of ushering in the Christian millennium. The Glasgow-educated scholar provided both funds and land for the construction of the college and designed a liberal arts curriculum intended to train preachers and teachers as well as produce educated men for secular occupations. The initial faculty consisted of six professors, including Campbell, who served as president of the college for more than twenty years. From 1840 onward he devoted much of his life to raising funds to sustain the

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<sup>16</sup> William Maddox, The Free School Idea in Virginia before the Civil War, (New York: Arno Press, 1969), page extracts in the Eva Jean Wrather Collection, DCHS, Nashville; and Wrather, "Portrait of a Soul," 965.

institution.<sup>17</sup>

Chartered by the Virginia legislature in 1840, Bethany College officially opened its doors the next year. In keeping with its founder's standards, it emphasized "the natural, the scientific, the useful and the contemporary," while dedicating itself to the moral growth of its students. All students signed a strict code of conduct as a pledge of ethical behavior and in their studies relied upon the Bible as their chief academic source book. Campbell exalted the Holy Word as "the only infallible textbook of the true science of man" when taught from a nonsectarian perspective. The Bible, Campbell affirmed, stood alone as a tool for honing the morals of would-be scholars and as "a basic requisite to a liberal education." To protect further the integrity of the non-sectarian interpretation of the Bible, the charter for the college forbade the establishment of a Chair of Theology or School of Divinity. Reaching beyond Campbell's early emphasis upon the creation of a unique spiritual fellowship, the college took a more ecumenical position, requiring that religious services be conducted each Sunday by ministers from various

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<sup>17</sup> Gresham, "Schoolmaster," 18-20, 21; Cochran and Garrett, Man and His Mission, 14-15; Perry Gresham, "Alexander Campbell and the American Dream," The Disciple, 3 August, 1975, 6-7; Green, "Campbell Home and Farm," 984; and Wrather, "Portrait of a Soul," 963.

denominations.<sup>18</sup>

Campbell's extraordinary popularity and his connection with his audience had far more to do with his message than with the mediums by which it was delivered. Whether his followers encountered his cosmology from his sermons, his publications, or his classroom presentations, they internalized ideas that resonated with both their love of country and their religious zeal. As he moved to a more ecumenistic religious stance and increasingly identified his citizenship in the Republic as an essential element of God's plan for the redemption of mankind, his message spoke to, and melded with, American identity. For both Campbell and his listeners, his message increasingly sounded the clarion call to the kingdom of the New Republic.

Commencing with his "Oration on the 4th of July, 1830" Campbell delineated his belief in a coming religious millennium, portraying the American republican experiment as a bridge to the Christian epoch; he carried this theme across the next three decades. In Campbell's mind God had blessed Americans with the best possible political and social milieu, one which would be supplanted only by the

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas H. Olbricht, "Alexander Campbell as an Educator," in Lectures in Honor of Alexander Campbell's Bicentennial, 1788-1988, 95; Cochran and Garrett, Man and His Mission, 15; and Lester G. McAllister, An Alexander Campbell Reader, (St. Louis, MO: CBP Press, 1988), 24-25.

coming Christian millennium. While his initial emphasis clearly stressed the sacred as superior to the secular, gradually he incorporated the secular elements of American society as integral parts of the approaching Christian commonwealth. In the 1830s Campbell envisioned the American Republic as precursor to Christian millennium, but by the 1850s he had come to imagine the Millennial Republic as the foundation of Christ's Kingdom on earth.

This subtle but pivotal shift reflected Campbell's movement away from an a-denominational stance to a growing identification with American Protestantism and a conviction that the United States occupied a special position in God's design to redeem His creation. Campbell maintained in his 1852 address, "The Destiny of Our Country," that the Lord had sent America's forefathers "to a new world, that they might institute, in the most favorable circumstances, new political and ecclesiastical institutions." Religion and politics he intricately intertwined, avowing that in "our country's destiny is involved the destiny of Protestantism, and in its destiny that of all the nations of the world."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Address. The Destiny of Our Country: Delivered before the Philo-Literary Society of Canonsburg College, Pennsylvania, August 3, 1852, being its Fiftieth Anniversary," in Popular Lectures and Addresses (Philadelphia: James Challen and Son, 1866), 168, 178. Many of Campbell's lectures and addresses were reprinted in Popular Lectures and Addresses, often with additions and corrections not found in the originals.

Prior to 1830 Campbell's discourses had reflected a more sectarian viewpoint as he focused his emphasis on defining the essentials of primitive Christianity while campaigning tirelessly for restoration of the ancient Christian order and the coming Christian Age it must beget. By 1829, however, a transformation in his outlook overtly manifested itself in his debate with Robert Owen and his involvement in the Virginia Constitutional Convention. In both he emerged as a proud defender of the American Republic and the values which it idealized. From this point until the eve of the Civil War his speeches and writings reflected his evolution from a theologian focused on the sacred, to an intellectual whose cosmology embraced America as foundational to a divine Golden Age. While Campbell's faith had always included a secular component, after 1830 this element transformed from a minor consideration into a seminal feature of his millennial doctrine. His rhetoric, consequently, or perhaps unconsciously, reflected the assimilation of civil religion into his body of belief.

In 1830 Campbell responded to a dispute among the Disciples in Pittsburgh, who questioned whether they should celebrate the Fourth of July as a religious observance. He considered such a commemoration entirely appropriate.

"While the children of *this* world," esteemed "the day

because of the *political* privileges which they inherit," Campbell affirmed "we know of no good reason why Christians may not . . . consecrate the day to the Lord as a *free-will offering*, and convert the occasion into one of joy and rejoicing in the Rock of their salvation." He assured his brethren that in "giving glory to the Governor of the nations of the earth that they are made *free* citizens, not only of a free Government on *earth*, but of the kingdom of *heaven*." Later noting that Pittsburgh leaders had followed his advice, Campbell reported over "two hundred and twenty disciples" met, sang praises to the Lord, and listened to a stirring "discourse on *the great and notable day of the Lord* which is to introduce the millennium."<sup>20</sup>

Even as the Pittsburgh brethren feted the Fourth, Campbell delivered his "Oration on the Fourth of July, 1830," to an audience he inclusively addressed as "Christian Citizens." Clearly marking the nexus between the Christian millennium and the American state, he began by reiterating the sovereignty of God and His love for His creation, while despairing of man's fall from God's grace. "Such was the value stamped on man by his Creator," declared Campbell that "a world is made . . . a palace

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<sup>20</sup> Alexander Campbell, "The Fourth of July," Millennial Harbinger, 1, (July 1830): 299-300. Italics are Campbell's.



reared and furnished and decorated for his abode," as God welcomes mankind into "its richest apartment." As Campbell reflected on human history, however, he lamented that mankind had moved from a world without civil government to one with governments that, until the Protestant Age, increasingly perverted both the sacred relationship and profane connections. He rejoiced, nonetheless, that the present generation stood poised to effect "the emancipation of the human mind . . . and the introduction of human beings into the full fruition of the reign of heaven." This task was made possible in part by the United States government which provided the "greatest amount of political and temporal happiness hitherto enjoyed by any people."<sup>21</sup>

Anticipating the restoration of God's kingdom on earth and extolling the virtues of that perfect age in which a "true millennial reign of intelligence, righteousness, and peace" would engender "an intelligent, prosperous, and happy people," Campbell praised the abundant gifts of the American republic. "The fourth of July, 1776," he enthused, was "a day to be remembered as was the Jewish Passover -- a day to be regarded with

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<sup>21</sup> Alexander Campbell, "An Oration in Honor of the Fourth of July, 1830," in Popular Lectures and Addresses, 7, 367-368, 374.

grateful acknowledgments" by citizens of all nations. America proffered to the world "redemption of man from political degradation," and served as a bridge to a greater revolution yet to come. George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson merited high praise for their accomplishments, Campbell asserted, their stature must expand exponentially as humanity imbibed the "blessings to result from the next revolution."<sup>22</sup>

The American republic had delivered the world from the despotism of European monarchies and the religious tyranny of papal Rome, which in Campbell's mind represented "a more insidious and a more unconquerable government," than the pagan regimes that preceded it. By rejecting religious affiliation and establishing a "purely political" system, the body politic promised to safeguard "man's political rights and promote his political happiness." More importantly, this freedom from the constraints of state religion, while benefiting the corporeal and assuring civil liberty, protected the sacred by freeing faith from the constraints of the secular.<sup>23</sup>

Through the 1830s Campbell lauded America's attainment of the political ideal, an achievement he believed all

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<sup>22</sup> Campbell, "Rank and Dignity of Man," 530; and Campbell, "Oration in Honor of the Fourth," 373-374.

<sup>23</sup> Campbell, "Oration in Honor of the Forth," 371-372.

citizens of the world should celebrate. He articulated his conviction that the American environment provided the perfect setting from which to transition to a better world - to the Christian millennium. Two decades later, however, Campbell's commitment to the Millennial ideal had subtly altered. Rather than America being the precursor to the Millennium, it had in effect become the physical embodiment of God's kingdom.

Twenty-two years beyond his "Oration on the Fourth of July," Campbell addressed the Philo-Literary Society of Pennsylvania's Canonsburg College and reiterated his profound love for God and his commitment to ushering in the Christian Age. Beyond this, he verbalized clearly his evolving perception of America's role in the coming millennium. Location, politics, and religion merged in this New Eden in Campbell's thinking, providing the locus for the fulfillment of God's plan for all mankind. Campbell asserted that America had received from God the "new world and all its hidden treasures" coupled with the "arts and sciences of the old [world]," so that all countries looked to "Protestant America as the wonder of the age, and as exerting a preponderating [sic] influence on the destinies of the world." A maturing America, no longer merely a conduit to God's New Jerusalem, now manifested on earth the

Creator's intended kingdom.<sup>24</sup>

As Campbell surveyed the American experience, he reasoned that God had chosen the North American continent on which to germinate the coming Christian Age. The Lord's blessings showered on the Anglo-Saxons of Europe, as Great Britain and the United States gave proof of divine favor and mission. To these God bestowed "the scepter of Judah, the harp of David, the strength of Judah's lion and the chosen of the world." Yet it was on the *Mayflower*, proclaimed Campbell that God transported to the new world "the choicest first-fruits of European Protestantism." Here "rich harvests rewarded the labors of the puritanic husbandmen," as they fulfilled God's design "that they might institute, under the most favorable circumstances, new political and ecclesiastic institutions."<sup>25</sup>

Campbell reasoned that once planted in God's chosen milieu, these elect Protestants then crafted the unique and enlightened political institutions necessary to the coming Christian millennium. He marked American statecraft as a melding of "divine providence and moral government," promoting unparalleled institutions founded on the principles of political liberty, able to free

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<sup>24</sup> Campbell, "Destiny of Our Country," 168.

<sup>25</sup> Campbell, "Destiny of Our Country," 168-169.

Europe and ultimately the world from the chains of political slavery. In Campbell's reasoning, however, it was not simply the divinely appointed environment or the republican experiment that assured America's destiny; the nation's Protestant institutions played a key part. "A Protestant conscience is essential to political and religious liberty."<sup>26</sup>

Pilgrims, Puritans, Protestants - all had migrated to God's New Eden. Campbell counted himself blessed to have been part of that European diaspora which rejected the medieval, restrictive religions of the Old World to embrace freedom of thought in the New. But this new-found liberty bore responsibility as Enlightenment thought unshackled the American Adam from oppressive European institutions. In Campbell's mind, America ideally combined the primitive and the pristine in which a Millennial Republic held out the promise for the restoration of the ancient faith, as well as for the creation of a nature state, where man would redefine political institutions in light of God's revelation.

Man's duty and destiny in this Millennial Republic, insisted Campbell, "is comprehended in these four words, education, religion, morals and politics," and

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<sup>26</sup> Campbell, "Destiny of Our Country," 169, 173, 177.

Protestantism capstones each. These elements circumscribed man's duty to himself, mankind, God and the state. Education, drawn from Enlightenment principles and undergirded by Protestantism, created the critical thinking necessary to advance American republicanism; morals assured the new Adam would retain God's favor and reside in a covenanted relationship with Him; religion, enlightened Protestantism, freed the millennial citizen from the mystery and mysticism of oppressive Catholicism; and politics provided the means by which Christian citizens ensured that their government and their society moved in harmony with the Divine.<sup>27</sup>

Education, Campbell reasoned, formed the bedrock of an enlightened, moral individual, providing development of character, honing the skills necessary to the reading and interpreting of God's word, and producing a citizen befitting of the Millennial Republic. "It is a law of God and it is a law of society that [the] educated mind shall govern the world," rendering it critical that "all persons having talents . . . cultivate those noble powers which God has bestowed upon them." Education furnished the individual with the discipline, moral fortitude, and liberty of thought necessary to avoid the pitfalls of monarchy and

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<sup>27</sup> Campbell, "Destiny of Our Country," 171.

religious despotism. Education constituted an imperative for enlightened citizens of both God's kingdom and the American republic.<sup>28</sup>

A well-grounded education benefited more than the individual; it was "the most transcendent cause in any and every community," engendering "the prosperity, the influence, the honor and the happiness of every state and of every people." Campbell assured his listeners that America held a special place in the edification of all civilizations declaring the "special destiny of our beloved country" is understood "through the medium of our schools of learning," allowing the United States to "extend blessings to many nations: indeed, to the four quarters of the world." Education must therefore "command and occupy the profound, the patriotic, the religious deliberation" of the most talented minds of the age, constituting an unshakeable foundation for the new millennium.<sup>29</sup>

For Campbell, however, lack of morality rendered an education hollow. "The formation of moral character, the culture of the heart, is the supreme end of education," thus "an immoral man is uneducated." Addressing the members

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<sup>28</sup> Campbell, "Destiny of Our Country," 176; and Alexander Campbell, "Address on the Responsibilities of Men of Genius. To the Members of the Union Literary Society of Miami University, Ohio, 1844," in Popular Lectures and Addresses, 89.

<sup>29</sup> Campbell, "Destiny of Our Country," 176, 185-184.

of the Union Literary Society of Ohio's Miami University in 1844 on the "Responsibilities of Men of Genius," Campbell lamented that such virtuoso minds as those of Voltaire, Diderot, Thomas Paine and Edward Gibbon, were dissipated by moral turpitude. Absent a moral compass, these men of genius "have created false virtues" and by commingling "virtue and vice, piety and impiety, wisdom and folly" made vices of such meritorious conduct as "gallantry, patriotism, chivalry, heroism, &c." Failing to promote the "best and greatest interests of mankind" they squandered their talent and compromised their ability to ameliorate society's ills. "It is not mere intellect that governs the world. *It is intellect associated with moral excellence.*" To derive complete mastery of one's talents and to "secure the legitimate rewards of genius" an individual "must pay supreme regard to the cultivation and high development of his moral nature." A sound ethical foundation empowers the educated to assume their responsibilities to the community, responsibilities Campbell took seriously, for "to serve society in any capacity promotive of its moral advancement, is the highest style and dignity of man."<sup>30</sup>

Campbell linked an appropriate education and proper

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<sup>30</sup> Alexander Campbell, no title, *Millennial Harbinger*, n.s., 4, (April 1840): 158; Campbell, "Men of Genius," 87, 89=90, 92. Italics are Campbell's.



moral development directly to the Bible, deeming it crucial to the establishment of spiritual and civil liberty. He lamented, however, that Old World tradition and the Catholic Church had obscured the emancipating message of the Bible. "The Popedom . . . took away the key of knowledge from the Christian Church," supplanting enlightenment and the Bible with rituals, altars, priests and "an empty and deceitful philosophy." Romanism, he declared, "must ever be a reign of terror to all who love liberty of thought and freedom of speech." Emancipation from Old World tyranny, both sacred and secular, lies in the revolutions both of Martin Luther and of America. Luther had freed mankind from religious bondage, and the American Revolution completed the task by loosing man from political captivity. Campbell attributed America's meriting of divine favor "not so much to soil or climate, or national superiority, or blood," but most importantly "to the fact that these are the lands of Bibles and of Protestantism."<sup>31</sup>

The American political experiment fulfilled its covenant with both the world and God not only because it was founded on republican virtue but because "Protestants have the literature, the science and the arts of the

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<sup>31</sup> Campbell, "Destiny of Our Country," 166, 170, 173.

country . . . exclusively under their direction."

