

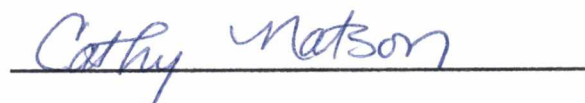
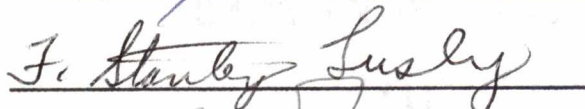
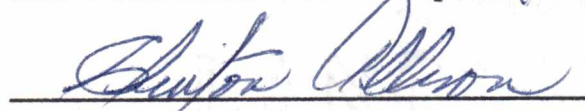
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by L. Thomas Smith, Jr. entitled "The 'Amelioration of Society': Alexander Campbell and Educational Reform in Antebellum America." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in History.



Paul H. Bergeron, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance.



Accepted for the Council:



Vice Provost
and Dean of the Graduate School

THE "AMELIORATION OF SOCIETY": ALEXANDER CAMPBELL
AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

L. Thomas Smith, Jr.

May 1990

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ABSTRACT

Religious leaders furnished an important impetus in the movement for social reform in the antebellum era of American history. This study examines the role of Alexander Campbell, the primary founder of the Disciples of Christ religious movement, in this effort to reform American society. Whereas Campbell's achievements as a religious reformer have been well documented, his accomplishments in the social realm have been often overlooked in studies of antebellum reform. In this work, I compare Campbell to other religious leaders who were associated with social reform, such as Lyman Beecher, Charles Finney, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, and identify his imperative for the reformation of society: an emphasis on the visible church as the agent for social reform, an alternative to the individualism and voluntary societies of the Emersonian and the revivalist traditions.

Although Campbell addressed nearly all of the social issues of his day, his most prominent work was in education. Campbell had a well-defined philosophy of education which reflected the influence of Lockean and Scottish Common Sense principles, his theological and millennial views, and the theories of the leading European and American educators of his day. The pillars of Campbell's program were nonsectarian education, use of the Bible as a textbook,

moral education, and a broad definition of education which included the family and the church as well as the school.

Campbell was a part of a network of educators who campaigned for the establishment of government-supported common schools. Whether involved as a delegate to the Virginia Constitutional Convention, a member of the Western Literary Institute and College of Teachers, a public debater, a popular speaker at lyceums, colleges, educational conventions, and legislatures, or a publisher of new educational ideas in his journal, The Millennial Harbinger, Campbell was a persuasive figure in the effort to establish common schools and improve existing pedagogy. He embodied his theory of education within his own private schools, Buffalo Seminary and Bethany College. Campbell was a multidimensional figure who not only had an important influence on the American religious scene but also was one of the leading educators and reformers of the antebellum period.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"In ordinary life we hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give. It is very easy to overestimate the importance of our own achievements in comparison with what we owe others."

--Dietrich Bonhoeffer

An academic exercise such as this dissertation is never the product of one individual's work. I am indebted to my director, Professor Paul H. Bergeron, and my committee, Professors Clinton B. Allison, F. Stanley Lusby, Cathy D. Matson, and William Bruce Wheeler, for their guidance, insight, motivation, and, most of all, time. I would also like to thank Dr. Robert Fife for suggesting this topic and for continued interest in my progress. The library staffs at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society and Johnson Bible College have been more than helpful. Above all, I would like to express my love and appreciation to my wife, Deborah, and sons, Jacob and Joshua, for their patience and encouragement.

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INTRODUCTION

Alexander Campbell arrived in the United States in September 1809 full of confidence, optimism, and expectations. Having left behind "the civil and religious misrule and discord" of his native Northern Ireland, Campbell traveled through Philadelphia and on across the Alleghenies to Washington County, Pennsylvania "with new feelings of delight and an indescribable sense of relief."¹ He was in his land of liberty. Before Campbell retired to his hotel bed on the eighth night of his journey, he recorded his "grateful reflections upon the goodness of Providence in bringing him to a land under the benign influence of the free institutions, the equal rights, the educational advantages, and the moral and religious elevation secured to all."² Campbell quickly learned, however, that his "land of enchantment" was not without evils of its own. He concluded that "sectarian bigotry and clerical intolerance" were not exclusive to the Old World

¹Robert Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1871), 1:206.

²Ibid., 210.

and that "no government or party or people is exempt from those errors and moral delinquencies which belong to a common humanity."³

Campbell's early experience in the United States was a microcosm of the general mood in America during the antebellum era. It was a period in which Americans were brimming with optimism about the future destiny of the nation on the one hand, yet, on the other hand, were faced with increasing social and political problems which would culminate in civil war. It was a time of boundless hope tempered with the necessity of reform--a vision of what could be accomplished and a mission to remove the obstacles in the way.

Americans emerged from the Revolutionary era and entered a new century with a self-confidence that has been perhaps unmatched in American history. The strong nationalistic impulse that was born out of the "Era of Good Feelings" grew to maturity in "Manifest Destiny" and encompassed both economics (growth in banking, transportation, and industrialization) and politics (new state constitutions, extension of suffrage, and national political parties). Westward expansion offered what seemed to be unlimited opportunity. Fifteen states were added to the Union during the antebellum years and shaped the

³ Ibid., 211.

continental boundaries of the United States.

This optimism may be illustrated by religious developments in the period. The Great Awakening of the first half of the eighteenth century had emphasized God's favor upon the American colonies and had identified America as the potential site of the millennium--Christ's literal reign on earth. The success of the Revolution and the later ratification of the Constitution seemed to confirm this optimistic view, despite a concern on the part of many church leaders that these "secular" events had led Americans astray from their primary religious and moral commitments.

Enthusiastic response to the Second Great Awakening of the early decades of the nineteenth century on the Kentucky frontier and in New England and the Midwest convinced these leaders that God had truly chosen America for a special destiny.⁴ Although the religious fervor which characterized

⁴For studies on the Second Great Awakening see John B. Boles, The Great Revival, 1787-1805: The Origins of the Southern Evangelical Mind (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), Dickson D. Bruce, Jr. And They All Sang Hallelujah: Plain-Folk Camp-Meeting Religion, 1800-1845 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1974), Whitney R. Cross, The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1950), Charles A. Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting: Religion's Harvest Time (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1955), Donald G. Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process," American Quarterly 21 (1969): 23-43, William W. Sweet, Religion in the Development of American Culture, 1765-1840 (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1963), and Timothy L. Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth Century America (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957).

the first half of the nineteenth century produced division within the existing church bodies and gave rise to several new groups, it furnished one unifying principle: "God has a plan for America." Typical of this attitude was Campbell's lofty conclusion in an 1852 address on the destiny of the American nation:

Never before lived a people possessing such birthrights--such an unbounded horizon of greatness and glory--as that which spreads itself before the enraptured vision of every enlightened American citizen. . . . Let us regard ourselves . . . as God's own depository of all the great blessings of civilization and salvation for the new world.⁵

It was assumed that these "enlightened American citizens" had the ability and the responsibility to resolve any political, economic, or social problem that might cloud their horizon.

Many Americans--especially church leaders--perceived these problems in moral terms, rather than political, social, or economic. The disease was moral; the political and economic crises were only the symptoms. As William Gribbin has argued, "most antebellum reformers fought not injustice or inequity, not oppression or social evils, neither inhumanity nor suffering, but sin."⁶ God had a plan for America, but this plan required a virtuous citizenry.

⁵Alexander Campbell, Popular Lectures and Addresses (Philadelphia: James Challen and Son, 1863), 45-46.

⁶William Gribbin, "Republicanism, Reform, and the Sense of Sin in Antebellum America," Cithara 14 (December 1974): 25.

This concern was intensified by westward expansion: the West must be saved from moral corruption so that America might fulfill its millennial purpose. The revivals, both on the frontier and in the eastern cities, were important responses to the perceived crises of this era.

One important way that Americans dealt with the tension between unbridled optimism and perplexing social problems was through efforts at social reform. "The myriad of reforms and reformers offer a meaning for much of the whirl and confusion and change that was America in the antebellum years," Clifford Griffin has argued, and provide "valuable insights into the difficulties the Americans encountered when they tried to give concrete meaning to their cherished ideals . . . of democracy and freedom."⁷ Movements to prohibit drinking, end slavery, relieve poverty, improve prisons and asylums, secure women's rights, promote peace, and educate children arose in all the geographic sections and social classes of America.⁸ These reformers held a common belief in human reason, perfectability, and the inevitable progress of human society. They confidently held "the assumption that when a sufficient number of individual

⁷Clifford S. Griffin, The Ferment of Reform, 1830-1860 (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, Co., 1967), 4.

⁸"Reform was a national preoccupation." Lorman Ratner, Pre-Civil War Reform: Variety of Principles and Programs (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 1.

Americans had seen the light, they would automatically solve the country's social problems."⁹

One crucial component to this program for social reform was education. In the broad sense of the term, the entire movement may be seen as an educational crusade. The reformers deluged their fellow citizens with pamphlets, tracts, journals, speeches, and meetings to awaken them to a particular concern. Many thought, however, that the institutionalization of education--the establishment of schools and school systems--held the key to progress in reform. Educational institutions were seen as the way to indoctrinate and discipline, and, in Ronald Walters terms, "to create a new person, incapable of immorality, and . . . to define values and norms in a disunited society."¹⁰

Walters has concluded:

Antislavery was the most significant and temperance had the largest number of adherents of the antebellum crusades. Communitarianism, nonresistance, and branches of labor reform were the most radical. Yet school reform brought together the most strands and, in some respects, was the epitome. It was endorsed by nearly all reformist groups: evangelical Protestants, utopians, artisans, and even pseudo-scientists like the phrenologists. It combined optimism about human nature with a desire to shape it by means of a rational system. It had millennial and perfectionist touches--all could be taught, all uplifted.¹¹

⁹ John L. Thomas, "Romantic Reform in America, 1815-1865," American Quarterly 17 (Winter 1965): 659.

¹⁰ Ronald G. Walters, American Reformers, 1815-1860 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 206.

¹¹ Ibid., 210-211.

One such reformer in the antebellum era who shared the basic assumptions and concerns of the social reform movement was the founder of the Disciples of Christ religious movement, Alexander Campbell. When Campbell went to Great Britain on his tour of Europe in 1847, he carried a letter of introduction written by Henry Clay which asserted:

Dr. Campbell is among the most eminent citizens of the United States, distinguished for his great learning and ability, for his successful devotion to the education of youth, for his piety and as the head and founder of one of the most important and respectable religious communities in the United States.¹²

It was significant that Clay mentioned Campbell's "successful devotion to the education of youth" and recognized his role not only as a religious reformer and leader but also as one in the forefront of the movement for educational reform.

This study will attempt to describe Campbell's role as an educational reformer--both in his involvement in the common school movement and in his efforts to establish his own private schools--and analyze his motivation, philosophical foundation, and educational theory. The goal of this study is to assess his impact on educational developments, especially in the West and upper South, and to provide more insight into the nature of educational reform advocated by reformers not immediately associated with

¹²Thomas Chalmers, Alexander Campbell's Tour in Scotland (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1892), 30.

developments in the northeastern United States. A secondary purpose is to demonstrate Campbell's contributions in the social, rather than religious, realm: a contribution that further qualifies Campbell to be considered as one of "the most eminent citizens of the United States." Conclusions concerning Campbell's contribution to educational reform, therefore, must answer the three questions deemed essential by Michael B. Katz in his "reassessment" of current scholarship on the origins of public education: Why did people establish systems of public education? How did they go about that task? What results did their efforts have?¹³ But before attempting to answer these questions, a biographical sketch of Campbell and a survey of the historiography of social and educational reform are presented.

Alexander Campbell was born in Antrim, Ireland in 1788 and emigrated to the United States with his mother, sisters, and brothers in 1809.¹⁴ His father, Thomas Campbell, an ordained minister of the Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian

¹³Michael B. Katz, "The Origins of Public Education: A Reassessment," History of Education Quarterly 16 (Winter 1976): 382.

¹⁴For biographical information on Campbell see Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, Selina H. Campbell, Home Life and Reminiscences of Alexander Campbell by His Wife (St. Louis: John Burns, 1882), and Eva Jean Wrather, "Alexander Campbell: Adventurer in Freedom," (Unpublished manuscript, Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society).

Church, had sailed to America in 1807 and had settled in Washington County in the southwestern corner of Pennsylvania. Alexander Campbell lived with his family in Washington County until his marriage to Margret Brown in 1811. Campbell "inherited" a 550-acre farm near Bethany, Virginia from his father-in-law, John Brown, which allowed Campbell a great amount of economic security and permitted him to pursue his preaching and writing interests.¹⁵ Campbell remained at Bethany the rest of his life, raising thirteen children--seven daughters and one son by Margret, and two daughters and three sons by Selina Blakewell Campbell, whom he married in 1828 after Margret's death--and managing a very prosperous farm.¹⁶

When Alexander Campbell joined his father in 1809, it became apparent that both Campbells had come to similar conclusions concerning the reform of the church. Two years earlier, Thomas Campbell had withdrawn from the local presbytery into which he had earlier been accepted and had formed the Christian Association of Washington, a small reform-minded religious body which called for the

¹⁵ Campbell had aroused interest among his congregation for plans to move as a group to Ohio and establish a new community. His father-in-law, who did not want his only daughter to leave home, "retired" and left the Bethany farm to Campbell so that he would not move away. Richardson, Memoirs, 1:461.

¹⁶ Campbell was especially proud of his flocks of Merino and Saxony sheep, the first to be brought over the Alleghenies, he claimed. Richardson, Memoirs, 2:222-223.

abandonment of sectarian names, creeds, and parties and a return to the New Testament scriptures alone as the basis of church unity, faith, and practice. These principles were set forth in Thomas Campbell's Declaration and Address.¹⁷ Alexander Campbell endorsed these principles, enthusiastically joined his father's work and, after two years of an intense program of self-education and preaching experience, was ordained to the Christian ministry in 1811 by the Brush Run Church (formed by the Christian Association of Washington), assuming the leadership of the incipient religious movement. Having adopted immersion as the proper form of baptism in 1812, Campbell and the Brush Run Church were accepted into the Redstone Baptist Association.

The members of Campbell's movement, calling themselves "Reformers" or "Disciples," remained somewhat tenuously associated with the Baptists until 1832. During this period the movement experienced significant numerical growth and Alexander Campbell emerged as a major figure on the western religious scene. In 1832 Campbell's "Reformers" united with the "Christian" churches which were led by Barton W. Stone. This marked the official beginning of the Disciples of Christ denomination or movement, which rapidly grew to become the fourth largest Protestant religious body in the

¹⁷ Thomas Campbell, Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington County, Washington, Pennsylvania (Washington, Pa.: Printed by Brown and Sample, 1809).

United States by 1860.¹⁸

Campbell's public career was multi-faceted, including roles as preacher, debater, and publisher in addition to that as educator. Campbell launched several preaching tours throughout western Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Kentucky and, along with fellow evangelist Walter Scott, witnessed the establishment of numerous churches with approximately twelve thousand members by 1832. The Millennial Harbinger, Campbell's second religious journal, recorded at least thirty-three preaching tours between 1830 and 1857, including trips to twenty states (Northeast, Midwest, upper and lower South, Old Northwest, and as far

¹⁸ It is estimated that there were about 12,000 "Reformers" and 10,000 "Christians" in 1832 (McAllister and Tucker, Journey in Faith, p. 154); Campbell claimed that there were 225,000 Disciples in 1852. The Federal Census of 1850 failed to distinguish between Disciples and other "Christian" bodies and is therefore an unreliable source. Edwin Gaustad estimated that there were 100,000 Disciples by 1840 and 300,000 by 1860. The three larger Protestant bodies in 1860 were the Methodists (two million members), Baptists (one million), and Presbyterians (500,000); Roman Catholics numbered approximately three million; Historical Atlas of Religion in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 52, 66, 81, 58, 91, 110. The classic history of the Disciples of Christ is Winfred S. Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ: A History, (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1948); see also Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker, Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1975), Leroy Garrett, The Stone-Campbell Movement (Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1981), James D. Murch, Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1962), and Earl I. West, The Search for the Ancient Order, 2 vols. (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1949; Indianapolis: Religious Book Service, 1950).

west as Missouri and Iowa), the District of Columbia, Canada, England, Scotland, and Ireland.¹⁹ Campbell always considered himself to be first and foremost a "preacher of the gospel," and other roles were therefore considered as supplementary to and supportive of his preaching.

Campbell edited the Christian Baptist, a monthly religious journal, from 1823-30. This journal became the chief organ for disseminating his early views on the reform of the church, as evident in his thirty-two-part series entitled, "The Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things."²⁰ He began the Millennial Harbinger in January of 1830 and continued as editor until 1864, two years before his death.²¹ Campbell was the author of twenty books (with several revised editions), including a translation of the New Testament, several compilations of hymns, debates, collections of popular addresses, and theological expositions. He published most of his journals, tracts, and

¹⁹ Claude E. Spencer, "The Tours of Alexander Campbell as Reported by Him in the Millennial Harbinger, December 1830 to October 1862: A Bibliographical Listing," (Unpublished paper, Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1957).

²⁰ Hence, many Disciples of Christ, especially those of the nondenominational fellowships, use the designation "The Restoration Movement."

²¹ The 1833-37 subscription lists for the Harbinger record 6610 subscriptions in 23 states, 4 territories, District of Columbia, and Canada. The two states with the most subscriptions were Kentucky and Ohio with over one thousand each. Issues of the Christian Baptist and Millennial Harbinger overlapped for six months in 1830.

pamphlets in his own printing office at Bethany.