Protestantism guaranteed the proper contractual relationship with God and stood synonymous with political liberty, unfettered as it was from the priestly constraints of Catholicism. Campbell reasoned that America and its educational system were by definition Protestant and equipped by the Divine with the "key that opens the chest that holds the covenant of future peace and happiness to man."<sup>32</sup>

Defining the term Protestant generically with broad and significant application to both secular and ecclesiastical spheres, Campbell earnestly expounded a fervent dedication to free-will theology which in his mind permitted liberty of "thought, of speech and of action." Protestantism, for the true believer, informed both the secular and the sacred for "himself, his fellows, his God, and his Redeemer." He lauded those who protested against both the "unjust laws" of Old World civilizations and the "unholy requirements" of the Catholic Church. Therefore its core Protestantism stood against the political and religious shackles of Europe. America, therefore, as a Protestant nation, represented the unparalleled melding of earthly liberty and heavenly redemption arranged squarely

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<sup>32</sup> Campbell, "Destiny of Our Country," 168-169, 173, 177-178, 179.

against the excesses of Catholicism and Old World  
despotism.<sup>33</sup>

Describing Protestant institutions as the "solid sub-basis of a free and enlightened government, in the church and in the state," Campbell found it impossible to separate the Republic from its religion context. "That Protestantism is essential to political liberty is the best-substantiated fact in the annals of European nations," he asserted. In his 1849 "Address on The Anglo-Saxon Language: Its Origin, Character and Destiny," delivered in Cincinnati, Ohio, Campbell noted England's path to greatness began only after "she presumed to dissent from the Latin Church, and substituted the Anglo-Saxon church." And to Protestant America, England's child "born in a day," God bestowed "the new world and all its hidden treasures" as well as "fearful and glorious responsibility." By breaking with the Old World and shaping a nation rooted in civil freedom and religious liberty, America stood poised to fulfill God's contract with mankind by realizing an age of temporal and divine perfection for all humanity.<sup>34</sup>

Campbell, a man of action as his life journey

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<sup>33</sup> Campbell, "Destiny of Our Country," 170.

<sup>34</sup> Campbell, "Destiny of Our Country," 173, 174, 177; Alexander Campbell, "Address on the Anglo-Saxon Language: Its Origin, Character and Destiny. Cincinnati, O., 1849," in Popular Lectures and Addresses, 41.

attested, understood his cosmology as more than an abstract love of country and the Creator. A citizen of the Republic and of the kingdom of God, he nourished an immense sense of duty to mankind. Religiously, this meant he devoted his life to propagating the gospel of primitive Christianity and the proposition that all individuals possessed the capability of developing a personal relationship with God. He defended American Protestantism in his celebrated debate with Catholic Bishop John B. Purcell, and preached the Gospel from the floor of the House of Representatives. As a freeman of the republic he participated in the Virginia Constitution Convention and fought for equality and an expanded suffrage, defended his country against the socialist Robert Owen, and extolled America's virtues to all who would listen, portraying the American nation as God's chosen vehicle for the salvation of the world.

Campbell thereby employed all the impressive tools at his disposal - speaking engagements, Bethany College, and his prolific pen - to disseminate Republican Millennialism in practical application. Yet, his zeal notwithstanding, Campbell found his ideology sorely taxed as he attempted to spread the dualistic millennial gospel, while striving simultaneously to advance religious and secular pluralism.

## CHAPTER 4

### PERFECTING THE REPUBLICAN MILLENNIUM

In 1840 Alexander Campbell stood before a Louisville, Kentucky audience and proclaimed confidently that while American "society is not yet fully civilized," it was progressing "to another age." Caught up in both religious zeal and pride in his American citizenship, Campbell saw himself as an agent in this march toward "a golden - a millennial - a blissful period in human history." He fused sacred and secular in his religious world-view, as the restoration of his vision of the ancient religious order stood side by side with his conviction that Protestantism - particularly in America - was God's own vehicle for the creation of an earthly kingdom marked by liberty and humanity. Campbell held that a manifestation of God's kingdom must appear on earth before the second coming of Christ and that America was its birthplace. Campbell believed in what he called the "amelioration of society," the perfecting of both Christian society and the American

commonwealth. The church and the republic matured as interdependent components of his millennial dream.<sup>1</sup>

In common with many American thought-leaders, Campbell combined his intellectual development, his religious obligations and his belief in the perfectibility of society, with the republican ideal of a virtuous citizenry. This melding engendered a political philosophy characterized by a pious and millennial outlook. As Americans threw off the religious and political chains of the past, they looked not only to a utopian future but also, based that future, to a return to an imagined ancient time of perfection; a point before complicated European institutions and traditions oppressed and corrupted humanity. This vision allowed both the godly and the worldly to espouse a singular American world view.<sup>2</sup>

Imbued with the belief that the Revolution and the Republic represented a unique position in the history of mankind, Americans easily assumed that God and/or Nature had chosen the United States to extend the blessings of freedom, equality and earthly perfection to all civilizations. Catherine Albanese points out that this

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Amelioration of the Social State," *Millennial Harbinger*, n.s., IV (July 1840): 326; and Schlesinger, "Age of Alexander Campbell," 33.

<sup>2</sup> Abzug, *Cosmos*, 15, 26; Hatch, *American Christianity*, 188; and Hughes, "Primitive Church," 87.

"creed of civil religion rested on the fundamental assumptions that the United States was a chosen and millennial nation." Whether directed by God, nature or the confluence of events, the American public assumed they stood apart from other civilizations, past or present, and felt the burden of "being an example of democratic equality and fulfilling a mission" to bring the rewards of republicanism to the rest of the world.<sup>3</sup>

The success of the republican experiment was the responsibility of each American citizen, and as historian Jack P. Greene argues, they understood "the strength and goodness of the republic depended on the virtue of the people," as well as the "willingness to sacrifice self-interest to the commonwealth." While the power of the Republic lay in the righteousness of the citizenry, the liberty, social equality and religious pluralism of the republic could also foster vice and self-interest. "The combination of limited government and greater freedom" contained the seeds of both the Republic's promise and its ruin.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Albanese, Religion, 446; Hatch, American Christianity, 168; Abzug, Cosmos, 55; Commanger, American Mind, 11; and Watson, Liberty and Power, 43.

<sup>4</sup> Greene, American Revolution, 22.

Immersed in the spirit of his age, Campbell mirrored his contemporaries' faith in a perfectible Republic. Duty to improve society moved intrinsically in his thought - patterns as he came to perceive reform and religion as virtually interchangeable. It was not enough to preach the restoration of the primitive church and marshal in the Christian Millennium, as a citizen of the United States, God's chosen estate, Campbell must equally protect and nurture the Republic. One attains Christian character, he told his readers, by "filling up the full measure of all relative duties." All Christians must demonstrate their moral fiber in all aspects of life, even as they handled "the hoe, the mattock, and the spade; in driving the loom, the plough or the harrow;" or as they constructed "a hat, a coat, or a shoe." God commanded his children to "adorn his gospel by every act" of their lives.<sup>5</sup>

In Campbell's mind the moral perfection of society fulfilled man's responsibility to God while safeguarding the Republic, this perfecting of America served more than God and citizen; it secured blessings for the entire world. "While charity begins at home, it does not continue at home, but goes abroad on missions of love and mercy to all

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<sup>5</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Christian Character," Millennial Harbinger, III, (September 1832): 465.



mankind." America stood at the nexus of God's plan for global salvation and righteousness and Campbell reasoned that in promoting "its moral excellence, its wealth, its honor, its character, we increase its power and extend its means of communicating blessings which, without it, no Christian man could bestow upon his species." Consequently from 1830 onward, Campbell's journal, lectures and addresses reflected his dual mission to shepherd in the millennium through Christian unity, and to address the moral questions facing the Republic.<sup>6</sup>

In common with both religious and secular reformers across America, Campbell's message, whether disseminated in the pages of the Millennial Harbinger, or his myriad lectures and addresses, served the cause of perfectionism. While the journal's chief purpose remained the quest for the restoration of Campbell's concept of primitive Christianity, he at times opened its pages to discussion of the many innovative ideas characteristic of the Age of Jackson - from dietary reform, to phrenology, to temperance and more. Across three decades prior to the Civil War, he published letters and short articles advocating a variety of constructive ideas, and he also reprinted materials

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<sup>6</sup> Campbell, "Anglo-Saxon Language," 44; and Alexander Campbell, "Destiny of Our Country - Sequel," Millennial Harbinger, series IV, II (September 1852):486.

detailing reform concepts gleaned from other journals and newspapers.

Alice Felt Tyler, in her seminal treatment of Jacksonian society, Freedom's Ferment, postulates the impetus for reform in the antebellum period was "the desire to perfect human institutions," an impulse inherent in both Campbell's religious and republican tenets. His own quest for perfectionism featured three themes. The Millennial Republic, he argued, depended on developing an educational system congenial to republican concepts, the emphasizing of woman's status within the American kingdom and the protection of that kingdom from Old World institutions most notably the Catholic Church - which he believed threatened to undermine the holy liberty necessary for a perfected society.<sup>7</sup>

A properly educated citizen, Campbell maintained, was foundational to the establishment of a Millennial Republic. "Ignorant as the ass's colt [man] enters upon the stage," he lectured, "what he shall become depends upon those to whom his education and training are committed." The Republic demanded moral, educated men because "an

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<sup>7</sup> Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment; Phases of American Social History to 1860 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1944), quoted in Irving H. Bartlett, The American Mind in the Mid-Nineteenth Century, The Crowell American History Series, ed. John Hope Franklin and Abraham S. Eisenstadt (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1967), 39.

enlightened community cannot be enslaved - an ignorant and uneducated society cannot be free." Campbell's desire to produce good citizens for both heaven and earth placed him squarely in the movement to reform American education.<sup>8</sup>

In his religious crusade, the necessity of educated Christians seemed self-evident. "Religion is founded upon learning," Campbell reasoned, "the Bible is a written communication from Heaven to man, and must be read in order to be understood, believed and obeyed." Because Campbell's restoration theology hinged upon a Lockean, common sense interpretation of the Bible, he was convinced that the essentials requisite for Christian unity could be agreed on by educated men and women through a thoughtful examination of the scriptures. Unschooled Christians would be unable to read God's word and derive intelligent, meaningful conclusions; they thus left themselves open to manipulation by the clergy and so fomented division within God's kingdom.<sup>9</sup>

"Next to the gospel," Campbell declared, education "is the most important of human concerns and interests." An informed citizen of the Republic, he averred, promoted "our

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<sup>8</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Education - New Series, No. 1," Millennial Harbinger, III, (August 1832): 408; and Alexander Campbell, "Education - No. 2," Millennial Harbinger, VI, (February 1835): 66.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Baccalaureate Address - No. III," 409.

national superiority, our national privileges, our excellent institutions, our peace, prosperity," and without it American felicity "cannot possibly be enjoyed or perpetuated." Campbell lamented that while "intelligence and virtue are the main pillars of our free institutions," little was being done to ensure universal education to all American citizens. To this end Campbell used all the means at his disposal to further the cause of educational reform in the United States.<sup>10</sup>

Common schools, which for Campbell included "primary, secondary, and ultimate" institutions, were a frequent subject in his journal and addresses as he campaigned for an education system "adapted to the common wants of the whole community." Campbell mused "I am, perhaps, too sensitive on the subject of education," but, he insisted, "I would make the literary and moral education of every child born . . . the first and paramount duty of the state." Campbell pledged to "go for schools of every sort so long as there is one of my neighbor's children uneducated."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Education," Millennial Harbinger, n.s., II (May 1838):204; Alexander Campbell, No Title, Millennial Harbinger, n.s., I (May 1837): 205; and Campbell, "Education," 64.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander Campbell, "ADDRESS to the Convention assembled at Clarksburg, Virginia, on the subject of Primary or Common Schools, September 8, 1841," Millennial Harbinger, n.s., V, (October 1841): 434;

Addressing an 1841 education convention in Clarksburg, Virginia, Campbell charged his audience to create the institutions necessary for an educated citizenry. Universal education benefits the whole community he assured the gathering, elevating every level of society. Convinced of a direct correlation between crime and ignorance, Campbell appealed to society's wealthiest elements, arguing that educating the poor lay within the scope of their enlightened self-interest. "The rich ought to contribute to the support of common schools in the ratio of their stakes in society"; otherwise, he warned, they stood to lose their superior status - materially and morally.<sup>12</sup>

While addressing the need for common schools in 1837, Campbell called for a government "appropriation of a hundred millions of dollars to bring a good education to the door of every American citizen." Four years later, he assured his listeners that, in actuality, the cost of such universal education would be more than offset by an uplifted society. He implored the "learned men and higher classes" to consider that it is "less expensive to educate an infant than to support an aged criminal in a State prison." When calculating the cost of "jails, pillories,

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and Alexander Campbell, "Reply to R. L.," Millennial Harbinger, n.s., II, (September 1838): 422.

<sup>12</sup> Campbell, "Clarksburg, Virginia," 439.

penitentiaries, and poor houses," and the expense of policing "gaming, gambling, immoral speculations, eating tobacco and drinking rum," he speculated "vice and ignorance" cost America millions of dollars. Beyond this, he questioned whether the government forfeited its "right, natural, inherent or divine, to punish crimes which grow from the ignorance she creates" by refusing to provide an education which allows the populace to discern right from wrong.<sup>13</sup>

Campbell's appeal to the nation's elite echoed the solicitations of other educational reformers. Charles Sellers, in The Market Revolution, points out that Horace Mann, head of the Massachusetts Board of Education, "wove the design of American public education from bourgeois panic." Mann warned Massachusetts' "nervous notables" that the freedoms of the Republic fostered both virtue and vice and only public education could serve "as a barrier against" such bad behaviors "which our institutions foster." In American Reformers, 1815-1830, Ronald G. Walters adds that "the more prosperous and skilled segments of the working class . . . regarded education as crucial for exercising and defending citizenship." Education

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<sup>13</sup> Campbell, "Education," 64; Campbell, "Clarksburg, Virginia," 437-438.

mitigated crime and uplifted republican and Protestant values. For his part, Lyman Beecher, in his Plea for the West, championed common schools as an impediment to subversive elements on the frontier.<sup>14</sup>

Campbell not only advocated common schools, but he also campaigned for Normal Schools, colleges, and universities. In practical terms the nation needed colleges to provide properly educated teachers for public schools. While universal education promoted social order and developed a moral citizenry, colleges are the "sources whence issue the science and the literature, the professors and the teachers" which in turn "create the academies, the schools, and the seminaries" that provide "teachers for all the schools in Christendom."<sup>15</sup>

"Colleges," Campbell continued, "go hand in hand in the progress of Christian civilization." Education, therefore, would guard the Republic, protect the rich and powerful and provide an ethical environment in which Christianity could flourish. But proper training, Campbell insisted, must be grounded in the Word of God. The Bible, Campbell averred, formed the basis "of all human rights as

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<sup>14</sup> Sellers, Market Revolution, 367-368; Horace Mann quoted in Sellers, Market Revolution, 368; Walters, American Reformers, 215; and Albanese, Religion, 506.

<sup>15</sup> Alexander Campbell, "An Address on Colleges," Millennial Harbinger, series IV, IV, (February 1854): 71.

the only . . . guarantee of our social immunities and privileges whether political, moral, or religious." He regarded it further as "the only infallible text-book of the true science of man." Simply not content to expound on the necessity of a moral, comprehensive education, Campbell implemented his vision by founding Bethany College in 1840.<sup>16</sup>

Campbell's college consisted of four major components that addressed each level of education critical to producing a civilized republic. It included a Preparatory and Elementary School for boys ages seven to fourteen; an Academy of Arts and Sciences for boys ages fourteen and older designed to serve as something akin to a vocational school emphasizing science; a College to equip students with a liberal education in the arts and sciences; and a Normal School for the training of teachers. In keeping with his call for moral education, Campbell made the Bible the foundational textbook of his school, but insisted it be taught from a nonsectarian point-of-view. He believed the Bible provided the knowledge necessary to furnish students

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<sup>16</sup> Campbell, "On Colleges," 61, 66; and Campbell, "Clarksburg, Virginia," 444.



with a moral compass and self-awareness, but was unwilling to use it to further any partisan religious agenda.<sup>17</sup>

While Bethany College evolved into Campbell's primary educational focus in his later years, he nonetheless continued to champion education at all levels. His Baccalaureate Address in 1847 charged the students with their responsibility to promote and implement universal public education. Sixteen years later, Campbell reflected on his lifelong crusade to forward the cause of learning in his essay, "What is Education, in its Full Import?" The attainment of useful knowledge he ruminated, "aggrandizes, beautifies, beatifies, and glorifies man." All of society "should still be much more interested than they are, in the great work of education," and its implications for "the future destiny of humanity and our own country."<sup>18</sup>

Academic training was the foundation of Campbell's millennial dream. His call for an educated populace often included segments of society then not normally associated with the need for academic instruction. His appeal for the cultivation of the intellect included upper and lower

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<sup>17</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Bethany College," Millennial Harbinger, n.s., V (June 1841): 271; and McAllister, Campbell Reader, 24-25.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Baccalaureate Address," Millennial Harbinger, series III, IV, (August 1847): 431; and Alexander Campbell, "What is Education, In Its Full Import?," Millennial Harbinger, series V, V, (March 1862): 111.

classes, slaves and servants, men and women. In his view universal education protected the elite from the excess of the ignorant, even as it safeguarded the rights of the common man from subversions by the dominant classes. Masters had certain responsibilities to their charges and Campbell condemned those who did not school their servants or slaves, deeming it "unchristian to do no more for a human being than for an animal servant." The subject of female education, however, enjoyed his stoutest defense; "the education of the female sex . . . is at least of equal importance as the education of our own. In moral results it is perhaps even greater."<sup>19</sup>

In his social history of the Disciples of Christ, David Edwin Harrell, Jr. argues that the Disciples' promotion of female education placed them among the more progressive elements of antebellum society. Prior to the Civil War, the Restoration Movement established at least forty female seminaries and founded several co-educational institutions. While the Disciples were not the first secular or religious organization to admit both men and women to their institutions of higher learning, Harrell

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<sup>19</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Morality of Christians," Millennial Harbinger, n.s., II, (February 1838): 99; Alexander Campbell, "Female Seminaries," Millennial Harbinger, n.s., II, (February 1838): 143; and Campbell, "Baccalaureate Address - No. III," 404.

insists "they proved apt students of this reform movement," and from 1850 forward a positive focus on female education characterized Disciple pedagogy.<sup>20</sup>

While Bethany College remained a male-only institution, Campbell promoted female seminaries of all types. He especially admired the one attended by his daughters at Pleasant Hill which was administered by his sister, Jane McKeever. Just eight miles from Bethany, the institute offered a broad array of courses for young women including "Grammar, Composition, Geography, History, Latin, Algebra, Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Botany, Moral Science, [and] Sacred Literature." While some female seminaries offered an education menu that prepared women for domestic duties, Campbell believed both woman and society were better served by a well-rounded liberal arts curriculum. No woman, he maintained, was ready to marry before she attained the age of twenty and held a diploma. Campbell insisted it was "most unphilosophic, and rather misanthropic . . . to bestow more pains or expense in training a son than a daughter."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Harrell, Quest, 207.

<sup>21</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Pleasant Hill Seminary," Millennial Harbinger, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, V, (August 1848): 479; and Alexander Campbell, Education - No. 5, " Millennial Harbinger, VI, (May 1835): 225.

Campbell proclaimed a message of female educational empowerment because he believed woman's "intellectual and moral culture . . . is of supreme importance to the State, to the Church, to the world." Educated Christian women maintained societal virtue, and through their influence over man, God would "advance society to the acme of its most glorious destiny on earth." In Campbell's mind, woman's roles as daughter, sister, wife and mother, formed a counterpoint to man's anarchy; woman, man's first teacher and mentor, filled a role that demanded a superlative education.<sup>22</sup>

Like most Americans in the antebellum era, Campbell perceived the role of women in what historian Barbara Welter has called, "The Cult of True Womanhood." Within this ideology, the characteristics of a true or worthy woman stood out as piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. These attributes served to preserve social order as well as keep woman in her appointed place. God and society called woman to live in a separate sphere from man and should a woman fail to conform to the ideal, she lost all prospect of happiness or position. Conformity, however, promised rich rewards; the true woman held considerable

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<sup>22</sup> Campbell, "Social State," 313, 326; and Campbell, "Education - No. 5," 225.

power and sway in the world of man, if she remembered her place.<sup>23</sup>

Men, on the other hand, were considered the movers and shakers of society and were expected to branch out and create new governments, new religions and new capitalistic enterprises. But these activities played havoc with the traditions of society, and led to social instability. Only within the confines of the Cult of True Womanhood, an ideal presented to the public by preachers, publishers and politicians, could women provide social stability in the wake of the chaos endemic to man's activities. Within the institutions of the home and the church, both God and Nature made women the preservers of tradition and the perpetuators of a virtuous society.<sup>24</sup>

In his various addresses and essays on the female role in society, Campbell echoed the tenets of the Cult of True Womanhood. "Women are more susceptible of religious impressions than men," he wrote, and this condition was preserved by her seclusion "from the corrupting influences, the collisions, the revelries and jarring interests of a commercial, political and worldly spirit." She alone could

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<sup>23</sup> Barbara Welter, Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1976), 21-41.

<sup>24</sup> Welter, Dimity Convictions, 21-41.

rescue man's heart from "the ambitions . . . and the passions that devour it, and fix upon it day by day a thicker and a thicker crust of icy selfishness." From the safety of the hearth, pious women provided the comfort and moral direction necessary "to improve, to civilize and bless the world with the highest moral excellence."<sup>25</sup>

Campbell held women who recognized and maintained their place in God's plan, and in the Republic, in high esteem. "A Christian woman, who is always in her proper sphere," recognizes that "modesty, shamefacedness and sobriety, are the garland of beauty, the wreath of glory, and the coronal of dignity and honor." Furthermore, Campbell enthused, women were not only the very foundation of civilization, but also the means by which enlightened societies were judged. Their status in society, the honor conferred upon them, and the level of education granted females gave evidence of a nation's worth. "In what country, under what form of government, under what profession of Christianity, is woman most honored and most honorable?" The American Republic, he answered, had no equal.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Campbell, "Social State," 324, 325.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Woman and Her Mission," Millennial Harbinger, series IV, VI, (June 1856): 314; Alexander Campbell, "An

Separate spheres for women developed as a natural consequence of the American ideal of republican motherhood - the idea that pious and pure mothers produced a virtuous citizenry for the Republic - a concept echoed by Campbell in his explication of the role of women. Separate spheres protected female purity, allowing them to carry out their obligations to the body politic by producing upright citizens. The concept of Republican Motherhood served a dual purpose - allowing men to maintain their dominance in society while at the same time shifting the responsibility of producing a virtuous citizenry from men to women. Historian Ruth H. Bloch asserts according to this perspective, women "would serve the new nation by making good citizens of their sons despite formal exclusion from institutional political life."<sup>27</sup>

Sequestering republican mothers in their domestic spheres served both God and country. As the first teacher of man, woman imparted discipline, duty and devotion to the Creator. Consequently, everything Americans held dear could be attributed to woman. "Is not the mother of our own Washington," proclaimed Campbell, "the root and origin of

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Excursion to the Kentucky and Henry Female College," Millennial Harbinger, series IV, VI, (July 1856): 393.

<sup>27</sup> Ruth H. Bloch, Gender and Morality in Anglo-American Culture, 1650-1800 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 143.

all the blessings, civil and social, accruing to this country and to the human race?" The strength of the country, he argued, even the foundation of the coming millennium, came under the direct influence of woman and her ability to shape future generations.<sup>28</sup>

Though the principles of True Womanhood and Republican Motherhood served to subsume female political power, Campbell insisted separate spheres hardly diminished woman's strength or importance. Woman was not the "weaker sex"; to the contrary he declared, a "woman's power is confined within this narrow circle that it might be the more concentrated and rebound with more force." Accordingly "no authority, no influence, no power . . . equals that which God vested in woman."<sup>29</sup>

Given the importance of women to direct the moral and social culture of the nation, both religious and secular reformers could agree on the necessity of female education. Yet, this did not translate into a call for female political empowerment. Although academic training for women and the stress on their importance to the nation raised female expectations for greater participation in the Republic, a majority of the citizens in the antebellum

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<sup>28</sup> Campbell, "Social State," 323.

<sup>29</sup> Campbell, "Social State," 322.



period remained opposed to women's suffrage and equal citizenship.<sup>30</sup>

Although Campbell rejected gender political equality, he did envision two areas in which women could expand their role within society - missionary work and service as deaconesses - while protecting what he considered their delicate natures. Because Campbell took "a deep interest in their moral worth and spiritual excellence," he began a series in the Millennial Harbinger directed at women, called "Female Biography." Each biography emphasized the moral character of the chosen subject and her work among the poor and disadvantaged. Whether they served spiritual needs at home or abroad, Campbell had high praise for this sort of women's work. Commenting on a "Letter From Sister Williams in Palestine," he declared "I have as much confidence in the mission of Sister Williams as I could have in the most accomplished man we could allot to that field."<sup>31</sup>

In addition, as a proponent of primitive Christianity, Campbell strove to emulate the first century church's

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<sup>30</sup> Harrell, Quest, 205.

<sup>31</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Female Biography," Millennial Harbinger, series III, II, (June 1845): 283; and Alexander Campbell, "Letter From Sister Williams in Palestine," Millennial Harbinger, series IV, VI, (April 1856): 234.

acceptance of woman's positive institutional role. In Campbell's examination of the scriptures, he concluded that Paul's reference to the deaconess Phoebe, in Romans 6:1, clearly indicated that the first century church engaged women in the office of deacon. He also interpreted I Timothy 3:8-12 as a catalog of qualifications necessary for the office. Campbell asserted in 1826 that "Amongst the Greeks who paid so much regard to differences of sex, female deacons, or deaconesses, were appointed to visit and wait upon the sisters." Thus the office fulfilled both the spiritual and domestic roles of women. Deaconesses should attend to the poor and sick, and distribute monies to the needy, but they must only "officiate amongst the females."<sup>32</sup>

"Amelioration of the social state," required two elements, Campbell insisted, "woman and the Bible, or . . . the *Bible in hand and heart of woman*." If the destiny of humankind depended on the piety and purity of woman, then female education must substantiate moral development; for Campbell the acme of Christian principles could only be found in Protestant nations. "Wherever Protestantism is in the highest ascendancy, there is woman in the highest honor

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<sup>32</sup> Alexander Campbell, "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things, No. XIX: The Deacon's Office," Christian Baptist, 4, (1827): 212; and Alexander Campbell, "The Ancient Order of Things - No. XXX," Christian Baptist, 7, (1829): 48.

and esteem," and furthering the cause of civilization, both sacred and secular. America, he assured the public, took second place to no one; as a Protestant, republican nation, the United States stood poised to redeem the world.<sup>33</sup>

Campbell's effusive proclamations of Protestantism as the foundation of the Millennial Republic meant that he would find in Old World Catholicism the essential threat to New World liberties. He saw in the powerful and centralized Catholic Church an institution which allowed its adherents almost no freedom and demanded from governments and societies conformity to its dictums. For Campbell, the crusade against Catholicism constituted a revolutionary reform protecting liberty-ordained America from Rome-centered oppression.

Campbell's anti-Catholicism, like his other advocacies, found grounding in both the sacred and secular facets of his millennial world-view. Campbell, as a Protestant reformer in serious disagreement with Catholic theology, opposed Romanism on social and political grounds as well. Catholicism jeopardized the ability of Christendom to unite under one banner and hasten the coming Christian

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<sup>33</sup> Campbell, "Social State," 313; and Alexander Campbell, "Address, Woman and Her Mission," Popular Lectures and Addresses, 219. Italics are Campbell's.

age; at the same time, it imperiled the progress of Western Civilization and threatened political liberty.

Campbell denounced Catholicism's "notions of purgatory, indulgences, auricular confession, remission of sins, transubstantiation, [and] supererogation" as corrupt and "injurious to the well-being of society, religious and political." He especially criticized the Pope and the Church's insistence on Papal infallibility. "There is one man in Europe," he warned, "whom we have to fear more than any other man in the world. He calls himself 'the vicar of Christ.'"<sup>34</sup>

Catholic doctrine, coupled with Romanism's refusal to place the Bible in the hands of the masses, was antithetical to Campbell's plea for the restoration of primitive Christianity, which depended upon the individual's liberty to reason out its essential elements through consultation of the scriptures. Untroubled by interference from outside forces such as dictums limiting freedom of thought, all people could find areas of agreement on which to build Christian unity. The power and

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<sup>34</sup> Alexander Campbell and John C. Purcell, A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion : between Alexander Campbell, Bethany, Va. and Right Reverend John B. Purcell, Bishop of Cincinnati : held in the Sycamore Street Meetinghouse, Cincinnati, from the 13th to the 21st of January, 1837 : taken down by reporters and revised by the parties (Nashville: McQuiddy Printing, 1914, 1837), vii; and Campbell, "Baccalaureate Address," 427-428.

position of the Pope, however, stood directly between humankind and God. In Campbell's mind, the Pope claimed extraordinary powers within God's kingdom as he "opens and shuts the gates of mercy according to his own will," effectively separating humanity from their Creator. In addition, by robbing the laity of access to the scriptures, the Catholic Church conspired to imprison the people in all the most vital aspects of their lives.<sup>35</sup>

Apart from his doctrinal quarrels with the Catholic Church, Campbell also perceived a correlation between the advancement of Western Civilization and the diminishing power of Romanism in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. In order to maintain power, the Catholic Church controlled the flow of information through their dominion over the religious and political structures of Europe, but the reforms of Martin Luther brought to the West free-will, independence of thought and broad access to knowledge. Protestants, exclaimed Campbell, do not jail "one for affirming that the stars do not fall; that the earth moves," and "they put no one to torture or to death for thinking for himself on religion, science or the arts." Freed from the constraints of Romanism, the Protestant Reformation provided "the regeneration of literature,

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<sup>35</sup> Campbell, "Baccalaureate Address," 428.

science, art, politics, trade, commerce, [and] agriculture."<sup>36</sup>

The rise of science, the Enlightenment and "the Anglo-Saxon race" required free-will and independence of thought, both of which the Catholic Church denied to the Old World. Historically it was worthy of notice, Campbell ruminated, that England's rise to power coincided with the country's break from the Latin Church, thus emancipating the world "from the most heartless spiritual despotism that ever disenfranchised, enslaved and degraded human kind." Unshackled from Romanism, Anglo-Saxon Protestants found freedom to bless and uplift humanity and direct the progress of civilization.<sup>37</sup>

Born into the British Empire and naturalized an American citizen, Campbell easily melded his Protestant enthusiasm with a belief that God had specially raised the Anglo-Saxon race as His chosen people to spread primitive Christianity and liberty across the world. In his "Address on the Anglo-Saxon Language: Its Origin, Character and Destiny," Campbell assured his Cincinnati audience that the age of the Roman Catholic Church had ended. God had granted "colossal power to Great Britain and the United States,"

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<sup>36</sup> Campbell, "Anglo-Saxon Language," 31, 32.