Campbell's popularity outside of his own movement was enhanced by his involvement in several much-publicized debates. Campbell debated with Quaker, Baptist, and Presbyterian leaders and earned a reputation as a skillful debater and thorough logician. His most famous debates, however, were with Robert Owen, the founder of the New Harmony communal experiment in Indiana, Roman Catholic Archbishop John B. Purcell of Cincinnati, and the Reverend Dolphus Skinner, an influential Universalist minister. Campbell achieved national (and, in the case of the Owen debate, international) notoriety from these debates and was acclaimed by many religious leaders as the defender of Christianity, Protestantism, and orthodoxy on the American frontier. All of Campbell's debates were published and enjoyed a wide readership.²²

Perry Gresham has argued that Campbell was "a celebrity of the nineteenth century."²³ He was welcomed into the

²²For Campbell's debates see Bill J. Humble, Campbell and Controversy (Rosemead, Calif.: Old Paths Book Club, 1952), Jesse J. Haley, Debates that Made History (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1920), and James N. Holm, "Alexander Campbell's Debate with Robert Owen, April 1829: The Effect of a Rhetorical Event on the Speaker" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1976).

²³See Gresham's preface in Garrett, Stone-Campbell Movement, p. x. See also Perry E. Gresham, ed., The Sage of Bethany: A Pioneer in Broadcloth (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1960). One example of this status was an 1858 trip to Washington, D.C., during which Campbell stayed in the

homes of presidents, senators, and justices, addressed national and state legislatures, and preached in some of the largest churches in the United States. He was an immigrant, a westerner, and a southerner whose perspective on the movement for social reform in the antebellum era is quite different from the traditional view which predominantly focused upon Northeastern reformers.²⁴

The direction of contemporary historical scholarship in the area of social and educational reform in the antebellum era has been characterized by Michael B. Katz as a rejection of "both the metaphor and the method" of earlier historical

home of Judge Black, the Attorney General of the United States, preached in a Baptist church to an audience that included the President, several Cabinet members, "and many distinguished members of both houses of Congress." The next day Campbell, his wife and two of his daughters were received by President Buchanan in the White House. Campbell commented: "The manner of the President was exceedingly cordial and I could not but conclude, that he was sincerely laboring . . . for the greatest good to the greatest number, by a rigid faithfulness to the Constitution of our great republic, and an enlarged and conservative policy on the stormy questions of sectional difference." Alexander Campbell, ed., The Millennial Harbinger (Bethany, Va.: A. Campbell, 1858): 157.

²⁴Campbell identified with both the western and the southern regions. He represented western Virginia in the 1829 Virginia Constitutional Convention; many of his debates and public addresses were held in Cincinnati; and the majority of Disciples churches were located in Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, and, later, Illinois and Missouri. Campbell also considered himself a true Virginian, and drew considerable support and students for Bethany College from the South. Campbell's son, Alexander, Jr., fought for the South in the Civil War.

work in this field.²⁵ The discarded metaphor, Katz explained, "portrayed education as a flower of democracy planted in a rich and liberating loam which its seeds continually replenished."²⁶ The earliest synthesizer of social reform, Alice Felt Tyler, established this position with her positive evaluation of the reformers as "heroes of liberal democracy" and her emphasis upon their ideological origins in the Enlightenment. Tyler's reformers sought to perfect American society and were motivated chiefly by humanitarian concerns.²⁷ Although other historians, such as Ray Billington, might emphasize certain negative aspects of societal reform such as nativism, or Perry Miller and Sidney Mead might make minor adjustments by asserting that reform was an attempt by various religious groups to adapt to a new egalitarianism, most followed Tyler's lead.²⁸

The initial challenge to this view was offered by John Bodo and Clifford Griffin, who portrayed the reformers as socially conservative clergymen who were primarily

²⁵Katz, "Origins of Public Education," 381.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Alice F. Tyler, Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History to 1860 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1944).

²⁸Ray A. Billington, The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860 (New York: Macmillan, 1938); Perry Miller, The Life of the Mind in America: From the Revolution to the Civil War (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965); Sidney Mead, The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

interested in maintaining their control over American society.²⁹ These "moral stewards" were more concerned with defending their status and the dominant Protestant culture than with building a godly society and improving the human condition. This approach foreshadowed the work of revisionist historians, such as Katz, who emphasized class conflict and advocated the so-called social control thesis.³⁰ This view of social reform asserts that the goal of middle-class reformers was to impose deliberately and systematically their system of order--values, morals, and tastes--on the lower classes, especially immigrants. According to this thesis, the reformers were fearful of a

²⁹See John R. Bodo, The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues, 1812-1848 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948); Clifford Griffin, Their Brothers' Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800-1865 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1960); also Charles I. Foster, An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790-1837 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), and Charles C. Cole, Jr., The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists, 1826-1860 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954).

³⁰The term "social control" was first used by Clifford Griffin in "Religious Benevolence as Social Control, 1815-1860," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 44 (December 1957): 423-444. The revisionist position in the history of education may be found in Michael B. Katz, The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-nineteenth Century Massachusetts (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), Clarence J. Karier, The Individual, Society, and Education: A History of American Educational Ideas (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1967), and Joel Spring, The American School, 1642-1985: Varieties of Historical Interpretation of the Foundations and Development of American Education (New York: Longman Press, 1986).

new egalitarian mood and reasoned that the social problems associated with a rapidly changing political and economic scene could only be averted by education and moral supervision. In a word, they desired social control, not social benevolence.

Challenges to the social control thesis have focused upon the long history of "disinterested benevolence," which was not of narrow New England origin, and upon ideological concerns such as millennialism and Christian republicanism.³¹ Diane Ravitch vigorously reproved the revisionist historians who, in her view, had attacked the liberal-democratic tradition. Her polemical style and "straw man" methodology, however, obscured her criticisms of the revisionist approach.³² Such arguments have not over-turned the social control thesis as much as have called for its adjustment, or acceptance as one of several equally viable factors.

Current historiography asserts that monocausal explanations are inadequate because of the wide variety of reforms and reformers. Ronald G. Walters, whose American

³¹Lois W. Banner, "Religious Benevolence as Social Control: A Critique of an Interpretation," Journal of American History 60 (June 1973): 23-41.

³²Diane Ravitch, The Revisionists Revised: A Critique of the Radical Attack on the Schools (New York: Basic Books, 1978). For a review of Ravitch's work see David B. Tyack, "Politicizing History," Reviews in American History 7 (March 1979): 13-17.

Reformers, 1815-1860 affirmed this position, declared that:

. . . it still is a risky business to generalize about what caused people to participate in antebellum crusades. . . . Most likely, we will eventually discover that people became reformers out of quite diverse motives and that their commitments satisfied a great range of personal, social, and cultural needs.³³

Carl Kaestle reflects this position in the field of the history of education. In tracing the history of the development of the common school, Kaestle emphasized the "substantial rise" in school enrollments and interest in education in the fifty years prior to the common school movement and suggested that the issue was not social control but rather the conflict between localism and centralization.³⁴ Kaestle admitted a variety of motivations within this conflict: class, gender, ethnicity, region, and ideology.

Revisionists such as Katz have also adjusted their approach. For example, Katz affirmed that the "denunciation of the masses of idle and vagrant youth roaming city streets" had its basis in social reality--"a real crisis of youth in the nineteenth-century city"--rather than his once-held view that this was simply "middle-class moralizing."³⁵ He also raised the issue of "spontaneous

³³Walters, American Reformers, xi-xii.

³⁴Carl Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), x.

³⁵Katz, "Origins of Public Education," 396.

consent"--the deference paid to the affluent, politically powerful people in the establishment of institutions such as public schools--and asserted that "imposition, in this sense, . . . does not imply conspiracy or malevolence."³⁶ In fact, groups such as immigrants were not always offended at being the objects of social reform but freely accepted many of these "imposed" values as the pathway to equal participation in the economic realm. Whether one advocates the social control thesis or not, one must agree with Katz's conclusion that

. . . historians of education of the last decade have dealt a devastating blow to the form in which the old metaphor had been cast. A simple narrative of the triumph of benevolence and democracy no longer can be offered seriously by any scholar even marginally aware of educational historiography during the last fifteen years.³⁷

This assessment applies to the historiography of the broader movement of social reform as well.

All contemporary social historians, however, would agree with Katz that the traditional method of historical analysis of social reform, which had "divorced inquiry . . . from the mainstream of historical scholarship," should be rejected.³⁸ Again writing about the history of education, but applicable to other areas of reform, Katz called for

³⁶ Ibid., 400.

³⁷ Ibid., 382.

³⁸ Ibid., 381.

current scholarship "to expand notions of social, cultural, intellectual, and political development through exploring and highlighting the role of education in modern history."³⁹ In other words, the study of social reform must not only reflect its broader social context, but may also be used as a "catalyst" to inspire the formulation of new historical questions and interpretations. Walters called for an approach to the study of reform "which involves exploring the social and cultural conditions that permitted reformers to see reality as they did."⁴⁰ In his study of common schools, Kaestle recognized the necessity of looking "beyond schools to the broader economic and cultural context."⁴¹ He sought to explore "the forward edge of an evolving relationship between social belief, social change, and educational change. . . ."⁴² Even critics of the revisionist school would agree with Katz's endorsement of this historical method.

The early studies of Alexander Campbell's life and thought tended to view him as an isolated individual and focused narrowly upon his philosophical and theological

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Walters, American Reformers, xii.

⁴¹ Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic, xi.

⁴² Ibid., 218.

views, without consideration of his social context.⁴³ Although most works on Campbell center upon his role as a religious reformer, there has been a recent effort to explore his social thought as well. This work was stimulated by Harold Lunger's The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell, David Edwin Harrell's Quest for a Christian America, and Robert Fife's Teeth on Edge (a study of Disciples' views toward slavery).⁴⁴ Several dissertations and theses have emphasized Campbell's views on education, but are limited to the religious and moral aspects of his educational thought.⁴⁵

⁴³There were forty dissertations written from 1897-1986 on Alexander Campbell or the Disciples movement in the antebellum era. Categories and the number of studies in each were: Theology (14), Public Speaking, Preaching, and Rhetoric (9), Biblical interpretation (6), Education (4), Philosophical background (4), Politics (1), Family (1) and Slavery (1).

⁴⁴Harold L. Lunger, The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1954); David Edwin Harrell, Jr., Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866 (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966); Robert O. Fife, Teeth on Edge (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1971). Although recent dissertations have focused chiefly upon Campbell's (and the Disciples') rhetoric, there is a perceptible movement toward the consideration of social themes informed by broader critical scholarship; for example, Ralph Edwin Groover, "Alexander Campbell and the Family: Precept and Example" (Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1982).

⁴⁵The best study of Campbell's educational thought is John L. Morrison, "Alexander Campbell and Moral Education," (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1966); others include Henry E. Speck, "The Educational Contributions of a

The purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate that, in addition to his role as religious reformer, Campbell must also be recognized as a reformer of society. Although he saw social reforms as secondary to his theological concerns, Campbell addressed most of the social issues of his day: slavery, war, crime, poverty, temperance, the nature of democracy, and, of course, education. In both the distinctive character of his approach to the reform of society and his widespread influence, Campbell should be viewed as an important social reformer along with the more recognized reformers in the antebellum era. Campbell's most prominent and persistent work in the arena of social reform focused upon education. While he somewhat reluctantly entered the temperance and antislavery campaigns, there was no such hesitancy in his crusade for educational reforms.

This study will commence with a comparison of Campbell's perspective on social reform with that of other religious leaders. It will then examine Campbell's philosophy of education and his work in promoting the establishment of government-supported common schools. Since Campbell's vision for the common schools was chiefly a

Religious Reformer--Alexander Campbell" (Ed.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1951), and William B. Sharratt, "The Theory of Religious Education of Alexander Campbell and its Influence upon the Educational Attitude of the Disciples of Christ" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1930).

Protestant one, it is necessary to explore his nativist sentiments. The study concludes with an analysis of how Campbell embodied his educational views within the two schools he established.

Alexander Campbell was convinced that America was God's chosen nation, and thus offered incomparable liberty, opportunity, and prosperity to its citizens. Campbell wrote to his uncle Archibald in Newry, Ireland in 1815:

I cannot speak too highly of the advantages that the people in this country enjoy in being delivered from a proud and lordly aristocracy. . . . I have had my horse shod by a legislator, my horse saddled, my boots cleaned, my stirrup held by a senator. . . . No consideration that I can conceive of, would induce me to exchange all that I enjoy in this country. . . . I would not exchange the honor and privilege of being an American citizen for the position of your king.⁴⁶

Though Campbell would never diminish the seriousness of the problems faced by his adopted nation in the antebellum era, he maintained an optimistic faith in the ultimate victory to be won by sincere reformers--whether religious or social.

⁴⁶Richardson, Memoirs, 1:465-466.

CHAPTER ONE

THE "AMELIORATION OF SOCIETY"

This work shall be devoted to the destruction of Sectarianism, Infidelity, and Antichristian doctrine and practice. It shall have for its object the developement [sic] and introduction of that political and religious order of society called THE MILLENNIUM [sic], which will be the consummation of that ultimate amelioration of society proposed in the Christian Scriptures.¹

When Alexander Campbell referred to the "amelioration of society" in the 1830 prospectus for his monthly journal, the Millennial Harbinger, he sounded a familiar theme in antebellum America: the call for social reform. Many Americans in this period had great faith in their ability to ameliorate their God-ordained nation. The concern for social reform must stand alongside other important concerns, such as the development of Jacksonian democracy, Manifest Destiny, slavery and sectionalism, as one of the foremost themes of the first half of the nineteenth century. Clifford Griffin has observed: "So great was the ferment of reform in the pre-Civil War United States that to understand it, to grasp the motives of the reformers, the nature of

¹Alexander Campbell, ed., The Millennial Harbinger, 34 vols. (Bethany, Va.: A. Campbell, 1830-1863), 1830: 1.

their work, their successes and failures, is to understand much about the American nation as a whole."²

There was a wide variety of reforms: temperance, antislavery, prison and asylum, health and diet, peace, women's rights, and public education. Methods used to foster reform were also quite diverse--from voluntary societies to communal experiments. Winthrop Hudson has described the first half of the nineteenth century in America as:

. . . a time of eager expectancy, unbridled enthusiasm, and restless ferment. A new nation and a new world were being born, and to many anything and everything seemed possible. It was a period when the comet's tail was said to have swept America and everyone went a little mad.³

A primary impetus for this "ferment of reform" came from the churches. Men and women within these religious institutions were confident that America was God's special achievement and that its history would soon evolve into the millennium of Christ. Leadership of the major reform groups was closely tied to the churches: "Clergymen inspired the . . . crusade for humanitarian reform at every stage."⁴ A roll call of the leading reformers would consist mostly of

²Clifford S. Griffin, The Ferment of Reform, 1830-1860 (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1967), 3.

³Winthrop S. Hudson, Religion in America, 3rd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1981), 182.

⁴Timothy L. Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), 36.

ordained ministers--Beecher, Channing, Emerson, Finney, Parker, Weld, Tuckerman, and Brownson, to name but a few. One cannot understand the motives, goals, and nature of the social reform movement apart from a study of the essential role of religion. Sydney Ahlstrom has argued that "if the collective conscience of evangelical America is left out the movement [for social reform] as a whole is incomprehensible."⁵

Historians of antebellum social reform have identified two religious influences: the Unitarianism and Transcendentalism associated with Channing and Emerson, and the revivalism of the New School Presbyterians led by Lyman Beecher and Charles G. Finney.⁶ The Wesleyan tradition which included Methodists and other "holiness" assemblies also had a revivalist emphasis and made a significant contribution to the movement for social reform. Their influence as reformers, however, developed late in the antebellum era--not until the 1850s--and they generally followed the existing leadership and methodology of the voluntary societies and were especially in sympathy with

⁵Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People, 2 Vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972; Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1975), 2:83.

⁶Griffin, Ferment, 28; Ahlstrom, Religious History, 2:79; Hudson, Religion in America, 198-199; William G. McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 99-100; Russel B. Nye, Society and Culture in America, 1830-1860 (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 34.

Finney's perfectionist message. For this reason they may be considered an extension of the Finney style of revivalism in matters related to social reform.⁷

The Unitarian/Transcendentalist and revivalist traditions, which stood at opposite ends of the theological spectrum, shared a common emphasis on the moral regeneration of the individual and, subsequently, all of society. Because of their origins in Calvinistic thought, both groups were advocates of a religious system that de-emphasized the role of the visible church in personal salvation and societal reform. The Emersonian tradition, for example, considered the church simply as a religious association for enlightened individuals and therefore eschewed its institutional aspects such as the sacraments and clergy. Beecher and Finney, on the other hand, encouraged adherents to join voluntary societies--seen as "auxiliaries" to the local church--as evidence of the sincerity and reality of their conversion experience.

Alexander Campbell, the primary founder of the Disciples of Christ religious movement and advocate of educational reform, represented yet another approach to social reform. Although Campbell shared certain aspects of theology and practice with both Unitarian/Transcendentalist

⁷For the connection between Finney and the Wesleyan tradition see Timothy L. Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform, especially chapters on "The Holiness Revival at Oberlin" and "Revivalism and Perfectionism."

and revivalist groups, he disagreed vehemently with their attitude toward the role of the institutional church in the reform of society. For Campbell, the church--"consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures"--was God's primary agent on earth to usher in the kingdom of God.⁸ Society could be "ameliorated" only through the church. Campbell thus stood as an influential third alternative, a "high church" reformer whose imperative for social reform proceeded from and concluded in the church.

This chapter seeks to identify the compelling force--imperative--behind Campbell's involvement in societal reform, as well as that of religious leaders of various hues who worked diligently in their efforts to improve American society. The chapter will conclude with a study of Campbell's approach to social reform, in particular his views on the role of the church as the characteristic institution for reform. Recognition of Campbell's imperative for reform equips one to understand better his motives for participating in the crusade for educational reform and to discover why convictions such as the importance of moral and nonsectarian education and the use

⁸Thomas Campbell, Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington County, Washington, Pennsylvania (Washington, Pa.: Printed by Brown and Sample, 1809; reprint ed., St. Louis: Mission Messenger, 1975), 44.

of the Bible as a textbook in the schools were central to his educational philosophy and practice.

The Emersonian tradition broadly included Unitarians, Universalists, and Transcendentalists.⁹ Unitarians emerged as an identifiable American denomination chiefly among the liberal Congregational churches in the Boston area in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Its chief spokesman was William Ellery Channing, whose 1819 sermon on "Unitarian Christianity" was the classic statement of the church's doctrine. Reflecting elements of both Enlightenment and Romantic thought, Unitarians contended for a rational understanding of the Christian faith, evidenced by their appeal for "the constant exercise of reason" in one's interpretation of the scriptures.¹⁰ On the basis of this approach to scripture, Unitarians rejected the notion of the Trinity (it was unreasonable to perceive God as a three-fold being), the divinity of Christ (one cannot divide the person of Jesus into two natures, human and divine), and substitutionary atonement (Christ's death as a sacrifice to remove the consequences of the sins of human beings). Channing affirmed the necessity of "moral perfection": "We consider no part of theology so important as that which

⁹Hudson, Religion in America, 162.

¹⁰H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, and Lefferts A. Loetscher, eds., American Christianity: An Historical Interpretation With Representative Documents, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), 1:493-495.

treats of God's moral character."¹¹ The purpose of faith, therefore, was chiefly the formation of moral character. The mission of Christ, according to Channing, was to lead human beings in the quest to recover Christian virtue--"true holiness"--as defined in Christ's command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The followers of Christ, according to Unitarians, also accepted this mission and saw the present world as "a place of education," where enlightened individuals--and subsequently all of society--were thus transformed.¹² James Freeman Clarke, another Unitarian and Transcendentalist leader, summarized the movement's faith as "the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the leadership of Jesus, salvation by character, and the progress of mankind onward and upward forever."¹³

Transcendentalism appeared in the 1830s as a response to the perceived cold, sterile rationalism of Unitarianism.¹⁴ It offered a romantic approach to Christianity, emphasizing an intensely individualistic faith, the role of intuition, and the rejection of all

¹¹ Ibid., 498.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Hudson, Religion in America, 162.

¹⁴ All but one of the eight original members of the Transcendental Club were Unitarians. See Ahlstrom, Religious History, 2:36.

external authority. The foremost leader of Transcendentalism was Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose address to the Harvard Divinity School in 1838 announced the characteristic themes of the movement: the immanence and benevolence of God and the call to oneness with God through exhibiting love and justice.¹⁵ Although Emerson rejected the Unitarian and Universalist emphasis on pure rationalism, his Transcendentalist message shared common themes with the two groups: a positive view of the nature of human beings--an emphasis on individuality, creativity, and unlimited potential--and an enthusiastic and optimistic faith in human progress, particularly the unique American destiny.

Although the Unitarians, Universalists, and Transcendentalists held some differing views on theology and practice, lines between the three fellowships blurred considerably with their involvement in various voluntary societies and individual efforts for reform. For this reason the three movements may be considered as one tradition--in this case named after Emerson because of his prominence--in relation to their role in antebellum social reform.

The Emersonian tradition inspired a host of prominent

¹⁵Ahlstrom, ed., Theology in America: The Major Protestant Voices From Puritanism to Neo-Orthodoxy (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1967), 299.

reformers in the antebellum era: general reformers such as Channing, Emerson, Thoreau, Theodore Parker and Bronson Alcott (chairman of the "Friends of Universal Reform"); those such as Joseph Tuckerman and Orestes Brownson who were concerned with the plight of the urban poor; women's rights advocates such as Elizabeth Peabody and Margaret Fuller; antislavery crusaders such as Brownson and William Henry Channing; campaigners for prison and asylum reform such as Dorothea Dix and Samuel Gridley Howe; peace advocates such as Noah Worcester, William Ladd, and David Dodge; and educational reformers such as Horace Mann, Samuel R. Hall, Josiah Holbrook, and William H. McGuffey.¹⁶ Their primary impulse was confidence in the perfectability of individual human beings through the transformation of moral character. Their mission was, in Merle Curti's terms, "to harmonize their view of human nature with life around them"; they supported and led social reforms "according to their image of what man could be."¹⁷

The reformers motivated by this imperative not only diminished the importance of the church in the reformation of society but often considered the church inimical to social reform. Emerson declared in 1844 that the true

¹⁶Ahlstrom, Religious History, 2:79-89.

¹⁷Merle Curti, Human Nature in American Thought: A History (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), 135.

church had separated itself from the rival religious sects and was to be found in the various voluntary societies.¹⁸

Orestes Brownson was more direct in his criticism:

The Christianity of the Church has done its work. We have had enough of that Christianity. . . . It now unmans us and hinders the growth of God's kingdom. The moral energy which is awakened it misdirects, and makes its deluded disciples believe that they have done their duty to God when they have joined the church.¹⁹

The Unitarian/Universalist/Transcendentalist tradition wanted to rid the Christian faith of its burdensome institutional structures which, in their view, hindered the development of the natural creative ability and progress of the individual person. Thus, it was not surprising that it rejected the church's importance to the crusade for humanitarian reform and placed its confidence in the voluntary societies.

In its relationship to religion, the second major source of social reform was the evangelical revivalism associated with the Second Great Awakening. New School Presbyterianism, which relaxed the strict Calvinistic doctrines of human depravity and bondage of the will and adopted revivalistic methods, emerged from the New England phase of the Second Great Awakening and achieved its

¹⁸Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 12 vols. (Concord Edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1876), 3:251.

¹⁹Smith, Handy, and Loetscher, Documents, 2:158.

greatest influence in the Northeast and the Midwest.²⁰ The two prominent leaders of this tradition were Lyman Beecher and Charles G. Finney. In the upper South, the Methodist/holiness groups successfully used the camp meeting revivals (the frontier phases of the the Second Awakening) to foster rapid numerical growth. By mid-century the Wesleyan groups were also quite prominent in the eastern urban areas. William McLoughlin has argued that the Southern Methodists (along with Baptists) did not have the same concern for social reform as those in the North.²¹ The Northern, urban Wesleyan groups followed the leadership of Beecher and Finney and in the 1850s often constituted the rank and file membership of the voluntary societies.²² Like the variety of adherents within the Emersonian tradition, the revivalists were a diverse group, but were united in a common approach toward social reform.

²⁰For a discussion of the Old School/New School controversy in Calvinism during this period see Ahlstrom, Religious History, 1:551-570.

²¹McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform, 133. "The awakening challenged southern culture--or was allowed to--only in terms of private self-control. . . . Southern white Christians were not averse to benevolent reform if that meant encouraging personal temperance and helping the orphan or widow, the deaf, the dumb, the blind, the insane. But if it meant rearranging the social order, tampering with slavery, interfering with state sovereignty, defending the Indians' right to remain on good farm and cotton land, then benevolent reform was totally misguided." Ibid., 137.

²²Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform, 22, 169, 171.

Lyman Beecher has been interpreted as a "conservative revivalist" who used revivalistic--New School--methods to stimulate enthusiasm among the Presbyterian and Congregational churches.²³ Beecher's special concern about the spiritual condition of the West led him to Cincinnati's Lane Seminary in 1832 to train ministers for churches and fight off the Roman Catholic influence. He played a central role in the crusade for social reform as the architect of the voluntary system. Beecher was the first to connect the revivals with the voluntary societies: encouraging converts to join a moral society was a way to "follow up" the revivals by channeling the newly generated enthusiasm into efforts at social reform.²⁴

The other "wing" of evangelical revivalism was the movement associated with Charles Finney. Although Finney's background was Presbyterian, he eventually considered himself a "freelance" Congregationalist and developed a perfectionism that was very similar to the Wesleyan emphasis on personal holiness--which fostered a cooperative relationship with the holiness groups especially in the urban areas. In his discussion of the role of revivalism in social reform, Timothy Smith included both groups--Revivalistic Calvinists and Evangelical

²³ McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform, 111.

²⁴ Ahlstrom, Religious History, 1:512.

Arminians--as perfectionist groups who shared a common imperative for reform.²⁵

Finney was the master of the revival method. A persuasive preacher, he was successful in spreading the "revival fires" throughout western and upstate New York and eventually into urban areas. Finney's message rested on two grand principles: "that all societal evil is the result of the selfishness of individuals," and "that the coming kingdom of God will be the result of the gradual increase of moral government in the world by the means of revival preaching."²⁶ As David Weddle has observed, Finney also emphasized the role of the voluntary society as proof of one's conversion experience.²⁷

The leadership of the early voluntary societies came from the adherents of New School revivalism. These men and women formed associations such as the American Education Society, American Sunday School Union, American Tract Society, American Bible Society, and American Home

²⁵ Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform, 32-33.

²⁶ David L. Weddle, The Law as Gospel: Revival and Reform in the Theology of Charles G. Finney (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1985), 255.

²⁷ Ibid., 262. "In Finney's mind, all that remained was for dedicated volunteers to pool their energies in the many charitable associations and reform societies which had sprung, like lush foliage, from the strong taproot of the revival. The result of this concentrated effort would be the dawning of the kingdom of God, the universal rule of moral law."

Missionary Society to combat ignorance and to foster missionary efforts. The American Colonization Society, American Peace Society, American Temperance Society, and the American Antislavery Society were organized to further humanitarian causes and moral reform. Many of the more recognizable names in the antebellum social reform movement were associated with the revivalists: Phoebe Palmer, William Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Weld, James G. Birney, Elijah Lovejoy, Arthur and Lewis Tappan, Henry Ward Beecher, and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Although Beecher and Finney did not speak disparagingly of the church, they did de-emphasize its role in social reform. The "evangelical united front" minimized denominational affiliation and focused instead upon individual contributions. In practice, however, the societies were seen as necessary appendages to the church. The revivalists' imperative for social reform was personal: one who had been converted from a life of selfishness (all sin is selfishness) had an obligation to demonstrate the reality of that conversion through disinterested benevolence.

Both the Emersonian and the revivalist traditions, therefore, founded their impetus for social reform on individualism. For the Unitarian, participating in social reforms was an important ingredient in the development of his or her moral character; for the revivalist, practical

piety was seen as evidence that one had been "saved." Both shared the post-millennial view of the coming kingdom of God on earth, were convinced that the United States was a "chosen nation," and considered their efforts at evangelism and social reform as essential contributions in ushering in the golden age.²⁸ Although neither group would completely discard the institutional church, it was evident that the church was secondary to their purposes.²⁹

Campbell shared important convictions with both the Emersonian and the revivalistic traditions. On one hand his respect for the Enlightenment, especially John Locke and the Scottish Common Sense philosophers, led him to develop a positive view toward the nature of human beings and a strong confidence in human reason very similar to the Unitarian position. Although Campbell would have disagreed with Channing's conclusions concerning the doctrine of the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus Christ, he would have appreciated Channing's use of reason in understanding

²⁸For a discussion of millennialism and its role in American history see Ernest Lee Tuveson, Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968) and Ruth H. Bloch, Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

²⁹John L. Thomas, "Romantic Reform in America, 1815-1865," American Quarterly 17 (Winter 1965): 674. "Both transcendentalism and perfectionist moral reform, then, were marked by an individualist fervor that was disruptive of American institutions. Both made heavy moral demands on church and state."

scripture. Campbell placed great emphasis on "loving God and loving one's neighbor" as the chief principle of the reign of Christ, and reflected some attitudes of the Emersonian tradition: an emphasis on free thought, free will, and openness to innovation and reform.

On the other hand, Campbell remained basically Calvinistic in his theological views and here would have held more in common with Beecher and Finney. Like the revivalists, Campbell considered personal sin to be the root of the problems in human society. In order to reform society, the sin problem must be resolved:

Thus the Christian scheme of moralizing and felicitating the world is predicated upon the actual condition of the human family, and regards every symptom and exhibition of the complex case of human vileness. But it begins at the root of the disorder. . . . The Christian scheme of ameliorating society in this world . . . is predicated upon these leading principles.³⁰

Human ignorance, guilt, and bondage to sin were the cause of the present conditions, Campbell argued, and "God's sublime and glorious scheme of ameliorating and reforming the world" dealt with this problem.³¹ According to historian David Edwin Harrell, Campbell echoed Beecher's and Finney's message: He "believed that the way to reform a society was

³⁰Alexander Campbell, ed., Christian Baptist, 7 vols. (Buffalo Creek and Bethany, Va.: A. Campbell, 1823-1830), 1825: 173-174.

³¹Ibid., 246.

to reform the individuals who made up that society."³² Campbell did not agree with the methodology of these "enthusiasts," but took advantage of the evangelical fervor stimulated by the western revivals to further his own movement, especially in Kentucky and Tennessee.³³

Where Campbell differed from both groups was in his insistence that the church was the exclusive instrument of God for the reformation of society. The emphasis upon the individual, whether from the Emersonian or the revivalist perspective, undermined the plan of God and the power of the gospel. Revivalistic preaching and the focus upon private religious experience appeared "to reduce religion to immediate spiritual experience and to render superfluous the objective life of the visible church."³⁴ The unique power of the Christian faith was to be found not in individual experiences but "in the common life of a visible united

³²David E. Harrell, Jr., Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866 (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966), 57.

³³The Disciples are often associated with the Great Kentucky Revival because of the involvement of Barton W. Stone, whose "Christian" churches joined with Campbell's churches in 1832 to form the Disciples of Christ movement. Although Stone participated in the early revivals on the Kentucky frontier, he took a very cautious attitude toward the revivals' emotionalism. Campbell was somewhat suspicious of Stone's revivalistic tendencies and engaged him in a few heated debates.

³⁴Kenneth Lawrence, ed., Classic Themes of Disciples Theology (Ft. Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1986), 33.

church, founded upon the word or testimony of the Apostles."³⁵ The ultimate amelioration of society was dependent upon a restored church preaching a pure gospel and uniting believers in a true fellowship based solely on the authority of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament. Thus Campbell's imperative for social reform was closely tied to his convictions concerning the reform of the church. Campbell's primary motivation for participating in reform efforts originated in his theological views of the role of the church in the world. A proper understanding of the nature of the church and a return of the church to its pristine condition would subsequently lead to the amelioration of society. In a reference to the early Christians of the New Testament church, Campbell declared:

They viewed the church of Jesus Christ as the scheme of Heaven to ameliorate the world; as members of it, they considered themselves bound to do all they could for the glory of God and the good of men.³⁶

Campbell clearly articulated his program for ecclesiastical and social reform in his frequent articles on the millennium in the Christian Baptist and the Millennial

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Campbell, Christian Baptist, 1823: 6.

Harbinger.³⁷ His millennial views were well-developed by the time he began publishing the Christian Baptist in 1823. He referred to the millennium in an 1825 article:

I know it is said that all these things will be brought right when the millennium shall come. I reply that it will be by the correction of these errors that the millennial day will be ushered in. . . . All that is needed for the restoration of the church to the apostolic order, is, that Christians be Christians, and act as the disciples of Jesus Christ.³⁸

This statement revealed Campbell's post-millennialism: an interpretation of Revelation 20:1-7 which seemed to claim that Christ's ultimate return to earth would be preceded by a golden age of peace and prosperity, ushered in by the preaching of and conversion to the Gospel. Campbell believed that the millennium was to commence in his own century, perhaps having already begun.³⁹ Campbell divided history into three stages, or "dispensations": Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian. The millennium would be the consummation of the Christian dispensation:

³⁷Early biographers and historians of the Disciples movement, such as Robert Richardson, W. E. Garrison, and W. T. Moore, minimized the importance of eschatology in Campbell's thought. One of the first to argue that eschatology played a central role in Campbell's thought was Robert West, Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 164, 179f., 187.

³⁸Campbell, Christian Baptist, 1825: 174.

³⁹The Evidences of Christianity: A Debate between Robert Owen . . . and Alexander Campbell . . . Containing an Examination of the Social System . . . (Bethany, Va.: A. Campbell, 1829; reprints include Cincinnati: Jethro Jackson, 1852), 108.

The Millennium . . . will be a state of greatly enlarged and continuous prosperity, in which the Lord will be exalted and his divine spirit enjoyed in an unprecedented measure. All the conditions of society will be vastly improved; wars shall cease, and peace and good will will be vastly improved. . . . Genuine Christianity will be diffused through all nations; crimes and punishments will cease; governments will recognize human rights, and will rest on just and benevolent principles.⁴⁰

Campbell was certainly not unusual or unique in adopting the post-millennial view. Since Jonathan Edwards constructed his vision of America as the chosen nation to introduce the millennial reign of Christ, the majority of Christian thinkers in the United States adopted post-millennialism, including virtually all of the humanitarian reformers. Campbell went beyond most other millennialists, however, by affirming a positive role in this transformation on the part of the visible church. Whereas most preachers in the era placed emphasis upon the conversion of individuals, Campbell stressed the inclusion of converted individuals within the fellowship of the church as the means to reform the world. Campbell interpreted Revelation 20:4--"they came to life, and reigned with Christ a thousand years"--as referring to a spiritual resurrection, meaning the visible church reigning with Christ on earth.⁴¹ Campbell was clear in making the point that the millennium would not come through revivalistic preaching or voluntary

⁴⁰ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1842: 9.

⁴¹ Ibid., 1834: 481-486.

societies, rather the millennium would come through the church.⁴²

It was Campbell's mission, therefore, to call the church to reform itself in preparation for its role in the millennium. Campbell believed that division and jealousy within the church--sectarianism--was the chief obstacle to evangelizing the world and ushering in Christ's millennial reign on earth. He argued that sectarianism could be destroyed by removing its creeds and replacing them with the scriptures alone. The first step toward the introduction of the millennial age, according to Campbell, was "to dissipate the darkness" by restoring the "ancient gospel."⁴³ The fundamental principle of Campbell's religious reform was a call for the unity of all Christians on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ and the authority of the New Testament Scriptures.