<sup>37</sup> Campbell, "Destiny of Our Country," 462; Campbell, "Anglo-Saxon Language," 256.

and "now girdled the earth from east to west with the Anglo-Saxon people, the Anglo-Saxon tongue, sciences, learning and civilization." The Reformation, in Campbell's estimation, marked the fulfillment of history as Protestantism was "ever progressing with increasing magnitude and accumulating force, till it has shaken the foundation of the Roman States." Progress, history, and the millennium thus required the destruction of Romanism.<sup>38</sup>

Religious disputes and his belief in the historical preeminence of the Protestant cause, were not however, the major focus of Campbell's anti-Catholic rhetoric. "The Roman Catholic religion," he declared in a 1837 debate with Catholic Bishop John B. Purcell, "is essentially anti-American, being opposed to the genius of all free institutions and positively subversive of them." For Campbell the most pressing problem with Catholicism in America was its threat to the Republic and a virtuous citizenry, desire to possess America and its government, and inability to understand political freedom. According to Campbell biographer Robert Richardson, "there was nothing that Mr. Campbell feared more, as to its probable effect on public liberty," than the ascendancy "of a religious sect, and especially that of the Roman Catholic Church."

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<sup>38</sup> Campbell, "Anglo-Saxon Language," 256, 266.

Accordingly, he continued, Campbell spent his life working vigorously "to expose the schemes of priestly ambition." The problem of Romanism, Campbell avowed in 1852, has "in my own mind occupied a very considerable space, and a more and more imposing magnitude and importance" for at least twenty-five years.<sup>39</sup>

Campbell's fear of the Catholic Church reflected the ideological orientation of many in Jacksonian America. While anti-Catholic sentiment was prevalent in early stages of colonial growth, by the American Revolution the rhetoric of liberty and implementation of religious pluralism had somewhat dampened bigotry aimed at the Papists. By the 1820s, however, the growth of the Latin Church in America and the influx of Catholic immigrants reignited latent anti-Catholic sentiment. "Protestant native Americans and British immigrants," writes Sean Wilentz in The Rise of American Democracy, were "increasingly distrustful of Papists as a political as well as cultural threat to the nation's liberties." During the antebellum period, anti-Catholic bias engendered violence, educational reform movements designed to ensure "correct" acculturation of Catholic immigrants and political factions determined to

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<sup>39</sup> Campbell and Purcell, Debate, vii; Richardson, Memoirs, 1: 537; and Alexander Campbell, "The Aspects of Romanism - No. 1," Millennial Harbinger, series IV, II (February 1852):66.



exclude, or at least blunt the impact of Catholicism in America.<sup>40</sup>

Campbell was convinced that Rome actively sought to take control of the United States. Having lost portions of the Old World, Campbell warned, the Pope is looking "to America, and especially to the vast and fruitful valley of the Mississippi . . . to secure the spiritual monarchy of the New World." Campbell insisted this was not idle speculation; Catholicism was by necessity imperialistic and despotic, therefore "it cannot be a *guest* in any land - it must be the *host*." He estimated in 1847 that there were two million Catholics in America who had been given instruction from the Pope himself to overthrow the political and religious institutions of America. Make no mistake, Campbell exclaimed, "the decree has already gone forth that our Protestant American liberties shall be newmodelled [sic] and rebaptized . . . according to the interests and honors of 'Holy Mother Church.'" He charged his Bethany graduates in 1847 to prepare for the coming struggle between Papal Rome and Protestant America. "It is quite evident that, as American Protestantism is the purest in

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<sup>40</sup> Sean Wilentz, The Rise of American Democracy: Democracy Ascendant, 1815-1840 (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 374; Jon Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 284; and Albanese, Religion, 504-509.

the world" the struggle "for the empire of the world between Protestantism and Popery may be expected in the centre of this New World."<sup>41</sup>

Even should the Romanist plot to convert and recast the American landscape fail, Campbell argued a Catholic presence in the United States must still pose a menace to the nation. Insistent that the very nature of Catholicism produced corrupt and depraved followers, he believed that it spawned a class of immoral citizens who undermined the virtue of the Republic. While traveling in Great Britain in 1847, Campbell wrote his readers that Ireland symbolized the indictment against the wickedness of Catholicism. Despite the riches of southern Ireland, he wrote, "the rapacity of the priesthood, and the superstitious reverence and submission of the laity," had transformed Catholic Ireland into an "impoverished, wretched, and dreary country." One could not, Campbell lamented, exaggerate the "poverty, its abject beggary, its immorality, profanity, and social wretchedness." In contrast, he insisted, Ulster thrived, a condition he attributed to Protestantism. "Roman

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<sup>41</sup> Campbell, "Baccalaureate Address," 428-429; Alexander Campbell, "The Jesuit's Oath," *Millennial Harbinger*, VI, (March 1835): 114; and Harrell, *Quest*, 217. Italics are Campbell's.

Catholicism enervates, while Protestantism energizes and invigorates."<sup>42</sup>

The flood of Irish immigrants to the United States exacerbated the morality issue. These newcomers, generally poverty-stricken, crowded the cities and burdened social services, and "native" Americans viewed them as ungovernable, disease-ridden and venal. The immigrants, who Campbell deemed "irreligious and immoral," gave impetus to his concerns over the Catholic Church in America.<sup>43</sup>

Of greatest import among all these concerns was Campbell's estimation that it was impossible for Catholics to understand liberty. "The love of liberty is a law or principle as uniform and immutable as the law of gravity," and as such, Campbell maintained it was impossible "to love liberty, freedom of thought, of speech and of action, in the state, and to hate it in the church." Campbell judged Romanism as inherently aristocratic and despotic, and by priestly command, so were the Church's followers. In Campbell's mind Protestantism and republicanism required that humans "think, will and act of and from himself, according to the free and unbiased dictates of his own best

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<sup>42</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Letters From Europe - No. XXXVI," Millennial Harbinger, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, V, (December 1848): 671-672.

<sup>43</sup> Campbell, "Aspects of Romanism - No. 1" 66; Harrell, Quest, 217; Sellers, "Market Revolution," 389; and Albanese, Religion, 504-509.

thoughts and understanding." The Catholic Church, however, declares "of human responsibility, free and voluntary action, of self-government, of merit and demerit, that it is, in essence, impiety, [and] insubordination." As long as individuals remained Catholic their allegiance lay with the Pope and constituted a threat to the Republic.<sup>44</sup>

In his debate with Bishop Purcell, Campbell announced to the audience "I come . . . to defend the great cardinal principles of Protestantism." In the course of the debate, however, he also took the opportunity to denounce the danger Catholics posed to America. "The Roman Catholic population," Campbell decried, are made "abject slaves to their priests, bishops, and popes, as to disqualify a person for the relish and enjoyment of liberty." The only countermeasure to such degraded thinking that Campbell could foresee was universal education. Common schools equipped Protestant Americans with the tools to defend themselves from the Catholic threat and provided the only means of retraining the Catholic citizenry. Harrell points out that "Campbell often equated 'Protestantism,' 'universal education,' and 'free republican institutions,'" believing, as Campbell wrote in 1835, "an enlightened

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<sup>44</sup> Campbell, "Destiny of Our Country," 455, 456.

community cannot be enslaved . . . an uneducated society cannot be free."<sup>45</sup>

Catholic reaction to public education appeared to bear out Campbell's assessment since the Romanists objected to the Protestant tenor of the common schools, the reading of the King James Bible in class and the anti-Catholic bias of religious history taught to the students. The Catholic fight for public monies for parochial schools and their attempts to ban the Protestant Bible from the classroom, served to further alienate mainstream Protestants. Yet, the Catholic threat, as well as other reforms, would soon take a back seat to a more pressing issue.<sup>46</sup>

The "darkest and most ominous cloud" looming over the nation Campbell declared in 1835, is "'Slavery as now established by law.'" And while he also remarked "the next most . . . portentous cloud in our political horizon" was the growth of the "popish empire in the bosom of the republic," all else would be eclipsed by the issue of slavery. As Campbell actively participated in the movement for reform in America, particularly in education, women's roles and the defense of the republic from Catholicism, he attempted to maintain a spirit of unity. The issue of

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<sup>45</sup> Campbell and Purcell, Debate, 394-395; Harrell, Quest, 219; and Campbell, "Education - No. 2," 66.

<sup>46</sup> Harrell, Quest, 219; and Albanese, Religion, 86, 506.

slavery, however, stirred emotional, irrational responses in most Americans. There remained no room for dissenting views; each citizen held his view confidently as the correct and moral position, one sanctioned by nature and the Creator.<sup>47</sup>

In the years leading up to the Civil War, religious communities, academic theaters, social and geographical connections, and political arenas were split asunder over the problem of slavery. Campbell, dismayed by the division slavery engendered, attempted to maintain a middle course in order to foster unity in the Republic and Christendom. But for both Campbell and nation, the fight over "the peculiar institution" shattered the dream of a Republican Millennium.

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<sup>47</sup> Campbell, "The Jesuit's Oath," 114.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### REPUBLICAN MILLENNIALISM AND THE DILEMMA OF SLAVERY

Caught in the swirl of the coming national divide, Alexander Campbell urged his followers to embrace a nation-saving disposition. "Christians, as such, know nothing of north or south," he exhorted in 1851, "in the Kingdom of Grace there are no degrees of latitude or longitude." In spite of his pleas, and those of equally fearful national leaders, both the political and religious realms of American life were increasingly consumed by the overriding issue of slavery. Campbell appealed earnestly to all who would listen to remember that this sectional question was a matter of opinion, which if allowed to fester threatened to destroy both secular and sacred harmony. "To preserve unity of spirit among Christians of the South and of the North is my grand object," Campbell proclaimed even as he prayed that "every man who loves the American Union, as well as every man who desires a constitutional end of American slavery" to forestall any rift between Christians over sectionalism and the peculiar institution.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Queries - The Fugitive Slave Law," Millennial Harbinger, 1851, 226; and Alexander Campbell, "Our Position

Campbell fully appreciated that slavery as an institution, or more specifically, the bitter northern attack upon it and the equally caustic southern defense of it, threatened to rend the Union. It was the single societal question that men of reason failed to approach with restraint; it was the contaminant that would destroy all hope of a Christ-focused Republic. Campbell's quest for national perfectionism - his belief in the perfectibility of mankind religiously, socially and politically - was foundational to his vision of the coming millennium, and slavery blighted that dream. Campbell's own fellowship, the Disciples of Christ, groaned under the emotional pressures posited by this titanic question. Disciple leaders looked on with horror as Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists split asunder over the question, and hoped against hope that that these examples would not be the forecast of their own doom. Campbell's plea for restraint, for toleration of opinion and for reasoned understanding of the biblical teachings about slavery, constituted their only plan for preserving both a united religious fellowship and a united national purpose.

Ironically, the quest for perfectionism lay at the foundation of the sectional argument. Southern defenders of

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to Slavery - No. V," Millennial Harbinger, series III, 2, (May 1845): 195.



slavery assumed that they already possessed the perfected republic, modeled upon both the democracy of Athens and the Republic of Rome. Both had been slave-based systems in which men of low status (the slaves) performed the menial tasks of society, thus liberating men of superior status (their masters) to engage in the higher orders of government, literature, philosophy and religion. Southern apologists emphasized that God sanctioned their peculiar institution. The Bible - Old Testament and New - gave examples of masters and slaves thriving together, and laid down rules for their felicitous association. To slavery's defenders, the South possessed the greatest civilization ever known and they only asked that the North allow them the liberty to live their lives as their society dictated.<sup>2</sup>

In the North, the quest for perfection was led by its regionally-focused evangelists. Chief among them, Charles Grandison Finney, assured his followers that salvation's path lay only in the transformed man and in the Christ-perfected society. To him, slavery violated the principles of liberty evident in the American Revolution and foundational to the Millennial Republic. This set Finney against the South in general and its peculiar institution

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<sup>2</sup> Eugene Genovese, A Consuming Fire: The Fall of the Confederacy in the Mind of the White Christian South, Mercer University Lamar Memorial Lectures, No. 41 (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 3-5.

in particular. "The question now," he sermonized in 1852, "has taken this form; shall we individually and personally aid in making men slaves?" To him "Christian men" could have only one response; "Christian men of the North, are all agreed that Slavery is a great sin." He implored his congregation to resist the fugitive slave laws that demanded runaway slaves be returned to their southern imprisonment, he urged his followers to crusade for immediate emancipation, and, when the Civil War erupted, he championed the Union cause hymning the pledge that as Christ "died to make men holy, let us die to make men free."<sup>3</sup>

If Finney wanted a North united in a holy campaign against southern sin, Campbell prayed for a nation united in moral purpose regardless of the individual's perspective on slavery. Unity of his movement and unity of the nation had to be preserved, else the Millennial Republic would be irretrievably broken. Campbell condemned Northern ministers who joined the anti-slavery cause in increasing numbers and "instead of preaching the gospel to sinners, have been piping, day and night, on the subject of slavery, and other

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<sup>3</sup> Charles G. Finney, "Guilt Modified by Innocence," delivered August 18, 1852. Truth in Heart Website, Special Collection Charles Grandison Finney, (last visited March 20, 2008) [http://truthinheart.com/EarlyOberlinCD/CD/Finney/OE/520818\\_guilt\\_ignorance.htm](http://truthinheart.com/EarlyOberlinCD/CD/Finney/OE/520818_guilt_ignorance.htm); and Julia Ward Howe, Battle Hymn of the Republic.

kindred topics." In 1851 he rebuked them directly for their blending of religious and political affairs. "Nothing," Campbell lamented, is "more repugnant to good sense and good morals, than to see Christian ministers and avowed Infidels," bound together in a crusade that is "sowing the seeds of disunion, insubordination and insurrection, among the people." He could not understand their willingness to endanger Christian unity or the American republic which was "pregnant with brighter hopes and richer promises to human kind, than God in his providence . . . has ever yet vouchsafed to fallen man."<sup>4</sup>

Having experienced the institution of slavery as a master who came to appreciate its flaws, Campbell developed a complicated relationship to the institution. On the one hand he became a fervent supporter of gradual emancipation, on the other, he sympathized with the feelings of slaveholders, appreciated the Bible's toleration of, if not support for, slavery, and determined in his mind that it must not be a source of either religious or secular division. Early in Campbell's ministry he inherited slaves from his wife's family, and as a part of his business endeavors he purchased and sold slaves as necessity

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander Campbell, "State of religion at the North," Millennial Harbinger, series III, IV, (January 1847): 13; and Alexander Campbell, "Slavery and The Fugitive Slave Law - No. IV," Millennial Harbinger, series IV, I, (July 1851): 390.

demanded. At this point in his career he found nothing in the Bible to condemn the institution and consequently, believed that buying and selling slaves, (except when dividing families) was not a moral issue. Both his biographer Richardson, and Campbell himself, confirmed he "thought it by no means inconsistent with Christian character to assume the legal rights of a master, or to transfer those rights to another," which Campbell did on several occasions. In time, however, Campbell became convinced that slavery, as institutionalized in America, was an abusive system that injured both master and slave, and, more importantly impinged on secular and sacred liberties. While it is impossible to precisely date the point at which Campbell became disillusioned with the American system of slavery, his father's experience in Kentucky almost certainly initiated the process.<sup>5</sup>

In 1819 Thomas Campbell moved from western Pennsylvania, settled in Burlington, Kentucky, and established an academy; initially accepted by the community, he and his family believed they had found a permanent home. But quite by accident he violated a

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<sup>5</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1: 501-502; Alexander Campbell, "Our Position to Slavery - No. VIII," *Millennial Harbinger*, series III, II, (June 1845): 259; Alexander Campbell, "Elder Hartzell's Book," *Millennial Harbinger*, series IV, IV, (November 1854): 637; and Alexander Campbell, "Sketch of a Tour of 75 Days," *Millennial Harbinger*, VI, and (July 1835): 332.

powerful southern taboo which threatened to make him a *persona non grata*. One Sunday afternoon Thomas Campbell "noticed a large group of negroes of both sexes amusing themselves in a grove nearby," and invited them into his schoolroom for a Bible reading. The impromptu religious service pleased Thomas immensely until he was informed by his neighbors that Kentucky law prohibited such activities. Outraged Thomas immediately closed his school, retreated back to Pennsylvania, and relocated just eight miles from Alexander's Bethany farm.<sup>6</sup>

This infringement on the Campbells' religious and moral obligations left an indelible imprint on both Thomas and Alexander. From that point forward both men "determined to keep themselves free from all personal responsibility in regard to slavery," and son Campbell soon became a life-long advocate of gradual emancipation. The timing of when Alexander Campbell completely divested his holdings in slaves is not entirely certain, but across the decade of the 1820s he claimed to have educated, Christianized and freed several slaves he inherited. Referring in 1845 to events that clearly had occurred much earlier, Campbell declared he had "set free from slavery every human being

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<sup>6</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, I: 494-496.

that came in any way under my influence or was my property."<sup>7</sup>

By 1829 Campbell was sufficiently committed to gradual emancipation of slaves that he intended to make it the hallmark of his service in the Virginia Constitutional Convention. Upon arriving in Richmond that autumn he carried with him a plan for the abolition of the peculiar institution as part of his larger effort to curb the political power of Virginia's tidewater families. In large measure the slave-rich seaboard aristocracy's strength in the state legislature rested in the counting of slaves as three-fifths a person for purposes of representation. A champion of the under-represented mountain Virginians, Campbell not only hoped gradual emancipation would lighten the suffering of the state's human chattel, but he also believed the action would enhance democracy, giving a more even distribution of power across the commonwealth. However, Campbell's idealism soon came into contact with the reality of slave-based politics. Advised by "the more mature judgment of many members of that convention," Campbell became convinced that introducing his scheme would be "impolitic and inexpedient." Bending to the admonitions

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<sup>7</sup> Campbell, "Our Position - No. VIII," 259; Richardson, Memoirs, I: 501-502; and Campbell, "Hartzell's Book," 637.

of his political allies, Campbell later reported that he dropped his proposal to include gradual emancipation in the newly drafted constitution, and resolved instead to circulate his proposition in the pages of the Millennial Harbinger.<sup>8</sup>

Following his service at the Virginia Constitutional Convention, Campbell assumed he had personally turned aside from the life of a politician, explaining to his adherents that "the State is the world, not the Church." In "this partisan and political age" he explained, he intended "to direct my energies to the root of the tree" rather than "devote myself to one branch of evil." As a believer in Christ, Campbell believed he better served the community by striking at the source of man's depraved condition - a lack of commitment to religious imperatives. By bringing the body politic together under a united banner the resulting millennial age would make political questions moot.<sup>9</sup>

Campbell proudly recounted that on an 1845 tour of Missouri he was confronted by a reader unable to discern Campbell's political preferences. Asked whether he was a

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<sup>8</sup> Alexander Campbell, "The Crisis," Millennial Harbinger, III, (February 1832): 86.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery, No. III," Millennial Harbinger, series III, 2, (March 1845): 108; and Alexander Campbell, "Abolitionism," Millennial Harbinger, VII, (June 1836): 282.

Whig or a Democrat, Campbell recalled, "I did not enlighten him very much," saying only "there are certain principles and policies to which I sometimes gave my suffrage," however, he informed the questioner, "neither parties nor men were worshiped by me with any blind devotion." Campbell added that while he took no interest in local political arguments "in grand national concerns, I found it my duty to support principles and measures involving, as I conceive, the best interests of the community to which I belonged."<sup>10</sup>

Nonetheless, Campbell was often pressed to clarify his stand on political concerns, and in the process was forced to voice his concerns relative to issues that were as secular as they were sacred. He admonished his readers as editor of the Millennial Harbinger that his role was to remain impartial. He assured his audience that for over twenty-five years as editor he had "uniformly and without a single exception given to our readers both sides of every question upon religion, morality or expediency, that has appeared upon our pages." However, despite his protestations Campbell was never completely removed from

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<sup>10</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Impartiality of the Harbinger Editor," Millennial Harbinger, series III, III, (January 1846): 4-5.



the concerns of the Republic as the lines between the secular and the sacred became increasingly blurred.<sup>11</sup>

In spite of Campbell's articulated desire to avoid overtly political discussion in the pages of his journal, in reality he often urged his followers to focus on the morality of topics other than slavery. Campbell appealed to his readers to remember the rights of the Cherokee nation, he spoke out against both Masonry and Anti-Masonry, and he cautioned his followers against making temperance their "religion." Nonetheless, as time progressed, slavery and related problems increasingly forced their way into the pages of the Millennial Harbinger. "Anyone of much sagacity," he declared in 1845, "must see that the controversy between the North and the South has commenced." Consequently, he acknowledged with reluctance that "to these subjects we must pay such attention as the crisis demands."<sup>12</sup>

Campbell had made his personal stand on slavery clear from the inception of the Millennial Harbinger; in his prospectus Campbell defined one objective of the journal as a dialogue "upon the treatment of African slaves, as

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<sup>11</sup> Campbell, "Impartiality," 4.

<sup>12</sup> Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery," 51; and Alexander Campbell, "Preface," Millennial Harbinger, series III, II, (January 1845): 1.

preparatory [sic] to their emancipation, and exaltation from their present degraded position." In the same 1830 issue he decried a new Georgia law prohibiting teaching any person of color to read or write, affirmed his belief that whites suffered more under slavery than their black slaves, and pleaded with the North to allow the South to solve the slavery question without interference. Nonetheless he insisted his stand on the peculiar institution was one of political opinion and should not impact the primary goal of religious unity.<sup>13</sup>

Campbell hoped discussing slavery in purely economic and political terms would blunt passions on the subject within the brotherhood and preserve unity. "Our great object in declaring our position on the subject of slavery and the propriety of the discussion of it, has been gained," he optimistically informed his readers in 1846, "there will be no division in our ranks on that question." His confidence, however, was misplaced. Slavery was a question that stirred intense emotions in both anti- and pro-slavery men alike, and division plagued the Republic as

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<sup>13</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Prospectus," Millennial Harbinger, I, (January 1830): 1; Alexander Campbell, "Georgia Slaves," Millennial Harbinger, I, (January 1830): 47; Alexander Campbell, "Emancipation of White Slaves," Millennial Harbinger, I, (March 1830): 128; and Alexander Campbell. "Response to 'T'," Millennial Harbinger, I, (April 1830): 191.

well as religious institutions on either side of the Mason-Dixon Line.<sup>14</sup>

By 1845 the slavery question ceased being a strictly political concern as many of Campbell's adherents began disfellowshipping slaveholders from their churches. Slavery, they strongly affirmed, was a sin and God demanded separation from evil. Since the question of fellowship with slave owners fell solidly in the realm of theology, he moved quickly to address the debate. Campbell recognized at the core of the controversy was whether or not slavery was a theological or a political question. If it was not a sin the question became secular and rejecting a brother or sister on the grounds of slave ownership contravened God's will; conversely, if it was a sin, then the peculiar institution threatened Christian unity as surely as it threatened the national consensus.

Both sides of the controversy looked to Campbell for guidance, as well as support for their opposing positions and he grudgingly opened the pages of the Millennial Harbinger to an in-depth discussion of the slavery issue. Desiring to contain the point of contention and hopeful he could find common ground for fellowship, Campbell insisted the only relevant question was "What does the Bible teach

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<sup>14</sup> Alexander Campbell, No Title, Millennial Harbinger, series III, III, (January 1846): 6.

on this subject?" It was Campbell's fervent prayer that by turning his followers' attention back to the fundamental tenet of the Restoration - speak where the Bible speaks - slavery would cease to be a divisive topic within the Church.<sup>15</sup>

After careful exposition of the Bible on the master slave relationship Campbell informed his followers slavery "is no where condemned in the Holy Scriptures as morally wrong; and that in certain cases, it is even now altogether lawful and right." Therefore, no matter what personal convictions a Christian might hold on the question "no Christian community, governed by the Bible, Old Testament or New, can constitutionally and rightfully" make slave ownership "a term of Christian fellowship."<sup>16</sup>

Campbell confidently directed his fellow Disciples to the New Testament book of *Philemon*, an epistle in which the apostle Paul dealt squarely with the issue of slavery. After converting a runaway slave to Christianity, Paul returned the slave to his owner, an action which implied at least passive acceptance of slavery. Campbell insisted that if slavery had been a sin Paul "would have said 'Let all masters on entering the Christian church emancipate their

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<sup>15</sup> Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery," 53.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Our Position - No. VIII," 257, 263.

slaves, and put an end to the unholy relation . . . instead Paul exhorted slaveholders to 'render justice and equity' to their slaves and sent the runaway slave back to fulfill his duty to his master. To Campbell, Paul's failure to condemn slavery when the opportunity presented itself clearly indicated that God condoned the institution, even in the New Testament. If slavery was not a sin, then the real issue could only be personal and political.<sup>17</sup>

Campbell assured his readers he was neither "an apologist for American slavery, a reformer, nor an abolitionist." Since slavery was a political, not a theological, question Campbell informed his followers, "we have no warrant to annihilate the relation," or to deny Christian community to masters. Additionally, as a citizen of the Republic he was obligated to recognize that in regard to slavery "the laws sustain it; and so long as the laws sustain it, abstractly right or wrong, it is the duty of every *Christian* man to respect it and offer it no violence." Under these conditions the only recourse for anti-slavery Christians was through the franchise, otherwise as principled citizens they could not "violate or

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<sup>17</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Morality of Christians - No. XVIII," Millennial Harbinger, n.s., IV, (March 1840): 101.

tempt others to violate existing laws without offending" the Lord.<sup>18</sup>

Campbell's exegesis on slavery and its place in God's word did not have the desired effect. Both pro- and anti-slavery men were convinced of the righteousness of their position. Those opposed to slavery cast doubt on Campbell's reasoning, often arguing that Biblical examples of the master-slave relationship in no way represented the realities of American slavery. His pro-slavery followers questioned whether Campbell had gone far enough in defense of the institution, calling on him to take a positive stand on issue. Campbell's ambivalent position on slavery, however, only served to complicate the question further.

As a student of theology Campbell was convinced that the Bible was the blueprint by which all should live; more importantly, he was convicted that God's word provided the basis for Christian unity and the foundation for the coming millennium. Consequently, Campbell could not, in good conscience, ignore Biblical acceptance of slavery. Conversely as a citizen of the Republic he was opposed socially, politically, morally, and economically to "slavery, that largest and blackest spot, that many-headed monster . . . whose breath pollutes and poison everything

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<sup>18</sup> Campbell, "Our Position - No. III," 108-109.

within its influence." Campbell also recognized the potential for destruction and disunity inherent in the question of slavery and attempted to steer a middle course, hoping to dampen the frenzied religious and secular sentiments.<sup>19</sup>

Campbell's distress over the plight of the slave was only a small part of his vexation over the peculiar institution. While he believed slaves had souls and he complained bitterly over laws that forbid educating blacks and allowed masters to separate husband from wife and a child from its parents, his loyalty lay with the slave owners. "Much as I may sympathize with a black man," Campbell wrote in 1845, "I love the white man more." He openly acknowledged "the owners of slaves, their heirs," were his primary concern as he agonized over the damage slavery inflicted on the white man.<sup>20</sup>

His disquiet over the white Southerner was twofold - societal and economic. Responding to criticism that his writings could incite rebellion among the slaves Campbell assured his readers "it is not for the slaves I write . . . it is the masters I wish to emancipate." In his 1830 article "Emancipation of White Slaves," Campbell asserted

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<sup>19</sup> Campbell, "The Crisis," 86.

<sup>20</sup> Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery - No. V," 51; and Campbell, "Preface," 234.

that slave owners were the "slave of slaves, while your slaves are only the servants of masters." Driven by fear, masters were unable to sleep at night, armed themselves against insurrection, and were forced to keep constant vigil over their family's safety. "Of the two kinds of bondage, which is the more difficult to be borne?" Worse still, in Campbell's mind, was the slaveholder's attempt to ameliorate their white enslavement by passing laws restricting freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press and the freedom to worship God. For Campbell this was incompatible with "the spirit of our civil institutions," and if the people allowed laws to be passed that inhibited "moral and religious obligations," then, he roared "out with our *magna charta*, and with our boasted civilization!" Clearly "something must be done to emancipate the whites" from their slavery to fear. In Campbell's perfected kingdom the debate over slavery and not slavery itself, threatened the foundational liberty and sense of unity which was the signet element of his religious quest.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, Campbell was sensitive to the practical issues facing slaveholders, especially their economic concerns. He vehemently opposed any emancipation

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<sup>21</sup> Campbell, "White Slaves," 128-132.



scheme that deprived slaveholders of their property without their consent or adequate compensation; Campbell insisted that property rights must be held sacrosanct. "I would hold as sacred the rights of the South to their slaves as I do the rights of the North to their land," consequently he would not anymore remove "the slave from his master than I would the land from its owner, without full and satisfactory consideration."<sup>22</sup>

Still, while cognizant of the monetary rights of slave owners, Campbell argued that slavery actually cost the South economically, as it destroyed the land and prevented industrialization. "Political economists . . . without a respectable exception, are opposed to slavery . . . [as] powerfully adverse to national wealth and respectability." In this conclusion Campbell concurred, declaring "I have, for at least more than twenty years confined my attention merely to the comparative progress of the slave and free States," and unequivocally the slave states were the loser. If the South failed to end the corrupting evil of slavery, he predicted, "she will become a wilderness, with a few scattering inhabitants. Nothing in the eye of political prophecy is more certain." The only expectation for improvement was if the South, before the damage was

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<sup>22</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Slavery and Anti-Slavery," Millennial Harbinger, VI, (December 1835): 588.

irreparable, "go to work in her vineyard, and dispose of her loungers and drones, that like her weevil, eat the heart out of her good things."<sup>23</sup>

Even as Campbell admonished southern slave masters, he also feared that the argument over slavery doomed national felicity. He deemed slavery as "not in harmony with the spirit and genius of the age, nor with the peculiar genius of our American population and political institutions." Slavery might be lawful but it was at the same time antithetical to the spirit of progress and the republican virtues that America maintained. In order to save the slave, the slaveholder and ultimately the Republic, Campbell propagated a plan for gradual emancipation that "when fully comprehended, will be found to be more truly philanthropic and Christian, than any other scheme before the American people."<sup>24</sup>

Campbell's scheme rested on the appropriation of excess government funds for the purchase and colonization of both slaves and free blacks. "The nation is duly informed that the *national* debt, the debts of *two wars* for

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<sup>23</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Tract for the People: A Tract for the People of Kentucky," Millennial Harbinger, series III, VI, (May 1849): 244; and Alexander Campbell, "Slavery in Virginia," Millennial Harbinger, III, (1832): 15.

<sup>24</sup> Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery - No. VIII," 257; and Alexander Campbell, "Abolition, Masonic, and Odd Fellow Intolerance," Millennial Harbinger, (July 1845): 314.

the acquisition and preservation of our *liberty*. Our *national independence*, is as good as paid," Campbell proclaimed, "What is to be done with the ten millions of dollars annually appropriated to the discharge of that debt?" He proposed to use those funds to discharge "another heavy debt" which "preys upon this confederacy, and threatens a disruption of some vital organ of the body politic." The use of public funds "appropriated to the colonization of all people of color, either slaves or free persons" would, by his calculation, profit all sections of the country. "An appropriation of ten million per annum, for 15 or 20 years" would, he assured the public, rid the Republic of the curse of slavery and "bind the union more firmly together than all the rail roads, canals, and highways" that could be built with those same funds.<sup>25</sup>

Instrumental to Campbell's plan was fair compensation for all slave-owners. Any plan to abolish the peculiar institution needed to "be done judiciously according to vested rights," and if any master declined to manumit their slaves, then public monies needed to be appropriated for purchasing said slaves. Campbell argued that using government surplus to eradicate slavery would not make "any

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<sup>25</sup> Campbell, "The Crisis," 87. Italics are Campbell's.

state or family in the union feel itself one cent per annum poorer," but it would "save the life of the nation."<sup>26</sup>

In the wake of the traumatic Nat Turner Rebellion of 1832, Virginia law-makers seriously considered a turn toward gradual emancipation. Supporting this effort, Campbell proclaimed his sympathy with the victims of "horrors of the Southampton Insurrection," while at the same time reflecting that "often is good educes from evil." Perhaps, he speculated, the deaths of "those unfortunates may be the means of averting a severer stroke, and of saving many more from still crueler fates." The time had come, he reasoned, for Virginia to extricate herself from the evils of slavery as a means of promoting "her interest, honor, and happiness." His optimism, however, was not rewarded as the legislature "rendered itself memorable with many eloquent speeches . . . but arose without passing a single law on the subject."<sup>27</sup>

Seventeen years later when Kentucky held its own constitutional convention, Campbell once again seized an opportunity to promote gradual emancipation. In his "Tract For The People of Kentucky" he appealed to convention

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<sup>26</sup> Campbell, "Slavery and Anti-Slavery," 588.