The thirteen central propositions in the Declaration and Address, a document authored by Thomas Campbell in 1809, formed the basis for both Campbells' work as religious reformers. It outlined their fundamental approach to Christian unity. Propositions one through three were the

⁴² Ibid., 1856: 132-135; Anyone who reduced the role of the church in the millennial order was called a "Bastard Millenarian"--applied by Campbell to persons such as Robert Owen ("my old dear friend"), William Miller, and the Mormons.

⁴³ Ibid., 5.

most prominent:

1. That the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else; as none else can be truly and properly called Christians.

2. That although the Church of Christ upon earth must necessarily exist in particular and distinct societies, locally separate one from another, yet there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions among them. . . .

3. That in order to do this, nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith; nor required of them as terms of communion, but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them in the word of God. Nor ought anything to be admitted . . . in their Church constitution and managements, but what is expressly enjoined by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles upon the New Testament Church; either in express terms or by approved precedent.⁴⁴

The "restoration of the ancient gospel" was the first and most important step in establishing a purified millennial church. This included the destruction of sectarianism and Romanism (which Campbell identified as the "dragon" of the Revelation, the "man of sin," "antichrist," and the "Mother of Harlots").⁴⁵ Then the restored church could fulfill its mission by attacking atheism, infidelity, ignorance, and vice in the world. Campbell's message was paradoxical--a plea for both unity of the church and unbending commitment to the authority of the New Testament

⁴⁴ Thomas Campbell, Declaration and Address, 44-45.

⁴⁵ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1835: 46; 52-58; 102-109.

scriptures--which required a delicate balance of tolerance and criticism.

As stated in the opening quotation of this chapter, Campbell's Millennial Harbinger was devoted to "the developement [sic] and introduction of that political and religious order of society called the millennium. . . ."46 In the 1830 Prospectus for the Harbinger, Campbell promised to address nine specific topics, three of which were devoted to social problems. The first of these was "the inadequacy of all the present systems of education, literary and moral, to develope [sic] the powers of the human mind, and to prepare man for rational and social happiness."47 Education was therefore absolutely essential to the reform of society in Campbell's millennium. He was positive that the millennium had already begun, because of widespread education which permitted the reading of the Bible "by all men."48 Campbell's conviction that citizens should welcome a public school system and reformation of existing educational methods was also founded on millennial views:

The whole community are interested, and should be still much more interested than they are, in the great and most benevolent work of education, in its true

46 Ibid., 1830: 1.

47 Ibid. The other two social themes were political injustice and slavery.

48 Ibid., 1834: 549. Campbell attributed the modern interest in education and concern for reading the Bible to the Protestant Reformation.

and legitimate import, and bearings on the present and on the future destiny of humanity and our own country.⁴⁹"

Educated mind will govern the world," Campbell declared in his lecture on "The Destiny of Our Country," therefore "the cause of education . . . is the most transcendent cause in any and every community."⁵⁰ Campbell entered the crusade for educational reform, because he saw in education both a means to prepare the world for the golden age and evidence that the millennial era had begun:

In the millennial order of society a system of education in accordance with the true philosophy of the whole man . . . will doubtless universally obtain.

. . . I rejoice to see the advances which every year is making towards that perfection of education which is necessary to the millennial order of society.⁵¹

Campbell's conviction that the church was the characteristic institution for social reform may also be seen in his attitude toward the voluntary societies. His aversion to any kind of society may be traced to the influence of his father. Thomas Campbell had some unpleasant experiences with "secret political organizations" in Ireland which led him to isolate himself "from all political agitations."⁵² Robert Richardson stated that:

⁴⁹ Ibid., 1862: 111.

⁵⁰ Campbell, Popular Lectures and Addresses (Philadelphia: James Challen and Son, 1863), 177,

⁵¹ Ibid., 1830: 251.

⁵² Robert Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: J. Lippincott, 1868, 1870), 1:41-43.

"In regard to secret associations, Alexander fully adopted his father's views, and continued through life to oppose everything of this nature, as inconsistent with the Christian profession."⁵³ Soon after his arrival in Washington County, Pennsylvania, Alexander Campbell took note of certain "moral societies" in the community which were attempting to "supress vice and immorality" such as sabbath-breaking, intemperance, and gambling. Campbell responded by writing an article for the local newspaper (under the name of "Candidus") condemning these societies for thinking that "fining men for their vices would make them moral." Suggesting that the fines would be given to the local clergymen, Campbell encouraged the immoral segment of society to continue in their misdeeds, "for the more you sin the more preachers we shall have."⁵⁴

Campbell outlined his general approach to moral societies in response to an inquiry from England in 1837 concerning his views on this matter:

. . . our brethren generally regard the church as the only moral or religious association which they can lawfully patronize. Hence they form not Missionary, Education, Tract, Bible, Temperance, Anti-Masonic, or Anti-slavery confederations. If these are good works, they belong to the church in her own proper character; and every member of the church is, as a Christian obliged to promote these objects as far as he has the means and the opportunity. The Christian institution . . . demands of all its subjects . . . to promote every

⁵³ Ibid., 1:45.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1:523.

benevolent, humane, and charitable object which can ameliorate the conditions of human existence.⁵⁵

Campbell insisted that moral societies should never be compared with or placed in competition with the church. This practice not only substituted human inventions for God's design for social reform, but also reduced the effects of the church's efforts and moral example:

We are sorry to have to remark that there appears to be a great falling off from the morality of the Christian religion. . . . This is in a measure to be traced to the new bonds of union [voluntary societies] which have been adopted in different religious communities.⁵⁶

Campbell claimed to have great respect for the motives of any society "whose object is man's rescue from ignorance, vice, and misery" but pointed out that if these societies attempted to become a substitute for the church they will end in ruin.⁵⁷ He declared that it was improper for Christian men to join "any nominally moral society but the Christian church," evidently an unpopular position--"I must suffer for . . . opposing these associations as infringing upon, or being in competition with the Christian institution."⁵⁸

Campbell received (and published) many letters from individuals taking offense at his position toward societies

⁵⁵ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1837: 271.

⁵⁶ Campbell, Christian Baptist, 1825: 227.

⁵⁷ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1845: 316.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 313.

and suggesting that the voluntary associations never claimed to be substitutes for the church, but merely auxiliaries. Campbell retorted that if the church required auxiliaries for works of benevolence, then it was a "defective" institution.⁵⁹

Their philosophy is, that Christianity and Christian brotherhood have been, and still are, inadequate to the wants of human nature as the world is now constituted. Hence the necessity of these institutions and as many more as the spirit of voluntary associations may suggest and inspire as necessary to perfect and complete the workings of benevolence.⁶⁰

Campbell would further contend that if one claimed that the church was defective and neglectful of its duties, why not give one's time to reforming the church rather than participating in distracting moral societies?⁶¹ Finally, if the societies were auxiliaries, then the church needed to organize one for every "sin, infirmity, and affliction of human society."⁶² The church is of divine origin, Campbell argued, and any addition--auxiliary--was "as redundant as a sixth finger on the hand, or two great toes on the foot."⁶³ If Christians simply did their duty, such associations would

⁵⁹ Ibid., 1848: 350.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 685.

⁶¹ Ibid., 351.

⁶² Ibid., 686. Campbell suggested the need for the "Sons of Chastity."

⁶³ Ibid., 1845: 134.

be "wholly unnecessary and inexpedient."⁶⁴

Campbell would agree to support voluntary societies, however, if they did not present themselves as substitutes or auxiliaries to the church and if they met certain other criteria. He asserted that he had no difficulty assisting a moral society whose "acts of benevolence do not oblige me to desecrate religion or unite the church and the world in some accredited act of devotion."⁶⁵ Campbell outlined four standards for establishing whether or not a Christian could support a particular society: Does it adopt some form of religion? Does it administer oaths? Does it accept members indiscriminately ("Jews, Turks, Atheists, and Infidels")? Does it conduct worship--pray, sing, etc.--with such groups? If so, then membership and support were forbidden.⁶⁶ Campbell summarized his position thus:

In any matter that is purely political or educational, I will, and I do, co-operate with my fellow citizens so far as I approve their measures and their proceedings; provided only, they do not convert it into a sort of religious institution and propose a religious or Christian intercommunion as the base of our co-operation.⁶⁷

Campbell served as president of a missionary and of a Bible society, but often cautioned his readers to ensure

⁶⁴ Ibid., 1846: 6.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 1848: 565.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 407-408.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 563.

that these societies were not usurping the authority and mission of the local churches. Scholars such as Harold Linger have argued that Campbell changed his views toward societies as he moved from an anti-clerical exclusivist (as revealed in the Christian Baptist) to a socially responsible denominational leader (as reflected in the Millennial Harbinger).⁶⁸ Campbell himself claimed, however, that his position remained consistent. He wrote in the Christian Baptist in 1825 concerning Bible societies:

. . . they are the most specious and plausible of all the institutions of this age. No man who loves the bible can refrain from rejoicing at its increasing circulation. But every Christian who understands the nature and design . . . of the institution called the Church of Jesus Christ, will lament to see its glory transferred to a human corporation. The church is robbed of its character by every institution . . . that would ape its excellence and substitute itself in its place.⁶⁹

Campbell took essentially the same position in an article on societies in the 1848 Millennial Harbinger, even quoting an address published in the first volume of the Christian Baptist.⁷⁰ Later in this volume Campbell reflected on his position:

In the days of the Christian Baptist, Missionary, Bible, and other societies called Christian, were composed of the world and the church, or of men not even professing Christianity, and of those who did profess it. As such

⁶⁸Harold L. Linger, The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1954), 120.

⁶⁹Ibid., Campbell, Christian Baptist, 1825: 33.

⁷⁰Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1848: 230-231.

I repudiated them then, and as such I still repudiate them. I never objected to the church, as such, resolving herself into either a bible, Missionary, or any other sort of meeting connected with the duties and obligations of the church to bless the brotherhood, or to evangelize, illuminate, and sanctify the world by converting it to God.

. . . What I object to is, their sending Christ a-begging to Satan for money to demolish the Devil's own kingdom.⁷¹

In an article on abolitionism, Campbell used the analogy of pruning a fruit tree to describe the efforts of voluntary societies in dealing with the problems of society. He said that such organizations took great delight in "lopping off the branches"--crusading against any one "of the hundred evils that afflict society."⁷² Campbell himself contended that he would rather put his "axe to the root" of the tree:

Some join the Abolition Church. . . . Some join the Temperance Church, some the Tract, and some the Missionary Church. But for my feeble powers and efforts the Church of Christ is enough, and the gospel philanthropy co-extensive with my aspirations. . . . for my part I choose to plead that cause which in its genuine catholicity aims a mortal blow at the root of every political, every moral, every antichristian error and defect in society. . . . I say, so far as I destroy the root, so far the leaves must wither and the fruit fail.⁷³

Although Campbell shared certain theological views and attitudes toward social reform with both the Emersonian and the revivalist groups, he stood apart from them in his

⁷¹ Ibid., 563.

⁷² Ibid., 1836: 282.

⁷³ Ibid., 283.

affirmation of the essential role of the church in the reformation of individuals and, thereby, the social order itself. The origins of this emphasis were found primarily in Campbell's millennial vision and were clearly illustrated in his attitude toward the plethora of moral societies. Historian John L. Thomas' conclusion that "deep and lasting reform, therefore, meant an educational crusade based on the assumption that when a sufficient number of individual Americans had seen the light, they would automatically solve the country's social problems," may apply to the approaches of the Unitarians/Transcendentalists, revivalists, and Campbell.⁷⁴ The Emersonian and revivalist program, however, focused upon the transformation of individuals regardless of their incorporation into the institutional church. Campbell argued that God's plan for the redemption of human society was announced and completed through the visible church. His imperative for reform, therefore, was evangelical and closely tied to the church.

Campbell does not fit the mold of the "social control" advocate. He was not the status-conscious conservative bent on preserving his own authority as moral arbiter of American society. As a Scotch-Irish immigrant and a Westerner, Campbell was not a part of the New England religious status quo--those usually associated with the social control

⁷⁴ Thomas, "Romantic Reform," 659.

thesis. In fact, Campbell was intensely anti-clerical and anti-establishment in his early writings; although his rhetoric on the subject may have softened with age, his views did not.

This does not deny, however, that Campbell did demonstrate certain characteristics identified by revisionist historians as indicative of those who were fearful of egalitarianism and secularism and sought to impose their values, morals, and tastes upon the lower classes. One of Campbell's justifications for the establishment of common schools was the desire to prevent poverty, crime, and ignorance: to protect one's property by providing for the education of the lower class neighbor. Campbell's emphasis on moral education and the use of the Bible in the common schools also indicate his concern about the "morals and manners" of the uneducated. Campbell would illustrate Katz's generalization concerning early school promoters that "the character of pupils remained of far greater concern than their minds," only if one also recognized that Campbell's theory proposed a balance between the intellectual and moral dimensions of education.⁷⁵

The primary motivation, however, behind Campbell's educational reform was his millennialism which shaped his

⁷⁵Michael B. Katz, "The Origins of Public Education: A Reassessment," History of Education Quarterly 16 (Winter 1976): 399.

view of the role of the church in society. Campbell's advocacy of education or of any other social reform was always made within the context of "that ultimate amelioration of society." He entered the crusade for educational reform because it was a necessary means to convert the individual from sin to the Gospel and to prepare America for the millennial reign of Christ. In this sense, Campbell was also not a benevolent, humanitarian reformer. His goal was not to alleviate unsatisfactory social conditions but rather to remedy the individual's sin problem and assimilate him or her into the visible kingdom of God on earth, the church.

The implications of Campbell's imperative may be seen in his philosophy of education, involvement in the common school movement, attitude toward Roman Catholicism, and the establishment of his own schools. Campbell's "true theory" of education was based upon a millennial view of the nature of human beings: education must consider man "as he is now, and as he must forever be."⁷⁶ Religious and moral subjects taught by the church were necessary components in a well-balanced education--physical, intellectual, and moral. As will be seen in the next chapter, Campbell's primary concern in his advocacy of education was its necessity in understanding the Gospel message, therefore making it

⁷⁶ Campbell, Popular Lectures, 231.

essential to the process of obtaining salvation and membership in the church.

Since Campbell reserved a unique role for the American nation in his millennial order, it was essential that its citizens be well-educated. Hence, Campbell called for the establishment of government-supported and directed common schools. Developing an enlightened, virtuous citizenry was the first step in the establishment of Christ's reign on earth. The common schools must be under the direction of the state, Campbell argued, and therefore free from sectarian influences. The use of the Bible as the chief textbook would ensure that the common school's purpose remained consistent with the goals of the church.

Campbell's identification of Roman Catholicism as an enemy of the restoration of the true church brought him into conflict with Roman Catholic leaders over the issue of public education. Campbell's vision of the millennial church was a Protestant one. His nativism was not rooted in social issues--such as a fear of immigration--but rather in theological convictions.

Campbell's own schools, Buffalo Seminary and Bethany College, were also closely tied to the churches. One primary motive in founding the seminary was to train ministers. Bethany College was intentionally dependent upon the Disciples' churches for financial support, leadership, and students. Campbell was very careful not to divorce the

college from the churches or elevate his position as college president over his role as preacher and church leader.

Morris Eames summarized Campbell's "high" view of the church thus:

While Campbell did emphasize the role of the individual in all phases of the life of man and nature, . . . he thought that no individual stands alone in the universe. This notion applies to atoms in a natural order, to single bones in our bodies, to man in society, and to the individual church in the Christian system. It is part of Campbell's philosophy and religion that the feelings, functions, and integrity of the individual in any part of God's creation must be respected, appreciated, and loved; it is equally true, however, that an individual unit standing alone and isolated has no meaning, function, or purpose. To find its own meaning and destiny it must relate itself to an orderly and organized whole, natural, social, or religious.⁷⁷

Campbell concluded his address to the Clarksburg Education Convention in 1841 by appealing to his audience "to take a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together," in the cause of establishing common schools in western Virginia. His final remark connected this effort to his ultimate vision for American society: "we shall gain for ourselves, our country, and posterity, richer blessings, . . . the approval of conscience, the smiles of Heaven, and the thanks of a grateful, virtuous and happy posterity."⁷⁸

⁷⁷S. Morris Eames, The Philosophy of Alexander Campbell (Bethany, Va.: Bethany College, 1966), 87-88.

⁷⁸Campbell, Popular Lectures, 271.

CHAPTER TWO

"THE TRUE THEORY OF EDUCATION"

. . . we must have the true theory of education--a theory grounded in the true philosophy of man--before we can devise any system of public or private education in harmony with the genius of humanity and the wants of society.¹

Alexander Campbell's grand vision of the "millennial order of society" included not only a thorough reformation of the church but also a gradual improvement of society through education. In his address before the Western Literary Institute and College of Teachers in 1836, Campbell declared that "the philosopher, the politician, the moralist, and the Christian regard the subject of education as of transcendent importance to the individual and social well-being of man."² His conviction concerning the influence of education was clear: "next to the gospel, this is the most important of human concerns and interests."³

¹Alexander Campbell, Popular Lectures and Addresses (Philadelphia: James Challen and Son, 1863), 301.

²Alexander Campbell, ed., The Millennial Harbinger, 34 vols. (Bethany, Va.: A. Campbell, 1830-1864), 1836: 581.

³Ibid., 1838: 204.

Campbell's lifelong role as an educator--teacher, professor, college president, and advocate of public educational reform--reflected his central concern that "to improve the system of education is one of the most promising enterprizes to ameliorate the condition of human existence."⁴

This chapter seeks to understand Campbell's philosophy of education: its origins in his own early educational experience, its refinement in the community of antebellum school reformers, and its major components (foundations, means, and objectives). Campbell's active work as an educator was built upon a carefully constructed philosophy of education. He stringently followed the rules of the logician (regardless of the subject) and characteristically began his remarks with basic principles and assumptions ("laws"). His "true theory of education" was well-defined and developed relatively early in his career. The reforms he promoted and the educational institutions he founded consistently reflected this "theory."