<sup>27</sup> Campbell, "Slavery in Virginia," 14-15; and Alexander Campbell, "'The Athenians Know What is Good, but the Lacedemonians Practice It,'" Millennial Harbinger, III, (May 1832): 240.

delegate's enlightened self-interest as well as to their Christian duty, and urged the peculiar institution's dissolution. Using state and federal government figures, he compared the economic output of Kentucky and Ohio. Kentucky, Campbell lectured "had the better start as to the means of settlement and of acquiring wealth," however Ohio had, in forty-six years amassed an "aggregate statistic wealth" that exceeded Kentucky by "one hundred and forty--eight millions!" Slavery, he assured them, was the culprit. In addition he called on every child of God to "vote like Christians at the polls and demonstrate [their] love of liberty and right" by freeing the slaves. "It is emancipation now or Slavery for ever," he warned them, but much to his disappointment Kentucky failed to act.<sup>28</sup>

As Campbell continued to push forward his proposition for gradual emancipation, he was convinced that if "the question of the abolition of slavery was legitimately to be laid before the people" of Virginia, Kentucky or any other section of the South, "there would be found, even among the slave-holders, a majority to concur in a rational system of emancipation." Campbell judged that "my essays on the subject are daily being well-received by candid and thinking men," but "proslavery and abolition leaders . . .

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<sup>28</sup> Campbell, "Tract for the People of Kentucky," 246, 252.

are superexcited [sic] and elevated many degrees above the reasoning point." Extremists were stirring up the people and making a rational solution unattainable, a situation that offended Campbell's common sense outlook and imperiled unity within and without the Church. He considered pro-slavery men misguided, if not self-destructive, but at least they were not contravening God's will. Abolitionists, on the other hand, were willing to jeopardize church and state for political expediency.<sup>29</sup>

Although Campbell proclaimed himself an opponent of slavery, he repeatedly pointed out that he was an anti-slavery man, not an abolitionist. Asked to delineate between the two terms he informed his readers, "*Antislavery* is generic, while abolitionist is *specific*." An anti-slavery man abhors the institution of slavery but "loves Christ and Christianity more," and "will not join any confederacy that contemplates blood or violence, or revolution or dismemberment," in the pursuit of a political objective. Conversely, abolitionists consider "the relation of master and slave as in its very nature evil, and only evil, continually," effectively ignoring Biblical teaching on the subject. Additionally, they reckon it their duty to abolish slavery "'Peaceably if they could forcibly if they

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<sup>29</sup> Campbell, "The Crisis," 86; and Campbell, "Queries," 530.

must.'" The problem with abolitionists, Campbell bitterly complained, is that "some of them have become men of one idea, and it has grown so luxuriantly as to choke all other ideas that ever entered their heads or their hearts."<sup>30</sup>

Campbell deplored fanaticism in any form, but he held a special disdain for Northern abolitionists whose single-mindedness of purpose would destroy all that Americans held dear. Anyone who would "dismember the church and dissolve the union" for the sake of slavery is ungodly, he exclaimed, therefore "as a Christian, no man could be an abolitionist." Yet while both concerned and outraged by their willingness to put their relationship with God at risk, Campbell excoriated abolitionists for the impact their actions had on the South. Their brand of "abolition is likely," he cried, "to beget a more intolerable species of slavery."<sup>31</sup>

Campbell reasoned that abolitionists in their drive to effect immediate universal emancipation ignored an important facet of human psychology. "Dream not of abolishing slavery in America on Abolition principles," Campbell scolded radical anti-slavery men, your "philosophy

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<sup>30</sup> Alexander Campbell, "American Slavery," *Millennial Harbinger*, series III, II, (August 1845): 357; and Campbell, "Slavery and The Fugitive Slave Law - IV," 391. Italics are Campbell's.

<sup>31</sup> Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery - No. V", 238.

may be humane, but it is not human." Just as when a neighbor offers "interference between a man and his wife, in any misunderstanding between them" is not a recipient of "their gratitude or affection," Campbell lectured Northerners to "let the Southern family settle its own affairs." Southern resistance to abolition was, Campbell concluded, "exactly in the inverse ratio of Northern interference. Right or wrong . . . this is a law of human nature."<sup>32</sup>

"Extremes beget extremes," Campbell admonished, and abolitionists were especially dangerous. He lamented "there are, indeed, Liberty Men and Abolitionists who regard the dismemberment of every church in the union their desideratum." Furthermore he prophesied, "they may accomplish a division of these United States." But while their zealotry "may create more slave states, create international wars; cherish and perpetuate eternal discords and hatreds," he predicted they would never be able to "abolish slavery in this New World." The only way for the North to achieve the end of the peculiar institution was to "let the South have their slaves and throw no impediment in the way." In turn Campbell was confident the Southerners

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<sup>32</sup> Campbell, "Queries," 530; and Campbell, "Slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law - IV," 391.



would resolve the issue in their own and the nation's best interests.<sup>33</sup>

An even-handed critic, Campbell execrated unethical slaveholders as severely as he criticized divisive abolitionists. God called Christian masters to hold themselves to a higher standard of behavior, and the Bible did not permit a child of God to "treat his servants as he treats his mules or his oxen." Campbell lectured masters to remember slaves "have souls as well as bodies; they have powers of reason; they have conscience, moral instincts, moral feelings, and are susceptible of spiritual enjoyments, of immortality, and eternal life." Consequently, the Christian slave-owners stood under "the highest obligation to discharge [their] duties faithfully," and this included the "mental, moral, and religious culture of their slaves."<sup>34</sup>

Campbell assured the South that if they followed Paul's admonition to "'render to your servants that which is just and equal,'" they would profit from the double blessing of silencing the North and improving their own

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<sup>33</sup> Campbell, "Queries," 530.

<sup>34</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Our Position to Slavery - No. VI," Millennial Harbinger, series III, II, (May 1845): 237; Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery - No. V," 193; and Alexander Campbell, "To Mr. William Jones of London, Letter II," Millennial Harbinger, VI, (January 1835): 18.

circumstances regarding the peculiar institution. "I have long been of the opinion," he wrote in 1845, "that were Christian masters to discharge all their duties to their slaves, abolitionists would have no more against them at the bar of public opinion." Additionally, if masters treated their slaves appropriately it "would so ameliorate their condition as to render it truly blissful . . . infinitely preferable to that of heathenism, out of which they were brought." Virtuous masters would have nothing to fear from the North or their bondsmen.<sup>35</sup>

Irrespective of Campbell's insistence he was not an apologist for the peculiar institution, his pronouncement that slavery was not a sin, his appeal for masters to treat their slaves justly and thereby silence their critics on earth and in heaven, his denunciation of abolitionists, and his call for the South to be left to resolve its own apparent contradictions mirrored the pro-slavery stance of many Southerners. Eugene Genovese, in A Consuming Fire, asserts that Southern spiritual leaders both defended the institution of slavery and warned their followers of God's judgment if they did not fulfill their Christian obligations to their chattel. They believed God "blessed

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<sup>35</sup> Campbell, "Our Position to Slavery," 235; and Alexander Campbell, "Reply to 'A Disciple' On the Subject of Slavery," Millennial Harbinger, series III, II, (May 1845): 199.

their struggle to uphold a scripturally sanctioned slavery," and in 1861 the Lord consecrated their crusade when the North and South question devolved into warfare.<sup>36</sup>

Campbell, however, differed from his fellow divines in important aspects. He only reluctantly acknowledged that the Bible sanctioned slavery, it was not the answer he sought, but his literal interpretation of the Bible and his desire to preserve unity would not allow him to ignore the holy writ. Campbell genuinely opposed American slavery, believing it ran counter to the grand progress of the age and that, as instituted in the United States, it lent itself to abuses that degraded and corrupted the white masters. More importantly he feared both the North and South would destroy the Republic in an irrational paroxysm over an institution that was increasingly outmoded and inexpedient. It was his fervent prayer that, left alone from the radical excesses of the North, right-minded Southerners would abolish the system post haste.

After extended discourse on slavery in the Millennial Harbinger of 1845, Campbell was optimistic that his rational and cogent exposition of slavery would lead Godly upright citizens to quell the impending storm. Regardless of his intentions, however, the questions of slavery and

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<sup>36</sup> Genovese, Consuming Fire, 4-5, 37-39.

union continued to fester. However grand the larger debate over slavery, many Americans - North and South alike - were drawn into the coming cauldron by more personal matters through which they identified with one side or the other. For Campbell, three intense events drew him away from theoretical arguments and impacted negatively the quality of his life, and foretold the collapse not only of the Union but, more importantly the failure of his quest for a perfected society, the Millennial Republic. In 1847 he sailed to Scotland where a squabble with Glasgow abolitionists led to his imprisonment and the failure of his missionary journey, in 1851 the national debate spawned by the Fugitive Slave Law forced him to commit to a position that inevitably divided him from many of his co-religionists, and in 1856 the cause of abolitionism struck cancer-like on the campus of his beloved Bethany College.

Eager to share his religious message abroad, Campbell embarked on an extended tour of the British Isles in 1847, and spent two months lecturing in England, Wales and Scotland. He preached in both homes and churches, communed with Baptists, Unitarians and Disciples and spoke to large gatherings in spacious halls across the country. The engagements were considered a complete success until he ran afoul of the Anti-Slavery Society in Edinburgh. The

Society, who took exception to Campbell's defense of slavery as well as his stand against abolitionists, pressed him for a debate on "the morality and scriptural sanctioning of slavery." Campbell rejected the challenge, citing his closely scheduled itinerary as the reason for his refusal.<sup>37</sup>

Campbell soon found himself embroiled in a conflict with the abolitionists as the Society placed broadsides around Edinburgh condemning Campbell, and their secretary, Reverend James Robertson, stood outside places Campbell was scheduled to speak wearing a placard that read in part: "BEWARE! . . . THE REV. ALEX. CAMPBELL OF VIRGINIA, U. S. OF AMERICA has been a slaveholder himself and is still a defender of manstealers!" Feeling compelled to defend himself Campbell reluctantly agreed to a debate, and in the wording of his acceptance opened himself to an accusation of libel under Scottish law and found himself thrown in prison, where he refused to post bail as a matter of principle. He languished in a debtor's cell for six days

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<sup>37</sup> Newton B. Fowler, Jr., "Alexander Campbell's Imprisonment in Scotland," Discipliana 44 (June 1984), 20-21; Richardson, Memoirs, 2:537-544; and Eva Jean Wrather, "Alexander Campbell's Tour of Scotland," The Christian, 22 May 1960, 10 and Alexander Campbell, "Letters From Europe - No. XIV; Millennial Harbinger, series III, IV, (November 1847): 626-628; and Alexander Campbell, "Letters From Europe - No. XV; Millennial Harbinger, series III, IV, (November 1847): 642-644.

before the authorities, finding the charges baseless, released him.<sup>38</sup>

Campbell subsequently counter-sued Robertson and won a judgment for the amount of £200, a considerable sum in terms of nineteenth century accounting. But the financial assessment hardly countered the damage to Campbell's reputation. Forced to defend his relationship to slavery, the incident obscured his real opposition to the institution, reinforced in his mind the destructive impact of radical abolitionism, and detracted from his real purpose of being in Scotland, which was to promote his religious movement.<sup>39</sup>

The incident in Scotland reminded Campbell that he could not avoid the issues of slavery whether at home or abroad. Back at his Virginia home in 1848, a beleaguered and exhausted Campbell explained to a reader of the Millennial Harbinger that "in Europe and America I neither advocated nor opposed any form of slavery. It came not into my mission." His only intent was "to preach and teach Christ. The Abolitionists would not allow me to do this"

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<sup>38</sup> Fowler, "Imprisonment in Scotland," 21, 25; Alexander Campbell, "Letter From Europe- No. XVI," Millennial Harbinger, series III, IV, (November 1847): 643-45; Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery - No. V," 238; and Richardson, Memoirs, 2:546.

<sup>39</sup> "Court of Session Extract, Alexander Campbell's Decree of Payment Against James Robertson," CFP, DCHS, Tennessee.

and because "I disbelieved their essential dogma . . . they let loose the dogs of war, and were not satisfied until they had misrepresented, calumniated, and imprisoned me." Campbell's imprisonment in Glasgow almost certainly damaged his health even as it left him mentally disheartened over its certain threat to his hopes for a Millennial Republic.<sup>40</sup>

Over the next years Campbell dedicated himself to preaching tours, raising money for his college, and various printing projects, but discord arising from the Compromise of 1850's strengthening of the Fugitive Slave laws, brought the question back again to the top of national attention and as such intruded onto the pages of the Millennial Harbinger. The North chafed under a statute that brought them direct participation in slavery, and preachers and laymen alike denounced the law, and across the region secular and spiritual leaders encouraged direct disobedience of it. Quite expectedly Southern slaveholders confessed shock that any American citizen would be willing to deprive them of their constitutional right to protect their property.

Pressed by his readers to speak out on this national crisis, Campbell had no choice but to respond. One correspondent, John Kirk of Ohio, proclaimed he had "come

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<sup>40</sup> Campbell, "Abolitionism," 177-178.

to the conclusion that I will neither patronize priest nor paper, that is not strictly anti-slavery," and then called on Campbell to denounce the Fugitive Slave Law as a "fiendish and ungodly statue." From the other side of the question's divide, reader Samuel Church of Pittsburgh implored Campbell to "speak out on this subject . . . A word from you would do a great deal, to preserve the perpetuity of our union."<sup>41</sup>

Campbell protested that as editor of the Millennial Harbinger he preferred to "stand on neutral ground," but he acknowledged that he owed "myself and my readers, North and South, to place myself before them." The Fugitive Slave Law stirred more excitement, he acknowledged, than any statute enacted "since the adoption of the Constitution of the United States." That any citizen, much less a Christian citizen, would "recommend violence, or insubordination to a law," passed by the duly elected representatives, that "merely reflects the will of the sovereign people," was for Campbell a "rather unexpected development."<sup>42</sup>

Campbell once again looked to the scriptures for guidance, and whether or not the principle of "higher law"

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<sup>41</sup> Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery," 49, 51.

<sup>42</sup> Campbell, "Slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law," Millennial Harbinger, series IV, I, (March 1851) 171.



- the overriding duty to give priority to moral law over secular decree - applied to the Fugitive Slave Law.

Campbell argued that in "all temporal and earthly matters - civil law, the social compact, is our rule of action," and in matters of faith "God alone is Lord of the conscience . . . the supreme legislator." God commanded his children to obey the laws of man insofar as they did not violate Christian morality, however, Campbell avowed, the Fugitive Slave Law was not a matter of conscience, it was merely "a law for the recovery of a runaway servant." By reasserting his contention that the master-slave relationship was not a sin, Campbell effectively removed the controversy from the realm of "higher law," and made obedience to the statute a obligation of citizenship.<sup>43</sup>

In Campbell's mind the only remaining question was legality - "What does the Constitution of the United States itself require of me . . . in reference to slavery?" The Constitution, he intoned, required that runaway slaves "SHALL BE DELIVERED UP," to their masters; this was not an argument over lawfulness or conscience, it was part of America's *magna charta*. "We are a free people - a constitutional, law-abiding people," Campbell reminded his

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<sup>43</sup> Campbell, "The Fugitive Slave Law," Millennial Harbinger, series IV, I, (January 1851) 30.

readers, "We are the *United States*, a rational self-governing community" where the rule of law and respect for vested rights made the nation the envy of the world. "I cannot, from all that I have heard or read," Campbell concluded, "see any valid reason or cause for resisting the present law."<sup>44</sup>

Again, Campbell's voice of reason was not heard and he feared the country was on the brink of destruction, and his fellowship was being torn apart by dissension. Reflecting on the riots in Boston over the statute, he could not comprehend the willingness of the North or South to risk the union or Christian fidelity. "As Christians, we are not called to create discords, to excite wars and tumults at home or abroad." By what justification could either side "kindle the flames of disunion or civil war, on such premises, for such objects, as are now before the people?" David Edwin Harrell, Jr. posits in The Quest For A Christian America, that by the end of 1851, in regard to the slavery question, Campbell was a weary and disillusioned warrior."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Campbell, "Slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law - No. IV," 387. Caps and italics are Campbell's.

<sup>45</sup> Harrell, Quest, 111.

Beaten down by the national debate over slavery, Campbell looked to his home in Bethany and to the College he founded there as a sanctuary from the greater issues of the day. But this isolated isle could not forever shelter him from society's greater calamities. "The environs of Bethany College," he exulted in 1854, "are a sort of District of Columbia, where North and South, East and West, can religiously, morally and politically meet, unite, and co-operate," as co-believers and American citizens. But in 1856 several students shattered that idyll, raised the abolitionist banner and preached to an assembly of the students the wickedness of slavery.<sup>46</sup>

Caught off guard, Campbell was hardly prepared for the events that followed. "The policy of Bethany College, from the commencement, has been to maintain a strictly literary, scientific and religious character," he explained in the pages of his religious journal. Politics and sectional partisanship had no home in the institution. Campbell blamed Philip Burns, a student from Scotland, for Bethany's troubles. Burns maneuvered to fill another student's assigned speaking engagement and announced he would be delivering an address at the college's Sunday night church service "on the true meaning of liberty," which Campbell

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<sup>46</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Notes on a Tour to Illinois," Millennial Harbinger, series IV, IV, (January 1854): 43.

assumed would be on "the liberty of the gospel." Instead, the student turned provocateur, attacked the institution of slavery as well as the character of several Bethany students and faculty who supported slavery. A near riot ensued. The following day Bethany students of southern origin passed declarations excoriating Burns' actions and condemning any further discussion of the question; Northern students responded proclaiming resolutions of their own that demanded "'the right to discuss, in public debate or in the pulpit, the merits of American slavery.'" The Northern students also "absented themselves from classes," Campbell reported, behaving in "open defiance" of the code of conduct they had sworn to uphold.<sup>47</sup>

In spite of efforts to contain the incident, five students, including Burns, were expelled and five others chose to remove themselves from the school. Supporters christened them the "immortal ten" and proclaimed them martyrs for the cause of abolition. Their exploits were reported in the same Glasgow newspapers that had led the abolitionist crusade responsible for Campbell's imprisonment. The Glasgow News and the Christian News reported the incident under the banners "Slavery Intolerance," and "Campbellite Proslaveryism,"

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<sup>47</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Disturbance in Bethany College," Millennial Harbinger, series IV, VI, (January 1856): 51, 56-57, 59.

respectively. Campbell was also incensed to discover that North-Western Christian University, a Disciples of Christ school in Illinois with strong abolitionist leanings, enrolled several of the students at their institution. He questioned how any college could "receive into their arms, with 'well done good and faithful servants,'" students who had been dismissed for unbecoming conduct by "respectable" sister institutions.<sup>48</sup>

However much Campbell may have felt betrayed by North-Western, he was more disturbed by the breach the incident exposed within his movement and the nation. In 1835 he warned his followers the perils wrought by the peculiar institution were multiplying and "will sooner or later (sooner perhaps than anyone imagines) burst on the heads of our beloved offspring, with a vengeance and a fury . . . as irresistible as death." The "trouble in Bethany College," was a microcosm of the growing rift within religious communities and the nation at large. Campbell fought vigorously to protect his college and his movement from the pernicious evil of sectionalism, but by 1856 the pressures

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<sup>48</sup> Harrell, *Quest*, 113; and Alexander Campbell, "Reported Troubles in Bethany College," *Millennial Harbinger*, series IV, VI, (February 1856): 111.

brought by slavery had already created insurmountable chasms in American society.<sup>49</sup>

Campbell had assured a correspondent in 1835 that America was "a growing nation, proud of its independence, boastful of its love of liberty and strict regard for the rights of man." He was confident the Republic would end slavery, an abhorrent institution, and prove to the world "that we appreciate our birthrights, and that we will not sell them for cotton, tobacco, and sugar." Campbell was convinced God had ordained that America would redeem mankind and serve as the gateway to a glorious age; surely, he reasoned, such secular and sacred promise would not be squandered.<sup>50</sup>

Yet in the closing years of the 1850s, America was indeed forsaking its sacred role, choosing instead to heed the martial call leading toward a national holocaust. Campbell grieved for his nation as "Northern, Central, and Southern disunionists, under pretense of patriotism, religion, and humanity," were acting in unison "to pull down and annihilate the fairest fabric of social prosperity, national greatness, glory and happiness," ever created by man, and consecrated by God. The virtuous

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<sup>49</sup> Campbell, "Slavery and Anti-Slavery," 588.

<sup>50</sup> Campbell, "London Letter, II," 18.

republic was teetering on the verge of destruction and Campbell's life-long quest, his vision for a Millennial Republic, was in disarray.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Campbell, "Slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law - No. IV, 390.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE FAILURE OF REPUBLICAN MILLENNIALISM

Long committed to the establishment of a Christian Age in America - the Millennial Republic - Alexander Campbell despaired of his quest as the nation plunged into civil war. "Alas! Alas! For the times we live in and the fearful deceitfulness of sin," he lamented in 1861. Of "all the incivilities of humanity, civil war is the climax." Everything that Campbell held dear in the Republic - "civil rights, civil justice, civil government, and civil law," - crumbled as the nation descended into a state of "barbarity, cruelty, rapine, captivity and murder." To Campbell's horror Protestant churches only exacerbated the crisis as they divided over the issue of slavery, and thrust the nation into a holocaust even as they hymned anthems blending virtue and war. Campbell's vision of a millennial age, one based on Christian unity and republican values, could not survive the conflagration. "We are as a nation and people most sadly out of joint," he wrote to a correspondent in 1864, "I do not mean religiously only, but politically" as well. And although war hardly touched his little farm in Bethany, which now lay in the newly created



West Virginia, Campbell's thoughts never ventured far from a conflict he considered "wholly contraband to both the letter and spirit of the gospel," as well as antithetical to the ideals of the nation. "Discord and secession," he cried, "once inaugurated, have no limit."<sup>1</sup>

Horrorific events marked Campbell's last years, renting asunder his family, his religious community and his nation. He had warned as early as 1840 that political controversies "will no longer be between Whigs and Democrats, but between North and South"; he reckoned that the North would soon "refuse any longer their consent to measures for the protection of slavery," and, he lamented, "the South will never surrender without bloodshed." In 1851 he had grieved for both the North and the South over the "bad feelings and the development of a spirit of violence and insubordination," which could only "sow the seeds of disunion - of intestine strife and commotion." He admonished fellow believers that "in this no Christian man, properly enlightened, can take any part." He prayed that all followers of Christ would remain faithful to the idea of "one faith, one Lord, and one baptism, one spirit and

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Campbell, "The Good Fight of Faith," Millennial Harbinger, series V, IV, (1861): 370, 365; Richardson, Memoirs, 2: 649, 651; and Alexander Campbell, "Union, Union, Union," Millennial Harbinger, series V, V, (1862): 50.

one hope," and that they would never take up arms against their brothers.<sup>2</sup>

Caught in the maelstrom of the coming national divide, Campbell's family suffered from the same fissures that thousands of families across the nation experienced in the cataclysmic fratricide of the Civil War. One Campbell biographer placed the plight of the Campbell family in dramatic relief when she observed "all the drama and heartache of a war between brothers [was] played out in the rambling mansion on the Buffalo." While his pacifism, his love for seceding Virginia, and his devotion to a united republic conflicted Campbell, his wife and daughters suffered no such struggles, remaining loyal to the South. Perhaps more bitter for Campbell, who declared in 1848 that "the spirit of Christianity is essentially pacific," his son, Alexander Campbell, Jr., enlisted as an officer in the Confederate Army.<sup>3</sup>

Across Campbell's extended family, passions for the North ran equally strong. Two of his sisters and their abolitionist husbands supported the Union. His nephew,

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<sup>2</sup> Richardson, Memoirs, II: 643; Alexander Campbell, "Slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law - No. V," 429; and Alexander Campbell, "Impartiality," 6.

<sup>3</sup> Wrather, "Portrait of a Soul," 967-968; and Alexander Campbell, "Tracts for the People - No. XXVI. An Address on War," Millennial Harbinger, series III, V, (1848): 375.

Archibald W. Campbell, purchased the Wheeling Intelligencer, a northwestern Virginia newspaper, and transformed it into an influential journal that combined abolitionist leanings with strong support for the Republican Party. Archibald powerfully sponsored Abraham Lincoln's presidential candidacy, and when Virginia withdrew from the Union, he was a leading advocate of "seceding from secession," pushing for the creation of a new state in western Virginia. Abraham Lincoln reportedly was strongly influenced by Archibald and his newspaper as he made his personal decision to support West Virginia statehood in 1862.<sup>4</sup>

The War also frayed Campbell's personal friendships as well as other relationships. When Walter Scott, Campbell's longtime fellow laborer in Christ, close confidant and frequent contributor to the Millennial Harbinger, wrote an article strongly in favor of the Union, the Bethany sage refused to print it. Influential Disciple leader and future United States President, James A. Garfield, supported the Union along with such important Disciple evangelists including W. T. Moore, David S. Burnett and "Raccoon" John

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<sup>4</sup> Wrather, "Portrait of a Soul," 968; and Ohio County Public Library, Wheeling, WV, <http://wheeling.weirton.lib.wv.us/history/landmark/public/idhall0.htm> and October 9, 1856: "Archibald Campbell acquired the *Wheeling Intelligencer*," "Time Trail, West Virginia" <http://www.wvculture.org/history/timetr1/ttoct.html> (last accessed April 3, 2008).

Smith. The Confederacy also gained Disciples of Christ champions, among them, Commander of the Sixth Texas Calvary, Barton Stone, Jr., whose father was a co-founder of the Restoration Movement. Stone, Jr. was joined by Dr. Benjamin F. Hall, a prominent Disciples evangelist, who stunned his colleagues with his zeal for slaughter.<sup>5</sup>

Even as political questions sundered family and friends, Campbell witnessed the nation's Protestant churches split over the slavery debate. "As Christians, we are not called to create discords, to excite wars, and tumults," Campbell lectured. On "subjects of human opinion and human expediency, we shall be able to maintain unity of spirit in the bonds of Christian peace, amity, love and holy co-operation." His admonitions, along with those of scores of other religious leaders, fell upon unfertile ground as the major Protestant denominations heedlessly divided along North-South lines.<sup>6</sup>

In 1845, Campbell had lamented the division of the Methodist brotherhood as reflective of the "same political metes and boundaries that separate the slave states from the free." He questioned how any citizen of America or the kingdom of God could view the split of the denomination

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<sup>5</sup> Webb, Christian Unity, 195.

<sup>6</sup> Campbell, "Slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law - No. IV," 389; Campbell, "Impartiality," 6.

"according to the philosophy of Mason's and Dixon's line, but with the most profound regret." Campbell deemed one who greeted the discord with approval as a "fanatic rather than a philanthropist or a Christian."<sup>7</sup>

By 1849, the Baptists as well were fracturing over sectional issues, and when the South seceded from the Union the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches also divided into northern and southern fellowships. Some, indeed, argue that religion permeated American identity and politics to such a degree that politicians as diverse as Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun decried the ecclesiastical rupture, both recognizing the grave danger such division posed. Mark Noll concludes that after the American Revolution "the American denominations that expanded most rapidly were the ones that most successfully presented themselves as both traditionally Christian and faithfully republican." Consequently as the nation parted over the peculiar institution, evangelists and their adherents found it difficult to separate political affairs from issues of churchly import. God's children, North and South, marched to war to defend both Creator and the Republic as the Civil War spurred the ultimate melding of nation and faith. Arguing that "good men will and do differ in matters of

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<sup>7</sup> Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery," 51; and Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery - No. V," 196.

great moment," Campbell beseeched all believers to remember that slavery was not a salvation issue; it was political. In consequence, "Christian men should not cast off each other as reprobate silver, because of honest and sincere differences of opinion." Few religionists heeded Campbell's admonitions, and by the Civil War's eruption North and South alike had gained ecclesiastical endorsements which stirred in each a conviction of the righteousness of their position.<sup>8</sup>

Campbell condemned the sectionalist fervor that informed the religious rhetoric and fomented a self-righteous, jingoistic intolerance. "It is worthy of special notice," he declared in 1861, "that in the numerous and various allusions to the Christian virtues . . . patriotism, is not one named or alluded to" in the Holy Scriptures. Campbell protested further that while a "philanthropist throws the arms of his benevolence around the whole human race," a patriot cares only for his region or country. "In the Christian's optics the whole earth is his country, and its whole population his natural brotherhood." Therefore as Christians, Campbell argued, "we

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<sup>8</sup> Mark Noll, The Civil War as a Theological Crisis (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 11-13, 27; and Alexander Campbell, "Slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law - No. V," Millennial Harbinger, series IV, I, (1851): 434.

cannot kindle the flame of war within or without the State in which we hold our citizenship."<sup>9</sup>

While Campbell reproached Christians who would pervert religious harmony for the sake of sectional loyalties, he expressed confidence that right-minded believers of his movement would not forsake the essential Restoration tenet of Christian unity. In 1845 he assured his journal's readers that the "great object in declaring our position on the subject of slavery has been gained - there will be no division in our ranks on that question."<sup>10</sup>

Campbell's certainly reflected more of his own hopeful optimism than conditions merited, and while many in his fellowship shared his assessment, historian David Harrell points out that although the movement never voted any formal resolutions of disunion, division was as onerous in the Disciples of Christ as in any denomination. Lacking any formal, weight-bearing organizational structure beyond the local congregation, the Disciples could neither compose nor enforce any fellowship-wide decree. They could not speak with a single voice, nonetheless, the North-South

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<sup>9</sup> Campbell, "Good Fight of Faith," 366; and Campbell, "Fugitive Slave Law - No. V," 429.

<sup>10</sup> Campbell, "Impartiality," 6; Harrell, Quest, 133-138; and Hughes, Ancient Faith, 128-129.

demarcation held as rigidly as in any other religious congeries.