The sources of Campbell's views on education may be found in his early education in Ireland (especially the influence of his father, Thomas Campbell), his university experience at Glasgow, Scotland, and the more immediate influences of the leading professional educators of his day in America and Europe. Campbell's philosophical background

⁴Ibid., 1836: 606.

and political ideology were very similar to that of the educational reformers of the early nineteenth century and he formulated an eclectic philosophy of education which paralleled their general convictions.⁵ Campbell's particular contribution to educational theory, rising out of his early education and refined in dialogue with contemporary educators, was his philosophy of education based on his view of the origins, nature, and destiny of human beings and his emphasis on moral education.

Campbell's father, Thomas Campbell, was the primary influence upon Alexander's early intellectual development. Although he began formal education at the elementary school in Market Hill and then moved to his uncles' (Archibald and Enos Campbell) school in Newry, Ireland, his important early education was under the tutelage of his father.⁶ By age eight or nine, Alexander studied full-time with his father.⁷

Thomas Campbell was a well-educated man and a capable teacher with a long career as an educator. After completing his secondary education, Thomas Campbell started a school at

⁵The clearest comparison is with Horace Mann, who shared Campbell's background in Calvinism and appreciation of the Enlightenment. See Jonathan Messerli, Horace Mann: A Biography (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972).

⁶Robert Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, Embracing a View of the Origin, Progress and Principles of the Religious Reformation which He Advocated, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: J. Lippincott, 1868, 1870), 1:23.

⁷Ibid., 31.

nearby Connaught ("one of the most benighted parts of the province").⁸ Afterwards he taught briefly at the Sheepbridge school (near Newry) before enrolling in the University of Glasgow. Upon the completion of a three year divinity degree at Glasgow and ordination as a Presbyterian minister, he resumed his teaching position at Sheepbridge. Thomas soon accepted a ministerial call from the Presbyterian church in Rich Hill, where he also instructed students in his home.⁹

Thomas Campbell often complained that his son Alexander was "so exceedingly devoted to sport and physical exercise that it was difficult to fix his attention upon books."¹⁰ In spite of the distractions (and his father's shrewd handling of the situation by assigning his son hard work in the fields), Campbell received an impressive course of studies from his father. The emphasis was upon literature, including memorization of long passages from Milton, Young, Cowper, and Shakespeare, classical languages (Greek, Hebrew, and Latin), French, and especially Biblical studies.¹¹ In addition, Campbell was introduced to the writings of John Locke which impressed him particularly with the importance

⁸ Ibid., 24.

⁹ Ibid., 25, 29.

¹⁰ Ibid., 31.

¹¹ Millennial Harbinger, 1862: 3-4.

of Locke's "Essay on the Human Understanding" and the "Letters on Toleration."¹²

It is clear that Alexander Campbell's family appreciated learning and was concerned about establishing educational institutions. Thomas Campbell began Rich Hill Academy to educate his own children but it soon attracted numerous pupils and secured for him "a significant income and prestige in the community."¹³ After arriving in America in 1807 Thomas founded schools in Washington (Pennsylvania), Cambridge (Ohio), Newport (Kentucky), and Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania), and later assisted his son at Buffalo Seminary and Bethany College.¹⁴ Alexander's sisters, Dorothea and Jane, both founded and administered schools (Washington Seminary, Washington, Pennsylvania, and Pleasant Hill Seminary near Middletown, Pennsylvania). Alexander taught in Ireland with his father and administered the Rich Hill School after Thomas' departure for America. He often lectured at his sisters' schools. Campbell's earliest educational models, therefore, were within his own family. Alexander held his father in high esteem throughout his life and attributed to him the impetus for his accomplishments: "My father, though I say it, was the best educator of young

¹²Richardson, Memoirs, 1:33-34.

¹³Ibid., 47.

¹⁴Lester McAllister, Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1954), 175, 181.

men I ever knew. . . . But for this education and discipline I should have never written a number of the Millennial Harbinger.¹⁵

The most important aspect of Campbell's early education for the development of his philosophy of education was his introduction to the Lockean and Scottish Common Sense schools of philosophy. Campbell appropriated several basic assumptions concerning the nature of human beings, epistemology, moral education, and the emphasis on utility in education from these schools of thought.¹⁶

Campbell called John Locke "the great mental philosopher, . . . this eminent Christian philosopher."¹⁷ He emphasized the inclusion of Locke's works in his early education and often quoted Locke in his writings and lectures. For example, he reprinted Locke's correspondence with Stillingfleet in the Harbinger and referred to Locke on

¹⁵Millennial Harbinger, 1862: 3-4.

¹⁶See George R. Phillips, "Difference in the Theological and Philosophical Background of Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone and Resulting Differences of Thrust in Their Theological Formulation" (PhD dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1968), 8, 119. For a discussion of the various interpretations of philosophical influences on Campbell. Phillips takes a pragmatic view, asserting that Campbell "borrowed when convenient": "Campbell was Lockean when forced to give philosophical justification and Reidan in background and outlook."

¹⁷Campbell, Popular Lectures, 130-131; Millennial Harbinger, 1844: 11; Christian Baptist, 7 vols. (Buffalo Creek and Bethany, Va.: A. Campbell, 1823-1830), 1824: 82.

numerous occasions in his debate with Robert Owen.¹⁸ In his study of the influence of Locke on Campbell's theology, Bowen emphasized that, even though Campbell criticized and rejected certain aspects of Locke's philosophy, he discovered that Locke offered a philosophy that was sympathetic to a rational and enthusiastic defense of the Christian faith.¹⁹ Bowen concluded:

This is not to say that Locke is the only source of influence, because he is not; nor is it to argue that Campbell always understands Locke correctly. Rather, the point is that no other person influenced him as fundamentally or as permanently.²⁰

Locke's theory of knowledge, which Campbell adopted "in a very crude form," was the most important aspect of Locke's thought in the development of Campbell's philosophy of education.²¹ He affirmed that there are no innate ideas and all knowledge must arise from experience: all original ideas are the result of sense perception, reflection and imagination. One may find examples of Campbell's use of Lockean epistemology in his debates with Robert Owen in 1828 and N.L. Rice in 1843:

¹⁸Millennial Harbinger, 1836: 252-253; 463-465.

¹⁹Billy D. Bowen, "Knowledge, the Existence of God and Faith: John Locke's Influence on Alexander Campbell's Theology" (Ed.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1968), 8.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 153-154.

²¹*Ibid.*, 5.

Everything is to be submitted to the most minute observation. No conclusions are to be drawn from guesses or conjectures. We are to keep within the certain limits of experimental truth. We first gather the facts, then group them together, and afterwards comes the classification and comparison of them.²²

All the knowledge we have of material nature has been acquired by the exercise of our sense and of our reason upon these discoveries. All our ideas of the sensible universe are the result of sensation and reflection.²³

Campbell's terminology was Lockean--sensation, perception, memory, reflection, judgment--and he even used many of the same examples as Locke. His general view toward the nature of human beings (endowed with sense, reason, morality, and the capacity for improvement) and society (progress could be achieved through "science") reflects the influence of John Locke. Campbell appeared to have knowledge of the educational writings of Locke; nearly all of Campbell's familiar educational themes may be found in Locke's works.²⁴

Campbell's understanding of Locke and the Enlightenment in general was filtered through the Scottish Common Sense

²²A Debate on the Evidences of Christianity . . . Between Robert Owen, of New Lanark, Scotland, and Alexander Campbell, of Bethany, VA. . . . (Bethany, Va.: A. Campbell, 1829), 218.

²³A Debate Between Rev. A. Campbell and Rev. N.L. Rice, on the Action, Subject, Design and Administration of Christian Baptism . . . (Lexington: A.T. Skillman and Son; Cincinnati: Wright Swormstedt, J.A. James; Louisville: D.S. Burnet; New York: R. Carter; Pittsburgh: Thomas Carter, 1844), 618. See also Millennial Harbinger, 1836: 166.

²⁴See James Axtell, ed., The Educational Writings of John Locke (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 114, 275, 341, 342, 400.

philosophy, which he learned from his father and from his one year of studies at the University of Glasgow (1808-1809). This school of philosophy, associated with Francis Hutcheson, Thomas Reid, and Dugald Stewart, was an attempt to harmonize Christian values, doctrines, and morals with Enlightenment thought, which, under the influence of David Hume, had become increasingly skeptical, relative, and secular. The Scottish philosophers rejected innate ideas (following Locke) but maintained that there were certain senses or capacities--"faculties"--that were innate and must be investigated and developed. They emphasized the accessibility of absolute, objective truth, the reliability of scripture, and the importance of reason tempered with prudence, conscience, and moral discernment--"common sense."²⁵

Both Campbells--Thomas and Alexander--studied under Professor Jardine at Glasgow.²⁶ Jardine was the heir apparent to Thomas Reid, serving six years as his faculty colleague and living in his home the last twenty years of his life. Jardine had joined the philosophy faculty at

²⁵Merle Curti, Human Nature in American Thought: A History (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), 129-130; Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology," Church History 24 (1955): 260.

²⁶Richardson, Memoirs, 1:31; see also Leslie L. Kingsbury, "Philosophical Influence Bearing on Alexander Campbell and the Beginnings of the Disciples of Christ Movement" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1955): 102-103.

Glasgow in 1774 and was distinguished for his course in moral philosophy. Alexander Campbell's notes from this course, published by Lester G. McAllister in 1980 as "Juvenile Essays," contained his early assimilation of the Common Sense approach.²⁷ Campbell's reading list for 1809 contained seven works by Common Sense authors. As with his appropriation of Locke, Campbell's educational thought reflects the influence of the Scottish universities.²⁸

After his immigration to America in 1809, Campbell's interest in education led him to the writings of the leading reformers of education in the United States. Through these reformers Campbell became familiar with the current theories of education in America and Europe. His personal acquaintance with many of the renowned reformers fostered his own contributions to the subject of education.

The primary connection between Campbell and these reformers was through the Western Literary Institute and College of Teachers, which will be discussed in a subsequent chapter. The annual meeting of the Institute in Cincinnati

²⁷ Lester McAllister, ed., Alexander Campbell at Glasgow University, 1808-1809 (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1980).

²⁸ See Douglas Sloan, The Scottish Enlightenment and the American College Ideal (New York: Teachers College Press, 1971), 23-33; 241-244, for a discussion of the Scottish universities' commitment to pedagogical reforms, especially the concern for moral uses of knowledge, utilitarian aspects of learning, and national programs of education.

provided a forum for discussion of the important educational issues and theories by leading authorities in the field. The first volume of The Western Academician and Journal of Education and Science, published in 1837 by the Institute, included addresses by Albert and John Pickett, William McGuffey, Calvin E. Stowe, William Wood, B. P. Aydelott, Baynard Hall, Samuel Lewis, Samuel Eells, John Purcell, and Joshua Wilson, all successful and influential educators. Campbell attended the annual meeting of the Institute on several occasions and addressed the College at least once.²⁹

Perusal of Campbell's library reveals several works on education, including: Calvin Stowe's The Prussian System of Public Instruction and Its Application to the United States (1836), James Simpson's Necessity of Popular Education as a National Object (1834), Joseph Neef's Sketch of a Plan and Method of Education (1808), Alexander Bache's Report on Education in Europe (1839), Benjamin Peers' American Education (1838), and Samuel Lewis' First Annual Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools, made to the Thirty-sixth General Assembly of the State of Ohio

²⁹ Campbell's address is published in this issue of the Western Academician. His 1846 address was read before the Institute in the annual meeting and subsequently published in the Transactions but Campbell himself was not personally present.

(1838).³⁰ The numerous reprints of articles on education from various newspapers and journals in the Harbinger also indicate that Campbell was well-informed on the subject.³¹

Campbell's 1829 debate with Robert Owen, the Scottish industrialist and utopian socialist who founded the New Harmony communal experiment in Indiana, may be seen as a turning point in Campbell's social thinking, especially in the area of education. Owen's innovative educational theory was drawn from contemporary European sources and had a similar philosophical basis as Campbell's in Lockean principles. Campbell's lasting friendship with Robert Owen was in part sustained by their common interest in education.³²

One important American influence on Campbell's educational views was Thomas Jefferson. Campbell adopted

³⁰ Charles Penrose, comp., "Short Title List of Alexander Campbell's Library" (unpublished paper, Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, n.d.).

³¹ Reprinted articles included those by such authors as William Ellery Channing and Benjamin Rush (1840: 430-431; 1848: 538-539) and on topics such as the Massachusetts, Connecticut, German, English, and French school systems (1849: 54; 1840: 156-157; 1844: 167-169; 1843: 381-382).

³² "Owen's original ideas, example, and plan for publicity, were in part responsible for the domestication both in Britain and America of the education theories of Pestalozzi and von Fellenberg." Frank Thistlewaite, The Anglo-American Connection in the Early Nineteenth Century (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959), 141. For the influence of Owen on Campbell see James N. Holm, "Alexander Campbell's Debate with Robert Owen, April 1829: The Effect of a Rhetorical Event on the Speaker" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1976).

Jefferson's ideal vision of an agrarian society of independent yeomen, his views on separation of church and state, and, especially, his sentiment that a republican form of government required a citizenry "of superior intelligence and moral virtue."³³ Jefferson believed that education functioned within a republican society to enable knowledgeable citizens to pursue their private interests, prepared them to exercise their rights as citizens, and perpetuated a capable and gifted civic leadership. Campbell may have denounced Jefferson's "godlessness," but he admired the latter's commitment to Locke and education.³⁴

The example and training of his father, plus Lockean and Common Sense philosophy, provided the primary sources for Campbell's philosophy of education. Campbell continued, however, to refine his educational theory, not in isolation, but as clearly part of a network of leading American and European educators.

In the summer of 1836 a number of prominent Disciples in Jacksonville, Illinois wrote Campbell concerning their interest in establishing a college "somewhere in the great valley of the West" and called for a meeting in Louisville

³³Thomas Jefferson, "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge" (1779) and "Thomas Jefferson to George Wythe, August 13, 1786," in Sol Cohen, ed., Education in the United States: A Documentary History, 2 vols. (New York: Random House, 1974), 2:739-40, 750.

³⁴Millennial Harbinger, 1856: 88.

in September to discuss this venture.³⁵ In response to this invitation Campbell published a series of articles in the Harbinger entitled "Literary Institutions." In the first number of this series he outlined his basic philosophy of education: "certain points in which we are all agreed."

Campbell's principles were:

1. All children born into the world bring with them nothing but capacities--no ideas or knowledge of any sort whatever; and are, therefore, to be educated.
2. . . . Without education neither intellectual greatness nor moral goodness can be attained.
3. That books and teachers are for this purpose indispensable.
4. That it is the primary duty of all parents to educate their children. . . .
5. That schools are the most ancient and useful inventions for this purpose.
6. That we have true learning and false learning--good schools and bad schools. . . moral and immoral teachers. . . .
7. That it is the duty and the privilege of Christians to use but not to abuse any good thing.
8. That those schools called Schools of Theology, have very generally filled the world with idle speculation, doctrinal errors, and corruptions of all sorts, terminating in discords and heresies innumerable.
9. That in our colleges, or high schools of literature and science, Grecian and Roman mythology, and the demoralizing works of pantheists, atheists, and deists, have usurped in a measure the place of sacred literature, and displaced the best models of fine taste, true eloquence, and sound practical knowledge, or science properly so called.

³⁵ Ibid., 1836: 197-200.

10. That all the colleges and universities in our country are more or less subservient to human creeds and partisan establishments, and that not one is found devoted to the Bible alone and to the catholic principles of simple, ancient, apostolic Christianity.³⁶

This list contains the major components of Campbell's philosophy of education: its foundation, basic assumptions, means, and purpose. In Campbell's view, education begins with a proper understanding of the nature of human beings, consists of the proper development of their "constitution," and results in a proper moral relationship with God and their fellow human beings.

In nearly all of his major addresses on education Campbell introduced his remarks by appealing to the creation of human beings by God and their special place in the scheme of the universe. He held that:

Colleges and schools of every rank are, or ought to be, founded on some great principle in human nature and in human society. They are presumed to have been, and of right ought to be, founded on a sound philosophy of man, in all his relations to society and the universe.³⁷

In his popular "Address on Education" Campbell asserted that "the true and enduring sub-basis of a rational and adequate education of a human being, is a just and true conception of man, not as he was, but as he is now, and as he must forever be."³⁸ Campbell attempted to construct his philosophy of

³⁶ Ibid., 201-201.

³⁷ Campbell, Popular Lectures, 291.

³⁸ Ibid., 230-231.

education "with a constant and solemn reference to the ultimate end and destiny of man, or to his rank and dignity in the universe."³⁹

Campbell's orthodox Christian view of the nature of human beings emphasized that humans were a unique and special creation, made in the image of God with a supreme intelligence and consciousness of thought that set them apart from the rest of the created order, which itself was created for their happiness. This "high" view of the nature of human beings concluded by affirming that humans are worthy of salvation and look toward an "incomparable destiny" in fellowship with their Creator.⁴⁰ Campbell made a distinction between "natural man" (as created, "primitive"), "preternatural man" (fallen, sinful), and "supernatural man" ("saved," restored to original state by faith in Jesus Christ).⁴¹ He understood the nature of human beings as having body, soul, and spirit, with a consciousness of will. Taking a moderate position on the freedom of the will, he stated that a human in his or her preternatural state was a "rational agent," but not a "free agent."⁴² Campbell's view resulted in three general

³⁹ Millennial Harbinger, 1838: 531.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 530-542.

⁴¹ Ibid., 540.

⁴² Campbell, Popular Lectures, 293; Campbell-Owen Debate, 142-143.

principles of education: humans must be educated according to their nature ("constitution"); their personal, intellectual and moral development depends solely on education; and they must be educated in view of their final destiny.

Humans must be educated "in harmony with the clearly ascertained laws of the human constitution":

Man, intellectual and moral, is neither the sport of nature, not the creature of circumstances; but that his mental nature has its elements and laws of development and change as inherent and fixed as those of his physical constitution; so that, in our judgement, education . . . gives form and character to all that is within him sown or planted by the hand of his Creator.⁴³

Campbell divided the human constitution into three major categories: physical or "animal," intellectual, and moral. He would sometimes add a fourth--religious--but it was often indistinguishable from the moral aspect. Education, therefore, consisted in the "full development of the whole man" and must be directed towards each of these categories.⁴⁴

Whether or not a human is fully developed and reaches his or her full potential depends solely on education. Campbell's theory of knowledge, based upon Lockean and Common Sense principles, stated that all understanding of the material world comes from sense perception and natural

⁴³Millennial Harbinger, 1838: 529-530.

⁴⁴Ibid., 1839: 233.

reason.⁴⁵ He asserted that the principle of carte blanche was "now a well established article in the catholic faith of all mental and moral philosophers."⁴⁶ He explained thus:

Newton entered life without a single idea: so have all the men of all ages of time. Man has capacity or susceptibility from the hand of his Creator; no more. . . . That something we call mind, acts not till acted upon through the medium of the machinery of sense. . . . How does he learn? By sensation and then by reflection.⁴⁷

Demonstrating the adjustment of his Presbyterian background in light of Lockean principles, Campbell responded to the common Calvinist contention "that infants naturally, perfectly, and cordially hate God" by asserting that:

Whether a child shall love or hate God is educational, and not natural. . . . According to the picture presented to the eye, so will be the image on the retina; so according to the character of God exhibited to the mental eye. . . . That the minds of children are capable of being shaped after almost any model and cast into any mold, universal testimony and observation prove.⁴⁸

This theory of knowledge would affirm that a child's entire development is dependent upon the way his or her natural capabilities are shaped by education:

Ignorant as the ass's colt he enters upon the stage.
What he shall be depends upon those to whom his

⁴⁵Robert West, Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 6. Campbell would argue for a natural morality but not for a natural religion. Religious knowledge must come from revelation.

⁴⁶Millennial Harbinger, 1838: 529.

⁴⁷Ibid., 1835: 152.

⁴⁸Ibid., 1830: 253-255.

education and training are committed. He is furnished with faculties and capacities by his Creator, but the development and discipline of those are in the hands of those to whose management he is entrusted.⁴⁹

Campbell declared in his 1852 baccalaureate address at Bethany College: "'Tis education, and not birth or blood, makes the man."⁵⁰ His pedagogy, therefore, was concerned with how to develop the human capacities properly.

The ultimate purpose of education, in respect to this view of the nature of human beings, was not only to develop the human capacities but also to prepare a person for his or her "future and eternal destiny": "the end of all education is to fit us for the enjoyment of God, and the pure, and holy, and refined society of heaven."⁵¹ Campbell's concluding remarks in his "Address on the Rank and Dignity of Man" sounded this note:

Ought not, then, . . . the education of youth to be conducted with constant and solemn regard to the final destiny of man, . . . paying a solemn regard to the full expansion and proper direction of our moral affections and dispositions, in every stage of education, from the infant school to the University itself?⁵²

A true theory of education must also rest upon a proper definition of education. In his 1845 address before the College of Teachers in Cincinnati, Campbell observed that

⁴⁹ Ibid., 1832: 408.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1852: 364.

⁵¹ Ibid., 1837: 259; see also Popular Lectures, 302.

⁵² Millennial Harbinger, 1838: 544-545.

"the most important question is 'What is education?' Even though 'How?' and 'By whom?' are key issues, they must take second place."⁵³ He defined education as "the full development and proper training of all the human powers, . . . physical, intellectual, and moral."⁵⁴ Campbell's definition contained two major concepts: "development" and "culture." The former referred to the exercising and improvement of the physical, intellectual, and moral faculties--"what is in man"--and the latter with the communication of knowledge and appreciation of one's social heritage.⁵⁵

Campbell was concerned that education had been reduced simply to the acquisition of knowledge and had thus failed in its greater purpose of developing the human potential.

Education, with me, is the proper development and direction of the human powers. It is not merely the simple communication of the knowledge of letters. . . . It is the proper training, the full development and cultivation of the physical, intellectual, and moral faculties.⁵⁶

He often used this analogy of "cultivation" to illustrate his view of education. The physical, intellectual and moral capacities of humans are like crops in the garden that must

⁵³ Ibid., 1845: 521.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1836: 582.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 585. ". . . the two objects of education: improvement of the faculties and the communication of knowledge."

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1837: 256.

be nurtured so that proper growth might ensue:

In one word, he ought to be so educated that his happiness would be perfect and complete to the full extent of his whole powers and susceptibilities--i.e. that his animal pleasures should be as great as they can possibly be without entrenching on his intellectual and spiritual; and that his intellectual and spiritual pleasure ought to be as great as possible, without entrenching upon his animal.⁵⁷

Campbell further explained the process of this development by describing Locke's concept of faculty psychology. He made a distinction between human organs such as an eye or ear, faculties such as seeing and hearing, and operations (i.e., an eye and seeing are the act of of a particular "look"). This "human system" is improved by exercise: each organ must be exercised to improve itself; i.e., one must not exercise only the eye but the other organs as well. Campbell argued, therefore, that "the natural order of education in seeking to improve the intellectual and moral powers is first the operation--then, the faculty--then, the organ--then, the mind."⁵⁸ Effective pedagogy must consider the entire "constitution" and the means by which a person's physical, mental and moral powers

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1839: 234; "But at the same time if any sacrifice must be made . . . the inferior must always yield to the superior--the brute to the man, and the man to the Christian."

⁵⁸ Ibid., 1836: 585-587.

are developed.⁵⁹

Education will consist in three things--in teaching and training man to think, to feel, and to act in perfect harmony with his own constitution, and with the constitution of nature and society around him . . . to act rationally, morally, and religiously.⁶⁰

The true philosophy of man demands that a rational and systematic course of instruction should be instituted . . . with a special reference to the conscience, . . . the understanding . . . , [and] the taste and the imagination of the pupil or the student.⁶¹

This philosophy of education appears quite modern in its approach, for Campbell was concerned that the existing educational system placed too much emphasis upon rote memorization and did not take into consideration the temperament and needs of the student. One could never be educated, according to Campbell's definition, by simply acquiring knowledge of certain facts, learning "a mere smattering of words." He decried the contemporary systems of education which conveyed "words, rather than ideas, . . . names rather than things; . . . memory has been cultivated more than his judgement; . . . [and he is] still to learn

⁵⁹ See Campbell, Popular Lectures, 295-296. Intellectual powers include perception, memory, reflection, reason, imagination, abstraction, acquisition and communication of knowledge, and cultivation of such should include grammar, logic, rhetoric, oratory, taste, discussion, and debate. Moral culture includes conscience, affections, and passions, and the exercise of them in truthfulness, justice, honor, benevolence, humanity, and mercy.

⁶⁰ Millennial Harbinger, 1836: 582.

⁶¹ Campbell, Popular Lectures, 231.

the art of thinking and reasoning correctly."⁶² Campbell's true theory was "soft pedagogy": student-centered rather than information-centered.

Campbell's reformed educational system would include a wider definition of "school":

I propose . . . to look at the schools which are essential to the development of man. These are four--the Family, the Elementary, the College, and the Church. To perfect the education of man, it is indispensable that he pass through these four⁶³

Education must begin in the home: parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children. He noted that schools "cannot often act the part of fathers and mothers. Indeed, we have sometimes painfully observed that the consequences of bad family education are insuperable."⁶⁴

His frequent articles on family education contained practical suggestions for what children should be expected to learn at home. One list included early rising, personal cleanliness, self-government, filial reverence and affection, brotherly kindness, and love. Another advocated that a child should learn "its own frame and the laws of its being, . . . of health and physical happiness." He asserted

⁶²Millennial Harbinger, 1832: 409.

⁶³Ibid., 1839: 234.

⁶⁴Ibid., 1842: 16. This comment may have been made in light of the trouble Campbell's "matrons and patrons" had overseeing the adolescents in the dormitories at Bethany College.

that "industry, energy, activity, economy, will be taught as carefully as the alphabet, . . . the employment of the hand as well as that of the mind."⁶⁵

Campbell's strong opinion that females should receive as good (or better) an education as males was based upon this familial concern:

Mothers are of necessity and of right the first teachers. How important, then, that they themselves have been well educated. On them physically, intellectually, morally, chiefly depends the destinies of the whole race. On this account females deserve, demand, and are worthy to receive as good an education as the males. . . . As we would ameliorate and improve society, let the females of our country have an equal chance of education.⁶⁶

Campbell's "Address on the Amelioration of the Social State" was a classic exposition of the concept of Republican Motherhood: women participate best in a republic by encouraging civic virtue in their sons and husbands.⁶⁷ The "four cardinal points . . . from which she radiates her powers over the world" were "those of daughter, sister, wife and mother," declared Campbell in lofty tones:

⁶⁵ Ibid., 1839: 278.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 1835: 225.

⁶⁷ Campbell, Popular Lectures, 47-72; For an overview of the sources of the concept of the "Republican Mother" in the Enlightenment see Linda Kerber, "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment--An American Perspective," American Quarterly 28 (Summer 1976): 187-205.

Woman was not created to found cities and empires. . . . She was made for other ends, to move in other circles, and to exert an influence more pure, more powerful, more lasting. She was made to have an empire in the heart of man, and to wield a mild and gracious sceptre over the moral destinies of our race.⁶⁸

He concluded with an appeal for "universal female education" which was "indispensable to the full and proper amelioration of the social state."⁶⁹ Campbell's plan for the education of females, however, was limited to the primary schools. He accepted some females into his Buffalo Seminary, but excluded them from Bethany College. Campbell's sisters, as was noted earlier, were respected teachers, and his own daughters were well-educated as well.

As a supplement to, or in case of neglect of, family education Campbell advocated the establishment of "Infant Schools" in which "the young, the pure, and the undefiled" could be taught the "simple rudiments of knowledge" as well as "moral excellence."⁷⁰ Modelled after the popular theories of the European educator von Fellenberg, these schools would be for children ages two through six and would teach them how to experience nature through observation and how to cultivate "moral feelings." Education must begin early to overcome the "sinister influences" of improper intellectual and moral training.

⁶⁸ Campbell, Popular Lectures, 63, 65.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 72.

⁷⁰ Millennial Harbinger, 1836: 601-602.

According to Campbell, the existing methods and content of instruction in the elementary schools and colleges were deficient in four areas: the "art of thinking," physical exercise, utility, and, especially, proper moral training. Three of these correspond to his view of the development of the physical, intellectual, and moral constitution of humans and are also related to his convictions concerning the purpose of education for the amelioration of society.

Effective educational methods must "sedulously cultivate the science and art of thinking."⁷¹ In a criticism of the colleges of his day, Campbell argued: "We have had too much of this dictionary and index learning without the proper discipline and invigoration of the reasoning powers."⁷² He appealed to "the master spirit of the Protestant Reformation" that "man by nature is, and of right ought to be a thinking being . . . and ought to think for himself."⁷³ This purpose for education was clear:

We cannot make out of every man a Plato or a Socrates, . . . a Shakespeare or a Milton. We cannot make out of every printer a Benjamin Franklin, nor out of every land surveyor and farmer a Jefferson or a Washington. But could we teach every man to think--voluntarily, systematically, and perseveringly think--and to think on themes in their nature grand, stimulating, suggestive, and ennobling, we could elevate the species

⁷¹ Ibid., 1852: 364.

⁷² Ibid., 1837: 258.

⁷³ Ibid., 1836: 579.

greatly above any form of society the present living generation of men has seen, or otherwise ever will see.⁷⁴

Perhaps reflecting his own preference for the outdoors and physical labor, Campbell also advocated that physical exercise become an integral part of the curriculum. In his second address to the Western Literary Institute, he bemoaned the fact that "our common and primary school learning . . . is . . . as much at fault in the physical as in the moral departments of education."⁷⁵ Campbell was greatly interested in the field of medicine and phrenology and was fascinated with how the physical body functioned.⁷⁶ "Physical education" was just as important and necessary to his view of education as other "more scholarly" pursuits:

[One] must have physical exercise to properly prepare one for intellectual and moral character. . . . A sound and mature mind requires a sound and mature body. . . . Spare no pains in developing . . . by suitable training and agreeable exercise, all the physical powers as the basement story of the intellectual and moral man.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1852: 369.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 1845: 523.

⁷⁶ Phrenology asserted that the faculties of the human mind can be localized in the brain and that the protuberances ("bumps") of the human skull indicate the location of these faculties. Although he spoke disparaging about this early form of psychology, Campbell had at least two separate examinations by these "craniologists," with the results published in his memoirs. Campbell, "Phrenology, Animal Magnetism, Clairvoyance, Spiritual Rappings, Etc.," Popular Lectures, 186-212; Richardson, Memoirs, 2:669-670.

⁷⁷ Millennial Harbinger, 1835: 226.

The influence of the Scottish Common Sense perspective on education may be seen in Campbell's insistence that learning must have practical application: "with me utility in education is the first and paramount interest."⁷⁸ If a person fulfills no useful purpose in society, he or she has not been properly educated, nor can one discover personal happiness and satisfaction: "the full enjoyment of ourselves consists in the proper employment of ourselves."⁷⁹

Educated mind is profitable and serviceable to its possessor in the field, in the workshop, behind the counter, in the legislative hall, on the bench, in the pulpit, or in any position that places him in frequent intercommunication with his brother man--whether he be a white man, a red man, or a black man.⁸⁰

As can be seen in Campbell's discussion of the moral dimension of education, a human being cannot be moral if he or she is of no use to society. This was also the contention of Johann Pestalozzi, the influential European educator, whose "manual labor" theories were popular in America in the antebellum era. Pestalozzi argued that education must include manual training, not only for vocational purposes, but also because it liberated the

⁷⁸ Ibid., 1837: 257.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1857: 422.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 1862: 341.

mind.⁸¹

The process of education, however, must continue throughout one's life. The elementary school and college offer only the tools for learning: "Man is never out of his pupilage, the best school does little more than present us with the necessary means of acquiring and communicating knowledge."⁸² Education "from the cradle to the grave" was a familiar theme in Campbell's baccalaureate addresses at Bethany College:

Many of our youth, of both sexes, feel that their education is finished when their school days are over. No idea can be so destructive to the progress of true improvement. Our education is never finished till we are in our graves.⁸³

This concern that education commences in infancy and continues throughout one's lifetime is consistent with Campbell's definition of education as "development and culture."

The most important theme in Campbell's "true theory" was the absolute necessity of moral education. The majority of his public addresses centered upon this topic. His first address to the Western Literary Institute and College of Teachers in 1836 was entitled "On the Importance

⁸¹Clarence J. Karier, The Individual, Society, and Education: A History of American Educational Ideas, 2d ed. (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 222.

⁸²Millennial Harbinger, 1837: 259.

⁸³Ibid., 1851: 84; see also 1852: 362; and Popular Lectures, 302.

of Uniting the Moral with the Intellectual Culture of the Mind."⁸⁴ The thesis of his "Address on Education," published in his Popular Lectures and Addresses, was often repeated: "Moral culture is the great end of all human education. This is the polar star of our whole theory."⁸⁵ He reprinted an article on education by Noah Webster in the Harbinger with this justification:

I quote the preceding article . . . because of the testimony which it gives to . . . the necessity of always associating moral with intellectual culture in every school. . . . For without this, our national superiority, our national privileges, our excellent institutions, our peace, prosperity, and happiness cannot possibly be enjoyed or perpetrated.⁸⁶

Campbell defined "moral culture or education" as "the proper development and direction of our moral constitution, both as respects our duties to God and to man."⁸⁷ The goal of moral education was not only to develop personal ethical behavior ("It enthrones reason and conscience within him, and subordinates his animalism to the direction and control of an enlightened conscience and a purified heart")⁸⁸ but also to encourage productive and useful members of human society:

⁸⁴Millennial Harbinger, 1836: 579-606.

⁸⁵Campbell, Popular Lectures, 243.

⁸⁶Millennial Harbinger, 1837: 204-205.

⁸⁷Campbell, Popular Lectures, 303.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 238.

You must not, then, imagine that you can do with yourselves as you please--you are under a paramount obligation that you will not alienate yourself nor your powers of doing good from the human race.⁸⁹

Campbell firmly asserted that "moral excellence is the only true demonstration of a well educated man" and that "an immoral man is uneducated."⁹⁰

You will perceive . . . that we make religion and morality essential parts of a rational education . . . and that we cannot for a moment suppose that any profane, viscious [*sic*], or immoral person is well educated . . . for the moral nature of man is his glory and his bliss. Hence its cultivation and full development will ever be the most prominent and useful part of every rational system of education.⁹¹

True "development and culture" must naturally include the moral capacities as well as the physical and intellectual ones. In fact, it is more necessary to emphasize moral education because the moral powers are more imperfect by nature ("more unfit for discrimination and guidance than physical and intellectual powers"), and moral nature is superior to intellectual and animal nature: "It is for society . . . that man possesses a moral nature. . . . Without benevolence, a sense of justice, the love of approbation . . . man would be unfit for society."⁹² A human is a moral being and thus personal and societal

⁸⁹Millennial Harbinger, 1845: 326.

⁹⁰Ibid., 328.

⁹¹Ibid., 1838: 530-531.

⁹²Ibid., 1836: 587-588.

happiness depends on adherence to God's moral code.