Within the Restoration Movement, extremists on both sides of the slavery issue levered tremendous pressure on Campbell and the mainstream of the Disciples of Christ. Harrell argues that from the 1830s a dynamic radical abolitionist faction had maintained a resolute attack on the peculiar institution. Equally radical proslavery believers urged upon their leaders a stronger defense of what they saw as the biblical right to own slaves. By the 1850s, sharp ruptures opened as Northern abolitionists left the movement, and Illinois and Ohio's Western Reserve spawned increasing antislavery agitation. Campbell sought to appeal to moderates within the movement, but by the late 1850s his desire for unity, his reluctance to take a strong stand against slavery and his rancor directed at antislavery radicals increasingly placed him at odds with the North and more closely allied him with the slaveholding South.<sup>11</sup>

The American Christian Missionary Society, of which Campbell served as president, also assumed a polarizing stance within the Restoration Movement. The Society, largely owing to Campbell's influence, resisted all

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<sup>11</sup> Harrell, Quest, 107-110.



attempts by abolitionists to make opposition to slavery a test of fellowship. In 1859, however, the more radical Disciples broke from the body over the Society's refusal to back an antislavery evangelist in Kansas. Dropping the term American, the breakaways formed the Christian Missionary Society, espousing a radical antislavery agenda in their newly created journal, the Christian Luminary. Although Campbell's Missionary Society resisted pressure to join in sectional disputes, by 1863 the exigencies of war excluded southern members from the Society's meetings, leaving their northern brethren free to pass resolutions supporting the Union. This North-South rancor which brewed during the Civil War festered long after the end of hostilities.<sup>12</sup>

This defection of abolitionists from the American Christian Missionary Society and the Fellowship's competing publications, together with the lingering ill will between slaveholding Disciples and free state believers, belies any assertion that the Restoration Movement suffered no split along the North/South dichotomy. The power of Campbell's leadership may account for the illusion of unity, and the autonomous organizational character of Disciples of Christ congregations mooted the idea of any formal resolution of dissolution, but the fissures in the Restoration Movement

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<sup>12</sup> Harrell, Quest, 108, 116-121; and Tristano, Intellectual History, 134-135.

nonetheless ran deep and would not be resolved by the termination of hostilities. Following the Civil War, Issac Errett founded the Christian Standard which maintained a decidedly northern slant on a variety of social issues. As Errett contemporary Thomas R. Burnett complained, the Standard "is neither scriptural or *Southern* and is not suited to Southern people." Southern Disciples soon found in the Nashville-published Gospel Advocate, edited by Tolbert Fanning and David Lipscomb, a journal amenable to their regional perspective. By century's end the movement had irretrievably fractured along sectional lines.<sup>13</sup>

Historians still differ on the primary causal agent for the splintering of the Disciples of Christ, which by the early 1900s had fragmented into the Disciples, the Churches of Christ and the Christian Churches. Richard T. Hughes argues that differing restorational, millennial and apocalyptic ideologies were primary factors in rupturing the movement, while Richard M. Tristano contends that differences over baptism, missionary organizations, and instrumental music lay at the core of the divisions. At the same time both recognize that Harrell's contention that social factors, particularly the impact of sectionalism and

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<sup>13</sup> David Edwin Harrell Jr., The Social Sources of Division in the Disciples of Christ, 1860-1900, Volume II (Atlanta: Publishing Systems, 1973) 330; Tristano, Intellectual History, 135; and Harrell, Quest, 117-121.

the Civil War, cannot be minimized. Harrell asserts that after the war sectional feelings hardened into competing factions as northern and southern journals propagated sectional ideology and the ill will fostered.<sup>14</sup>

The Disciples' struggles stand as a microcosm of the larger wounds suffered by the nation as a whole. Over 600,000 Americans died in the Civil War, leaving few families untouched by the melancholy fratricide. Slaves gained their freedom but the re-united nation refused to address the daunting question of how whites and blacks might live amicably together as fellow citizens of the Republic. The American people could not perceive what the postbellum era held in store politically, socially, or religiously.<sup>15</sup>

In war's wake, as the nation reflected on the conflict's meaning, not surprisingly Americans relied upon their religious orientation to fathom the purpose for which so many had died and countless others survived with lives blighted. The North blamed the South for the devastation

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<sup>14</sup> Richard T. Hughes, The Churches of Christ, student ed., (Westport, CT: Praeger), 5-7; Hughes, Ancient Faith, 144-145; Tristano, Intellectual Origins, 114-136; and Harrell, Quest, 58, 99-138.

<sup>15</sup> Francis G. Couvares, Martha Saxton, Gerald N. Grob, and George Athan Billias eds., Interpretations of American History: Patterns and Perspectives (New York: Free Press, 2000), 340; and Orville Vernon Burton, The Age of Lincoln (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 235-236.

visited on both sections of the country, and having won the conflict, Northerners could act on their convictions of their own righteousness and political rectitude. But the South, stunned by defeat, remained remorseless, refusing to accept its loss as abandonment by God. Instead Southerners reminded themselves that God may allow His people to be chastised, and retreated into a Reconstruction theology that allowed them to remain God's chosen people.<sup>16</sup>

These opposing perspectives rendered full political reconciliation difficult at best, and the death of Lincoln at the hands of an unrepentant southern cabal complicated politics even further. The newly re-united nation lost the one leader who might possibly have calmed the political turmoil, instead Reconstruction and its aftermath shaped a bitter legacy enduring deep into the twentieth century and even beyond.<sup>17</sup>

The Civil War inflicted a variety of wounds which often refused to heal. Its cherished institutions gone, the South, as Eugene Genovese so persuasively points out, "recognized a bitter irony. By forfeiting God's favor, they found themselves living under the very social system they had condemned as un-Christian." Southerners clung to an

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<sup>16</sup> Couvares, et al, Patterns and Perspectives, 341; Noll, Civil War, 77; and Genovese, Consuming Fire, 101-103.

<sup>17</sup> Burton, Age of Lincoln, 240-243.

often-imagined antebellum culture which they juxtaposed to the North's "materialistic, marketplace society that promoted competitive individualism and worshiped Mammon." At the same time, the North reveled in apparently divine justification of their societal norms, confident that "the hand of God has visibly and wondrously led events to a happy end.'"<sup>18</sup>

Yet, having achieved its wartime goals and now fulfilling God's purpose, northern society remained unsettled; the war had not resolved the issues of race or addressed the inherent inequities of a burgeoning industrial, capitalist society. Mark Noll asserts, in fact, Civil War "did not provide the moral energy required for rooting equal rights in the subsoil of American society or for planting equal opportunity." Unwilling to certify racial inequality, however, the North crafted three amendments to the Constitution theoretically protecting the rights of black Americans, but quickly shifted to political expediency, abandoning the newly freed slaves to an unrepentant South.<sup>19</sup>

The years following the Civil War welcomed unprecedented industrial growth as the conflict's economic

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<sup>18</sup> Genovese, Consuming Fire, 102; and Noll, Crisis, 77.

<sup>19</sup> Noll, Civil War, 160.

exigencies unleashed nascent trends present before the hostilities erupted. Northern belief in the moral superiority of the wage-labor system would be tested as the rise of the industrial age provided material success to others at the expense of the working poor. By century's end, reformers and some politicians struggled to ameliorate the abuses of the rapidly expanding capitalist economy but not in time to prevent serious questions about the morality of American economic life. Similarly, while the conflict had demonstrated the power of "massive industrial mobilization, it did not offer clear moral guidance as to how that mobilization could be put to use for the good of all citizens."<sup>20</sup>

Much about the Civil War remained ambiguous long after hostilities ended. Historians have failed to agree on whether the war was irresistible or avoidable, which party in the conflict could claim moral superiority, or whether the war rested fundamentally on political and/or economic differences. As a result, the meaning and impact of the Civil War on American society is the subject of continuing debate. Most agree, however, that since religion played a major role in the Civil War, American Protestantism lost

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<sup>20</sup> Noll, Civil War, 160.

much of its moral authority and influence in public life after the conflict ended.

Additionally, American Protestantism, with white Christians unwilling to address the puzzles of race, made little effort to reconcile the inadequacies of religious pluralism or to confront the growing secularism of a capitalist society. As a result, the Civil War cemented trends already in place in the antebellum period as the coming decades increasingly marginalized Protestantism, leaving them no longer the "bearers of a religious perspective in the body politic." Consequently, in American pulpits since the Civil War, "theological arguments have only rarely been able to overcome the inertia behind institutions and practices sanctioned by the evolving usages of a voluntaristic, democratic consumerist culture."<sup>21</sup>

For American religious identity and the ideal of a Millennial Republic, the Civil War was a fundamental turning point, just as it was in most other areas of national development. In the antebellum period most Americans judged the melding of secular and sacred impulses as not only permissible but necessary, believing the Millennial Republic to be the fulfillment of God's plan for

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<sup>21</sup> Noll, Civil War, 160.

mankind. The successes of the republican experiment and the swelling national prosperity seemed signs of divine sanction, a by-product of God's favor.

After the war, however, American identity focused on temporal concerns transforming millennial ideology into a secular crusade. Now religion served more as rhetorical justification for American democracy, imperialistic campaigns, and capitalist hegemony instead of acting as the conscience and moral substructure of a godly republic. This ascendancy of the secular facet of the Millennial Republic was already in place prior to the Civil War; abolitionists illustrated this trend by arguing the primacy of liberty and progressive ideas, asserting that it mattered little whether the Bible sanctioned slavery since the peculiar institution stood in direct conflict with Christian humanitarianism and was clearly antithetical to republicanism.

For Alexander Campbell, the Civil War represented the disintegration of his vision for a Millennial Republic. His confidence in republicanism and its role in the coming Christian Age collapsed as the union fractured over the question of slavery. "Civilized America! Civilized United States! Boasting of a humane and Christian paternity and fraternity," Campbell lamented in 1861; "your furious



appetites for fraternal blood, caps the climax of all human inconsistencies inscribed on the . . . pages of time in all its records." While he prayed the war might be short in duration, "though in this we may be disappointed," he retained his confidence in his Creator, declaring "One thing we know, the Lord reigneth, and in this we rejoice."<sup>22</sup>

Although Campbell's vision of a Millennial Republic floundered over the issue of slavery, other, more regional explanations of God's intent helped bridge the social span from the ante to the post-bellum eras. Not surprisingly, white southern church-goers faced the more complicated task of rationalizing how a supportive God could damn them to defeat. Stunned by their apparent abandonment by the Deity, southern whites most often demonstrated little remorse and refusing to accept their loss as a divine condemnation of the social system, they retreated into a creative and self-justifying theological construct in which they remained God's chosen people. They clung to the belief that slavery was no sin, no matter that the war had put an end to the peculiar institution. Even as the white South accepted its rebuke from God, it refused to remake southern society in the image of the North. With slavery disallowed, the South

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<sup>22</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Wars and Rumors of Wars," Millennial Harbinger, series IV, III, (June 1861): 348; and Alexander Campbell, "Correspondence," Millennial Harbinger, series V, V, (January 1862): 18.

instead fashioned a brutal system of rigid segregation enforced by implacable and animalistic lynch law. Orville Vernon Burton, in the Age of Lincoln, argues that the South transformed its "theological underpinnings for slavery" into their religious justification for "racism, discrimination, and segregation."<sup>23</sup>

At Reconstruction's end in 1877, the North abandoned its southern crusade and allowed retrogressive forces to restore white aristocratic rule along with a form of neo-slavery. But Darwinism soon refocused and revitalized northern religion with the blending of its precepts into the traditional message of the Gospels. Infused with the belief that God had used the mechanism of evolution to raise the Anglo-Saxon race above all others and then commissioned it to spread the simple truths of primitive Protestant Christianity and democracy throughout the world, northern religionists sponsored mission efforts to extend the values of a revised American Millennial Republic abroad. Good, dedicated, Godly men and women preached salvation and suffrage to the untutored of India, Asia and Africa. By century's end a northern based version of the

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<sup>23</sup> Couvares, Patterns and Perspectives, 341; Noll, Civil War, 77; Genovese, Consuming Fire, 101-103; and Burton, Age of Lincoln, 236.

Millennial Republic marched with the imperialists creating the United States' world-wide cultural empire.<sup>24</sup>

Alexander Campbell, however, played no role in this new drama. In 1860 he had grudgingly acknowledged that the advent of the millennium "has not been, is not now, nor is it likely soon to be perfected." No longer able to reconcile the competing strains of religion and republic, Campbell, unlike his nation, rejected the secular and returned to his religious origins, focusing on God and His written word as the only infallible blueprint for mankind. S. B. Maywell, a correspondent to the Millennial Harbinger, wrote to Campbell in 1861, declaring "We are in the midst of the bloodiest revolution the world has ever seen. We as a congregation are very much divided." Maywell pled with Campbell to give him and his fellowship some guidance. Campbell responded, "Our nation has been superlatively blest for many years with health, peace, and prosperity." No country, he continued, "can long enjoy these without becoming proud, puffed up, ungrateful, unthankful, and enslaved to mammon." The war, he concluded, was God's rebuke. Saddened to hear of their divisions, Campbell nonetheless asserted, "You are all to blame and you must

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<sup>24</sup> For a prominent post-bellum Northern churchman's blending of the religion of Jesus with the imperatives of Darwinism see: Josiah Strong, Our Country: Its Possible Future and its Present Crisis (New York: American Home Missionary Society, 1885), 159-66.

come together and confess your sins . . . and humble yourselves before the Lord." No longer finding refuge in the Republic, Campbell called his followers back to God.<sup>25</sup>

Religious pluralism in America had provided the foundation on which Campbell built his vision of the Millennial Republic. Ironically, it was his and other religious leaders' common sense philosophy and attempts at moderation that helped sow the seeds of destruction that blossomed into the Civil War. Common sense told Campbell all men could read the Bible and agree to the essentials for Christian Union; slavery, however, defied resolution or moderation. Had Campbell recognized where his embrace of American Protestantism and republicanism must lead him and the nation, he might have heeded his own prophetic assertions. In 1845 Campbell, condemning Christian involvement in Abolition, Masonic or Odd Fellow associations, warned fellow believers that "their affections are very apt in all cases to be divided," and when those affections "happen to conflict, they are generally apt to cleave to the human rather than the divine institution." He reiterated, three years later, "All mixed communion in religion with the world, under any pretense

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<sup>25</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Prophesy - No. I," Millennial Harbinger, series V, III, (March 1860): 123; Alexander Campbell, "Our National Troubles," Millennial Harbinger, series V, IV, (June 1861): 412-413; and Hughes and Allen, Illusions of Innocence, 186.

whatever, is spiritual adultery or fornication, according to my Bible." Campbell's inability to perceive his own melding of the sacred and the secular left him disheartened and disillusioned as he witnesses the death of his vision for a nation within Republican Millennialism.<sup>26</sup>

Campbell died March 4, 1866, dispirited and exhausted from years of struggle, marking a stark contrast to his optimistic beginning more than five decades earlier. Arriving in America Campbell saw before him a vista offering unparalleled religious, material and political promise. He believed confidently that this New Eden, in a New World, held all the requisite conditions for the flowering of a Millennial Republic. But by the time Campbell entered the scene in 1809, the roots of destruction were already firmly planted.

For all the potential Campbell and his fellow citizens saw in the Republic, slavery would be the conundrum which would confound the social, religious and political leaders of the nation. It was the contaminant that would poison all hope of a Christ-focused Republic as it irretrievably and increasingly consumed the political and religious fabric of American life. For Campbell, no part of his life remained

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<sup>26</sup> Campbell, "Odd Fellow Intolerance," 313; and Alexander Campbell, "Moral Societies," Millennial Harbinger, series III, V, (July 1848): 409.

unblighted by slavery as it permeated his family, his church and his country. In the end it swallowed up both the man and his vision for America.

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ABSTRACT

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL AND THE DELIMMA  
OF REPUBLICAN MILLENNIALISM

by Dawn Leslie Alexander-Payne, Ph.D., 2009

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When Alexander Campbell migrated from his native Northern Ireland to Pennsylvania in 1809, he found himself immediately immersed in the Jacksonian Era's market revolution, a phenomena that altered every aspect of America society. In the context of cultural change, Campbell and his contemporaries struggled to define the American identity, one that necessitated merging of the Deism and rational thought of the founding fathers with the older and powerful strain of Calvinistic contract theology grounded in the Puritan strains of colonial New England. This legacy and the assertions of the American Revolution deeply influenced American intellectual development producing a distinctive worldview and engendering an American identity which allowed the citizenry instinctively to claim an unparalleled position in the world, inculcating them with a profound belief in a Millennial Republic. Millennialist thought, both worldly and sacred, comfortably

accommodated the emerging American psyche linking religion and national identity. This ideology – Republican Millennialism – formed the core of the American animus and the basis of a national secular and religious mission.

Alexander Campbell was uniquely positioned to internalize, participate in and help shape the developing American character. A successful businessman, revered evangelist, educator, publisher and speaker who issued pronouncements on both religious and social issues to his adherents, as well as a larger American audience, Campbell epitomized the possibilities of the American dream, a belief in the unique God-given destiny of the United States, and a deep abiding love of God and country. His assimilation into American society reflected the larger issues of American character as he wrestled with pressing social issues and struggled to synthesize sacred and secular elements into a holistic and viable personal and national identity. As with Americans in general, however, Campbell's blending of the profane and the divine fell tragically short as the crucible of slavery and the resulting conflict ultimately destroyed Campbell's millennial optimism. The Civil War fractured the country and cast deep doubt on both Campbell's and America's vision of itself as the harbinger of the new millennium.