Campbell woefully considered that the elementary schools, academies, and colleges of his day had abandoned this dimension of education--"moral culture is an essential part of national and popular education almost wholly neglected."⁹³ He traced this neglect to the false assumptions that "in cultivating the intellect we are cultivating the moral sentiments and feelings--that in enlightening the head we are improving the heart" and that "religion and morality are matters of private and individual concern and that it belongs to parents and ministers of religion, rather than to . . . schools."⁹⁴ Moral education was crucial to proper development of a human being and, since moral education had public consequences, was a fit subject for the schools. A benefit of living in a free, republican society was the opportunity to unite moral training and public education, thus producing a virtuous citizenry. The climax of his 1836 address to the College of Teachers echoed this sentiment:

It is remarkable how much more men are wont to admire intellectual than moral worth. . . . It is a misfortune that parents not a few often speak in the presence of their children as if they would rather see them great than good, talented than moral, cunning than candid, selfish than generous, knavish than honorable.⁹⁵

⁹³ Ibid., 591.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 594, 596.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 593.

Campbell offered a variety of arguments to encourage the inclusion of moral education in all systems of learning. The first of these was theological in nature and would have especially appealed to those who appreciated Campbell's emphasis on the converting power of the Gospel and, in particular, its basis in the written word, the New Testament. Education was necessary to the reading and understanding of the Bible, therefore making it essential to the process of salvation.

Now if that language be not understood by any particular person, he cannot come to the knowledge of his God or of himself, so far as God has spoken to man. . . . Education is, therefore, essential to the salvation of any man in whose hand God, in his moral government or overruling providence, has placed a Bible. . . . And, therefore, a certain amount of education is absolutely necessary to give to every man the means of possessing and enjoying the life that now is, or that future and everlasting life to come.⁹⁶

This argument must be seen as Campbell's primary concern in his advocacy of education. He was first and foremost an evangelist and all efforts at promoting education may ultimately be connected with this theological motivation.

He did, however, construct his argument for moral education to appeal to the broader elements of society. In his addresses on behalf of the establishment of government-supported common schools, he used a pragmatic political-economic justification for the necessity of including moral education in the popular schools: it is

⁹⁶ Campbell, Popular Lectures, 233.

more expedient to prevent social problems through education than to provide for the punishment and rehabilitation of the offenders.

It is only . . . when the maxim that intelligence and virtue are the essential pillar of the state shall have deeply penetrated the public mind . . . that it will become entirely obvious that it is uncomparably more rationally and commendable to legislate for the training of children than for the punishment of viscidious [sic] men.⁹⁷

He also made a similar pragmatic appeal to the various social reform societies of the churches, stating that although it was commendable to provide relief for the hungry, poor, and sick, it was considerably more profitable to prevent such social problems "by removing that ignorance, vice, and immorality which nine times in ten are either the proximate or the remote causes of the misfortunes and calamities [sic] of our race."⁹⁸ In this aspect of social reform, Campbell reflected an anxiety common to the "respectable" classes over what seemed to be an "epidemic of lawlessness," originating in the lower classes and symptomatic of "individual, moral failure".⁹⁹

This concern for moral education was to be fulfilled only as the Bible is used as the primary textbook in all

⁹⁷Millennial Harbinger, 1836: 604.

⁹⁸Michael B. Katz, "The Origins of Public Education: A Reassessment," History of Education Quarterly 16 (Winter 1976): 392-393.

⁹⁹Millennial Harbinger, 1841: 272.

schools. This was Campbell's "capital position": "A school, an academy, a college, without the Bible in it, is like a universe without a centre and without a sun."¹⁰⁰ Moral development can only occur when the Bible is systematically taught in the schools:

The only text-book for such a system, and such a study, and such a perfect developement [sic] of man is that inestimable volume. . . . Hence we conclude that this volume should be a standing and a daily text-book in every primary school, academy and college in Christendom.¹⁰¹

A school or a college without the Bible . . . is not in accordance with the wants of society, with the genius of human nature, with the interest of the State, with the progress of civilization, with the advancement of the church, with the glory of God, or with the happiness of man.¹⁰²

Since education must consider the destiny of human beings, the Bible must be an integral part of the curriculum: "the Bible facts, narratives, precepts, promises, revelations, must be the standing text . . . before the Christian dispensation shall have attained its millennial glory in this world."¹⁰³

This "true theory" of education, based on a proper understanding of the nature of human beings ("the rank and dignity of man"), effected through development and culture

¹⁰⁰ Campbell, Popular Lectures, 234, 244.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 231.

¹⁰² Millennial Harbinger, 1850: 174

¹⁰³ Ibid., 1839: 279.

of the physical, intellectual, and moral faculties, and resulting in appropriate moral behavior toward God and fellow human beings, provided the motivation for Campbell's efforts at educational reform. His involvement in the common school movement and the establishment of his own schools reveal the practical application of this theory.

CHAPTER THREE

"A PERFECT SYSTEM OF SCHOOLS"

A perfect system of schools and education, both in theory and practice, is still a desideratum. . . . Man is not yet fully developed, because he is not perfectly educated; and he is not perfectly educated because there exists no institution in which such an education can be obtained.¹

On July 4, 1846, Alexander Campbell stood before the sixteen members of the graduating class of Bethany College and a larger host of faculty, families, and friends, and delivered, as usual, the baccalaureate address. After dispensing with the formalities, he stated the thesis of his address: "the great point to which I would call your attention . . . is, to show some reasons . . . why you ought to become advocates of universal common school education."² That this central point was chosen certainly did not surprise these graduates, because Campbell had been engaged in the advocacy of common schools for more than two decades, and many of these listeners had probably heard the address before. His participation in the network of

¹Alexander Campbell, ed., The Millennial Harbinger, 34 vols. (Bethany, Va.: A. Campbell, 1830-1864), 1839: 233.

²Millennial Harbinger, 1846: 405.

antebellum educators and his concern for the incorporation of a "true theory" of education in all institutions of learning led Campbell into the movement to establish government-supported common schools.

Campbell emerged as an influential public school reformer in the West and South, specifically playing an important role in the establishment of common schools in western Virginia (and indirectly in the common school system adopted in West Virginia after becoming a state), and also favorably shaping public attitudes toward common schools. He was well aware of the problems facing common schools in the West and South and the kinds of opposition they faced. His crusade took him to state legislatures, conventions of professional educators, debating halls, lyceums, literary societies, churches, and several varieties of educational institutions. He was not only concerned with the implementation of the common school system, but also with the moral purpose of public education and the use of the Bible in the common schools. Campbell concluded his 1846 baccalaureate address by declaring that

. . . universal common school education is the only solid basis of a nation's wealth, the only invincible palladium of its safety, and the only enduring charter of its independence, prosperity, and happiness.³

The background of the common school movement of the 1830s and 1840s must be traced to the development of

³Millennial Harbinger, 1839: 411.

educational institutions in America in the colonial and early national periods. There was a relatively high literacy rate in colonial America and the availability of schools was increasing by the time of the Revolution. Kenneth Lockridge argued that New Englanders achieved nearly universal male literacy by the end of the colonial period.⁴ However, education depended upon parental initiative and local control. Schooling was neither compulsory, nor tax-supported, and the government played little role in its supervision. It was therefore not available to all children of the communities. Teaching methods often consisted of rote memorization and were woefully inadequate.

Education commanded a more prominent place in the early national period. The dominant republican ideology enhanced education's role in producing an enlightened, virtuous citizenry. Education was perceived as a key element in government's task of protecting freedom and preserving order. In spite of this recognition of the necessity of popular public education, however, efforts to establish state control of education were resisted in favor of traditional means of education, local control, individual choice, and, especially, no taxes. There were

⁴Kenneth A. Lockridge, Literacy in Colonial New England: An Enquiry into the Social Context of Literacy in the Early Modern West (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1974), 4.

modest efforts at legislation in Massachusetts (1789), New York (1795), and Connecticut (1795), but the funds allocated for education were insufficient. By 1830, "America had schools, but . . . America did not have school systems."⁵

The essential question, therefore, was not whether or not to promote education, but to what extent the government should be involved: who will control the education process? Michael Katz has identified four distinct alternatives available to American communities for the education of their children.⁶ The story of the common school movement is "a complex . . . tale of competition among alternatives, each passionately believed to be singularly appropriate to America's polity and social structure."⁷

"Paternalistic Voluntarism" offered free public education only for the extremely poor. This continuation of the old pauper school approach depended upon voluntary efforts of "concerned" citizens who formed themselves into associations such as the New York Public School Society. "Corporate Voluntarism" was the establishment of single

⁵Carl Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 62.

⁶Michael B. Katz, Reconstructing American Education (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 25-53.

⁷Ibid., 24.

institutions as individual corporations, supervised by boards of trustees, and usually funded through endowments. According to Katz, this option was the "social-welfare counterpart to the business corporation."⁸ "Democratic Localism" and "Incipient Bureaucracy" form the two major alternatives for common schooling by 1830.

The localists "stressed variety, local adaptability, and the symbiotic relation to school and community."⁹ They were, for the most part, rural, democratic in political orientation, against the professionalization of teaching, and opposed to centralization of school systems. They preferred that vital interests such as education remained within the smallest possible organizational unit and closely tied to the family unit and the local community. This alternative would also appeal to minority groups, such as Catholics, who coveted public money to support their own schools.

The alternative that was eventually victorious in this battle over common school systems was "Incipient Bureaucracy." The "bureaucrats" stressed centralization and standardization, and focused upon the structure of education--administration, supervision, and professionalism--as much as the content. They argued that

⁸ Ibid., 38.

⁹ Ibid., 34.

a union of school districts was more efficient and was especially adaptable to the urban setting. Although the bureaucratic model appeared to have triumphed by the Civil War, many school systems held characteristics of more than one model.¹⁰

Support for common schools varied widely from region to region.¹¹ The northeastern states, for example, had a considerable number of public elementary schools along with private academies and were achieving moderate success in the establishment of common school systems. Many of those who migrated west from the New England states took this concern for education with them. There was more support for common schools in the West than in the South, but both regions suffered from demographic and economic problems which limited the movement. Sparsely settled areas, frontier conditions in which most families were concerned with survival, and limited state revenues were the most

¹⁰ Ibid., 53.

¹¹ Kaestle argues against the traditional interpretation of that common schools began in the New England states as a result of the English democratic tradition and the Puritan concern for learning, spread to the Midwest through migration from New England, and were rejected in the South by planter aristocracy-influenced communities. This interpretation, according to Kaestle, "paints an overly homogeneous picture" by ignoring the intense battle in the Northeast over common schools, suggesting a monolithically hostile South, and assuming that New England migrants were the only educational reformers in the Midwest. Pillars of the Republic, 183, 192.

persistent problems.

The South resisted the common school movement more than the West largely because of its more rigid class structure (few wealthy planters would agree to be taxed to educate their poorer neighbors), economy (educating white labor--an important appeal in the Northeast--was not a concern for the planters), and long tradition of private schools.¹² Most elementary schools in the West and South were either private academies or charity (pauper) schools. Yet there was agreement on the part of most Americans that more and better schools were needed. In these regions, the fundamental questions concerning education, however, were again: to what extent should national and state governments be involved, to what extent should public funds be used, and what knowledge should be disseminated.¹³

Into this arena stepped the educational reformers who were convinced that the only solution to the woeful condition of education in the new Republic was state supported and supervised common schools. Leaders such as Horace Mann and Henry Barnard in Massachusetts, William Seward in New York, Calvin Stowe and William McGuffey in

¹²Clarence J. Karier, The Individual, Society, and Education: A History of American Educational Ideas, 2nd ed. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1967; 1986), 40, 45; Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic, 203.

¹³Lawrence Cremin, American Education: The National Experience, 1783-1876 (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), xii.

Ohio, and John Pierce in Michigan, vaulted to the front of the movement, building on the earlier efforts of Webster, Emerson, Beecher, and Channing. Their threefold message was that education was primarily the responsibility of the state rather than the family; the state had the right to tax property for school support; and that nonsectarian, publicly-supported systems should be open to all youths regardless of creed or finances.¹⁴ These reformers prevailed in the Northeast and Midwest, but there were also many advocates in the South, though they could not muster the necessary political and economic support for their programs.

Most of these reformers shared ideological assumptions which centered around republicanism, Protestantism, and capitalism--recognizing the "sacredness and fragility of the republican polity," the importance of individual character and personal industry, civic responsibility, sanctity of property, equality of economic opportunity, the superiority of American Protestant culture, and the eminence of America's destiny.¹⁵ Most of them sought political expression of their views in the Whig party, although more "progressive" Democrats might also be found

¹⁴Alexander Rippe, Education in a Free Society: An American History, 6th ed. (New York: Longman, Inc., 1967; 1988), 116.

¹⁵Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic, 76.

among their ranks (as well as some Whigs among their bitterest opponents). They were, in Carl Kaestle's term, "cosmopolitans."¹⁶

It would be unfair, however, to paint a monolithic picture of the common school supporters. One must recognize a diversity of personalities, objectives, and motivations in their quest to establish common schools. Some were fearful of the effect of universal suffrage and sought to educate the citizenry of America to insure the success of the democratic political process (the Jeffersonian ideal that popular intelligence and virtue is the basis of a republican government's success). Others saw education simply as a "protective insurance policy" to safeguard their property. A number of reformers sought to maintain or extend their dominance of cultural values. The entrepreneur might hope to create more effective workers and a greater number of consumers; the laborer a means of social mobility; the nativist a way to Americanize the immigrant. There were some who were egalitarian social reformers seeking more equal opportunity and sharing of wealth and power. Humanitarian crusaders worked to save society from poverty and vice.¹⁷ Nearly all would have

¹⁶ Ibid., 77. For the importance of education and school systems to Whig ideology see Daniel W. Howe, The Political Culture of the American Whigs (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 36, 75, 183, 200.

¹⁷ Karier, Educational Ideas, 45.

agreed with Alexander Campbell's statement that "a judicious and favorable system of education is the first and superlative duty of the State," but their reasons for agreement would have been quite diverse.¹⁸

Opposition to the common school movement also took several forms. Typical attitudes were: "Why should the wealthy pay to educate the poor?"; "Education is a family matter, not a public concern"; "If you give away an education, it will make the children lazy and unappreciative." Local control advocates resented interference by the state in what they considered their prerogative and resisted any more taxation. Religious groups, such as Roman Catholics, Congregationalists, and Lutherans, were offended by the "pan-Protestant" approach to morality espoused by the school reformers. These and other religious denominations sought to protect their own sectarian schools from competition with common schools.¹⁹

Alexander Campbell shared many of the assumptions and goals of the common school advocates. He was well aware of the particular problems facing the common school movement in the South and West and fought against the opponents of

¹⁸Campbell, Popular Lectures and Addresses (Philadelphia: James Challen and Son, 1863), 249.

¹⁹Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic, x, 203; Carl Bode, The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 112-113; Rippa, Free Society, 98-99.

common schools in his own county, state, and region, as well as nationwide. Campbell was recognized as a leader in the common school movement and therefore provides an important dimension to the study of the establishment of public schools in this era. In addition to the widespread circulation of the Millennial Harbinger (in which he often included appeals for the common school movement), Campbell's role as an advocate of common schools may be seen in four important categories of activity: the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829-1830, the Western Literary Institute and College of Teachers, the Clarksburg Education Convention (Virginia, 1841), and as a popular lecturer and lyceum speaker. Examination of Campbell's involvement in these arenas offers insight into his perception of the goals and methods of the common school. It was, in essence, his attempt to put his "true theory of education" into practice in a public institution.

The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829-1830 emerged out of the long-standing sectional conflict in Virginia, with the most recent manifestation centering on the problems between residents in the eastern Tidewater and Piedmont areas of the state and those in the western "transmontane" region. The convention was called to resolve questions concerning representation, suffrage, and abuses in state and local government (conduct of legislators, financial waste, "shortcomings" in the county

courts and sheriffs' offices). The lines between east and west were clearly drawn: the delegates from western Virginia were "protective tariff men" (the northwest district was the only one in Virginia to vote for the tariff of 1824), supported internal improvements, and approved of nationalism whereas those in the east bitterly opposed these innovations. Charles Ambler observed:

It was a contest between an older society with its peculiar institutions and a newer society fundamentally different from the older and inadequately represented in the law-making bodies. It was a contest between the owners of large estates and the owners of small farms; between a population largely English and one composed of various nationalities; and between a people whose economic interests and relations were with the South and a people whose interests and relations were mainly with the North.²⁰

Robert Sutton has also emphasized the sectional character of the debate: "By the early nineteenth century constitutional questions were tied to, and indistinguishable from, a sectional contest for political power."²¹

The Convention attracted the eminent statesmen on both state and national levels. Its delegates included two past and one future president (Madison, Monroe, and Tyler),

²⁰Charles H. Ambler, Sectionalism in Virginia from 1776 to 1861 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1910; reprint ed., New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1964), 5-6.

²¹Robert P. Sutton, Revolution to Secession: Constitution Making in the Old Dominion (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), 59.

Chief Justice John Marshall, a senator, twelve current Representatives in Congress (including John Randolph, Philip Barbour, and Philip Doddridge), and Judges Dade, Green, and Upshur. When the Convention commenced in Richmond in October 5, 1829, three "clearly defined classes of political thinkers" gathered to debate the compelling issues: "old school conservatives" (strict constructionists staunchly defending the status quo); "new school conservatives" (moderates, willing to make some compromises with modernization); and the "reformers" (predominantly westerners seeking wholesale changes in the constitution).²²

Alexander Campbell stood alongside Philip Doddridge--the best known of the "reformers"--as a delegate from Brooke County of the northwestern panhandle (the "sore thumb" of the state).²³ Although Campbell normally stood aloof from the electoral process (what he called "partyism"), he modestly campaigned for election to what he considered a noble cause: serving as a delegate to a constitutional convention was "above" the dirt and grime of petty politics.²⁴ Campbell claimed to be "whiggish" in his

²² Ambler, Sectionalism in Virginia, 149.

²³ Sutton, Revolution to Secession, 85.

²⁴ For Campbell's political views see Harold Lunger, The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1954).

political orientation, but diminished its importance:

I was elected by all parties in the congressional district a member of the Virginia Convention in 1830 . . . and while nominally a Whig, or protective tarriff [sic] man, never . . . meddled with politics state or national. . . .

. . . as I have no faith in . . . any party, I stand aloof from them all. . . . I go for the Bible, human rights, liberty of thought speech or action, and for no [political party].²⁵

Campbell was definitely for internal improvements and national programs (he served as a local postmaster for several years and benefited greatly from the franking privilege), and his interest in the protection of the wool industry probably was due to the fact that he owned the finest flock of Merino sheep west of the Alleghenies.

Campbell served on the Judicial Committee at the Convention and made at least three major speeches. In his "King Numbers" speech on the basis of representation, Campbell used the lack of support for common schools on the part of most Virginia legislators as an indicator of their preoccupation with matters of self-interest: "I fear these monosyllables mine and thine, are about to frustrate all attempts at a thorough amelioration of our condition."²⁶

²⁵Alexander Campbell to James E. Wharton, April, 1857. Microfilm Reel 161, "Lecture Notes, sermon outlines; and index of notes, 1809-1862." Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society. See Millennial Harbinger, 1857: 309-314, 502-508, for the tour during which Campbell wrote this letter.

²⁶Proceedings and Debates of the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829-1830 (Richmond: n.p., 1830), 389.

He then asked the Convention to consider a "splendid scheme":

We have been told that it is quite practical now to give birth to a system of education which in twenty years from this day would render it impossible for a child to be born in this commonwealth and to live to manhood, without receiving a good education, and that too, Sir, without the laying any tax after that day for the support of such a system. I have understood . . . that in some parts of Massachusetts . . . any child, without the contribution of a single cent, may receive not only a good English, but a classical education. Such is the extent to which the common school system has been carried in that enlightened community.²⁷

In a later speech, Campbell made a formal resolution to the Convention:

Whereas republican institutions and the blessings of free government, originated in, and must always depend upon, the intelligence, virtue, and patriotism of the community; and whereas neither intelligence nor virtue can be maintained or promoted in any community without education, it shall always be the duty of the Legislature of this Commonwealth to patronize and encourage such a system of education, or such common schools and seminaries of learning, as will, in their wisdom, be deemed to be most conducive to secure to the youth of this Commonwealth such an education as may most promote the public good.²⁸

This resolution was refused by the Convention which did not consider it germane. In a subsequent debate over the frequency of the meeting of the General Assembly, Campbell suggested that the legislative body convene less often, and that the money saved would fund public education. This proposal--like all of Campbell's--was rejected.

²⁷ Ibid., 390.

²⁸ Ibid., 750.

One eastern delegate accused the reformers of disguising their real agenda: "that the West are to be educated at the expense of the East."²⁹

The primary issue of the Virginia Constitutional Convention, and its interest to scholars, was the slavery question and the related themes of suffrage and sectionalism. It is important to note, however, that for advocates of the common schools, the Convention marked the first in a long series of appeals to Virginia legislators for the establishment of a state-supported and directed school system. Though his proposals failed, Campbell emerged from the Convention as a popular leader of the common school movement in Virginia.

Campbell attended the second annual meeting of the Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers in Cincinnati in 1836. The "College" was an association of educators who, concerned about the condition of education in the West, founded the institute as a forum for discussing current trends and issues in education and for encouraging teacher training and establishment of public schools. It was organized in Cincinnati in 1835 and a year later had auxiliaries in Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana (all with regular officers and meetings). By 1840, there

²⁹ Sutton, Revolution to Secession, 76.

were members and auxiliaries of the Institute in eighteen states and two territories.³⁰

The activities of the Western Literary Institute included an annual meeting in Cincinnati with addresses by prominent American and European educators, a yearly publication of its transactions (which contained the convention's addresses), and irregular publication of a journal comprised of original and reprinted articles on educational matters. On the auxiliary level, it encouraged the organization of lyceums and county associations of common school advocates. On both national and local levels there were efforts to educate legislators through copies of addresses, reports, pamphlets, and personal letters.³¹

Campbell pointed to the Western Literary Institute as "a new era in the literary annals of the West."³² He first addressed the Institute in 1836 "On the Importance of Uniting the Moral with the Intellectual Culture of the Mind," which prompted his subsequent debate with Roman Catholic Bishop John B. Purcell, also a member of the Institute. In his October 1845 address Campbell praised the College of Teachers for its efforts in promoting a type

³⁰Allen O. Hansen, Early Educational Leadership in the Ohio Valley (Bloomington, Ill.: Public School Publishing Co., 1923; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, 1969), 101.

³¹Ibid., 108, 110.

³²Millennial Harbinger, 1836: 579.

of education "in harmony with the clearly ascertained laws of the human constitution and of the surrounding universe." He asserted that "we have greatly advanced beyond our predecessors" and pointed to new and improved schoolbooks, new methods of instruction, teachers "more in harmony with the true philosophy of imparting instruction," and state patronage of collegiate and common education. He declared

I am still more than ever before, devoted to this great and good work, and have really become a professional teacher in a school got up more in unison with the spirit of the age and with the present attainments of society, than that over which I presided some quarter of a century ago.³³

Campbell served as chairman of the Western Literary Institute's Committee on Educational Departments in State Governments in 1836 and his report was published in the 1837 Transactions and sent to several western governors. In this "Report on the Importance and Practicability of Creating Departments in our State Governments Having the Subject of Public Instruction Under Their Immediate Supervision," he discussed the value of education to the state and the importance of state patronage of education.³⁴ In the first section he argued that intellect and morality were the true wealth of the state, that "the chief dignity of a state is the intelligence, virtue and happiness of all

³³ Ibid., 1845: 520-521.

³⁴ D.L. Talbott, ed., Transactions of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Western Literary Institute and College of ProgeSSIONAL Teachers (Cincinnati: n.p., 1837), 601.

its citizens," and that the "only firm basis of a Republican form of government, is the intelligence and virtue of the whole population."³⁵ He appealed to the example of Prussia, a government which had "most liberally patronized education, by making it a primary national concern," and pointed to other examples of the "importance of national patronage to education."³⁶

Campbell then turned to practical considerations: the division of a state into school districts, building of suitable schools, appointment of a board of directors in each district, and erection of Normal schools for the training of teachers. These would require the oversight of a state superintendent, for which Campbell recommended the creation of a state department of education. He pointed to money already available in many states through literary funds, and the allocation of land on which to build schools in the western states from the land act of 1795. He suggested that "authentic" annual reports be made to the legislatures so that "enlightened" laws concerning education may be enacted and required that

. . . the head of such a department, the general superintendent of education in a State, ought not to be a political man--an aspirant after political place or reward--not even an ardent partizan; but he ought to be

³⁵ Ibid., 601-602.

³⁶ Ibid., 602-603.

an unsophisticated philanthropist; . . . a person of enlarged views on the whole subject of education.³⁷

This outline for the creation of state departments of education did not, of course, originate with Campbell. This was the standard course of action advocated by many common school reformers. Its significance for the common school movement lay in the wide political and social influence of the Western Literary Institute and College of Teachers.

Campbell's third area of involvement was in conjunction with the Clarksburg Education Convention which invited Campbell to address its Convention in September 1841. "From our knowledge of your character," noted the committee's invitation, "we cannot regard you a disinterested spectator of the movements that are now being made in North-western Virginia; therefore, 'come over and help us.'"³⁸ Because of the death of his daughter, Maria, Campbell was unable to attend the convention, but the address was delivered, published in the State of Virginia's House Journal, and subsequently reprinted numerous times.³⁹

³⁷ Ibid., 607.

³⁸ Millennial Harbinger, 1841: 433.

³⁹ Robert Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: J. Lippincott, 1868, 1870), 2:181. The correspondence in the Harbinger indicates that he had other commitments and may not have attended anyway. Charles Dabney assumed from the House Journal that Campbell himself was present. Universal Education in the South, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), 1:83.

This address probably reveals Campbell's most creative thinking on the establishment of common schools.

Since Campbell's plea for state controlled schools at the Virginia Constitutional Convention, several efforts to further the cause had been put forth. For example, the Virginia legislature had passed a complicated voluntary common school system which a few counties adopted. Dr. Henry Ruffner, President of Washington College, had written a series of articles highly critical of Virginia's school systems and the apathy of the legislature and people. In 1838 Virginia Governor David Campbell stirred interest in common schools by calling for a series of educational conventions to be held throughout the state. The "first and most important" of these was the Clarksburg Convention on September 8-9, 1841.⁴⁰

In his address Campbell focused attention on the "difficulties peculiarly our own."⁴¹ The first of these problems--perceived as obstacles to the establishment of common schools--emphasized the geographical considerations in Virginia: large territories, mountains, sparse population, bad roads, irregular districts and boundaries. Campbell bemoaned the "misshapen things called counties." To establish "some sort of districts, either according to

⁴⁰ Ambler, Sectionalism in Virginia, 275-276; Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic, 199.

⁴¹ Millennial Harbinger, 1841: 448.

territory or population," was "an indispensable preliminary."⁴² In this context he advocated the division of western Virginia from the remainder of the state--so common schools could be "got up in Western Virginia without . . . additional expense to the richer classes." He admitted that those who desire a school system established "can't wait for East and West to agree on one system":

Our brethren of the East have difficulties . . . that lie not in our way. They have two sorts of population of great political disparity. . . . That misfortune tends to aristocracy. Now common schools and aristocracy are not quite so homogeneous. . . . We of the West are generally too poor--that is, too democratical for such notions.⁴³

The second of the "difficulties" originated with this aristocracy, which was "more disposed to patronize colleges . . . than to extend education throughout the length and breadth of the land."⁴⁴ Although offended by the "exclusiveness" of the aristocrats, Campbell very perceptively cautioned against setting common schools against colleges (common schools for the poor and colleges for the rich):

We blame not . . . Mr. Jefferson for erecting and liberally endowing one great Eastern University. . . . We only blame them for not granting similar favors to the West, and good common schools to the whole country.⁴⁵

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 452.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 448.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 450.

He considered the cause of public education to be above class interests:

In the sacred and benevolent cause of education we are not allowed to have castes or parties--we are neither aristocrats nor democrats--we do not stand up for the rich or for the poor; but for the people, the whole people, and nothing but the people. . . . I am for rendering to all their dues. I would not rob the poor for the rich, nor filch from the rich to benefit the poor. We must have common schools, normal schools, and colleges. The whole wants of society must be met.⁴⁶

We . . . would be glad to send our children to the same good common school, and would have not patrician scrupulosity [sic] of conscience in permitting them to read the same Primer of Greek Testament with those of mere plebeian honors . . . placed under the same teacher. . . . The propinquity of less patrician inheritances is our happier lot.⁴⁷

The third obstacle to the establishment of common schools in Virginia, argued Campbell, was legislative apathy. He made reference to the Constitutional Convention's refusal of his resolution on education and decried the "apathy of the legislature supported by the fatal apathy of the people."⁴⁸ His opinion of "our political halls and chambers of legislation" was less than flattering. He called it "Roman Barbarism," "polite blackguardism," "half-civilized," and "more pagan than Christian."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ibid., 448.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 453.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 451.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 437.

We look in vain to those standing upon the upper rounds of the ladder of human ambition for help to remove it, or to change its position and modification. We must begin at the bottom--we must stand upon the soil and raise up a new species of men, and attach to the high places of the State a ladder of a new and more rational and moral construction.⁵⁰

He quoted statistics concerning the illiteracy rate in prisons and questioned whether

. . . the state government has a right to punish the crimes which grow from the ignorance . . . [yet] withholding from them that education which is essential to their clear discrimination of right and wrong.⁵¹

He expressed his key argument: "we are annually paying . . . more for the present stock on hand of ignorance and vice, than would educate every child born on our territory . . . in a good common school."⁵² Referring to 2100 illiterate persons in Shenandoah County, Campbell observed:

. . . yet they must vote; and their illiterate vote must, in our government, outweigh the vote of two thousand and ninety-nine Solomons, could they be found. . . . The right of suffrage in the hands of such voters, uneducated in morals and literature, is like a razor in an infant's hand. . . .⁵³

Campbell questioned the intentions of the current political leadership: how could these legislators remain apathetic about so crucial an issue? How could they refuse to support public education when the fate of the entire

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 438.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 455.

political system was at stake? Did they have the best interests of their constituency in mind? He assumed that any sensible legislator would understand

. . . the golden theory that the great end of all human government is to teach men to govern themselves; and that therefore it is the duty of the government to provide a system of national education; and to place it under a very strict and rigid supervision.⁵⁴

After discussing the character of his ideal system of education--which must emphasize the art of thinking and moral education--Campbell asked, "How is this system to be introduced?" He called on public lecturers to visit each county and instruct the people on common schools, and the "periodical press" to "enlighten the people." Petitions addressed to the legislature "praying for a fair distribution of the . . . Literary Fund to all Western Virginia" were to be circulated throughout the communities. Finally, Campbell advocated an ad valorem property tax "to which also voluntary subscriptions from the more wealthy and benevolent may be added," and a division of counties into school districts with committees and treasurers elected in each.⁵⁵ This was a similar program to that advocated by Horace Mann in Massachusetts and Henry Barnhard in Connecticut.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid., 447.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 454.

⁵⁶ Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic, 148-151.

The series of educational conventions had some effect on the development of public school systems in Virginia. The legislature created a voluntary system of taxation for school purposes in 1846-1849 which ten counties and four cities approved. But no permanent, statewide legislation concerning the establishment of common schools was passed until after the Civil War. The Clarksburg Convention was seen as the impetus for the acceptance of common schools in the western portion of the state and had more significance for the development of the public school system in West Virginia after the war.

In his address "On Common Schools" published in Popular Lectures and Addresses Campbell wrote, "Lecturers should perigrate [sic] every town, village, and hamlet in the State, and awaken the whole community to the consideration of the matter."⁵⁷ He certainly took his own advice, for he was a popular and seemingly tireless speaker and lecturer. A list of where he delivered his Popular Addresses included three lyceums, three literary societies, two groups of college students, two female seminaries, and a "Popular Lecture Club" in five different states. Campbell especially used the lyceum circuit to further his views on the necessity and nature of common schools.

While the lyceum movement, founded in 1827 by Josiah

⁵⁷ Campbell, Popular Lectures, 248.

Holbrook, was primarily intended as adult education, it "also took part prominently in the . . . struggle on behalf of the tax-supported elementary school."⁵⁸ The lyceum aided public schools by fostering a favorable atmosphere for their acceptance in the local communities and legislative halls. Carl Bode has observed that lyceums made local surveys of school-age children, gave schoolteachers a preferred place in their meetings, called conventions of teachers on the county and state level, operated institutes for teachers in places where there were no Normal schools, sponsored a national educational convention, put local communities in touch with national educational leaders and reformers, and lobbied with Congress and state legislatures for the common school cause.⁵⁹

Although throughout the existence of the lyceum there was an official ban on religious matters, many ministers took part as lecturers and local leaders. Indeed, many lyceums met in church buildings and moral training was often the topic of the lecture. Campbell used the lyceum format to disseminate his views on education in general and common schools in particular.

Campbell used other venues to promote the cause of

⁵⁸ Bode, American Lyceum, 110.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 113-115.

common schools. After the founding of Bethany College he encouraged students to become active either as teachers or common school advocates. His baccalaureate speeches often dealt with this theme.⁶⁰ He recorded a trip to Hannibal, Missouri during which on Sunday he preached on the "Christian Religion," and on Monday addressed the Missouri legislature on the subject of education.⁶¹

Campbell's primary concern for the common school was the centrality of moral education and the use of the Bible as a textbook as the means of attaining it: "common schools, without the Bible and moral training, is [sic] a national calamity rather than a public benefaction."⁶² His addresses on common schools were usually preoccupied with how to use the Bible as a textbook in the common school. In response to the passage of a resolution dispensing with the reading of the Bible in the fourth ward of New York City's public schools, Campbell exclaimed: "God forbid that the day should ever come when the Bible and the common schools cannot fraternize."⁶³

He was convinced that the study of the Bible was absolutely necessary for moral training and that it could

⁶⁰Millennial Harbinger, 1846: 404-406; 1853: 424.

⁶¹Ibid., 1853: 66.

⁶²Ibid., 1841: 445.

⁶³Ibid., 1858: 525.

be used in the schools in a nonsectarian way. Other school reformers, such as Horace Mann, advocated the same principle (though for different reasons), but Campbell was enabled by his theological and ecclesiastical background to provide a more comprehensive argument to justify and implement the use of the Bible in the common schools. According to Campbell, the Bible can and must be read without sectarian bias because of a "common Christianity" shared by most American citizens, and the Bible can be studied as a book of "facts" rather than sectarian dogma.

Campbell asserted that the Bible was not a sectarian book and that it could be read without particular interpretations, creeds, and doctrines. His admiration of the Prussian system of common schools lay in its use of the Bible in a nonsectarian way.⁶⁴ He rejected the "erroneous opinion" that "religious instruction is necessarily sectarian" and declared that "how to teach the Bible, without teaching sectarianism, is a question which many cannot answer and which but few comprehend."⁶⁵

No school, worthy of Christian patronage, ever was or can be founded on a catechism, or on the speculative dogmata of any sectarian formula of opinions. We demand and the age we live in demands, facts and not theories, Divine oracles and not human dogmata.⁶⁶

⁶⁴Ibid., 1845: 95.

⁶⁵Ibid., 1850: 123, 125.

⁶⁶Campbell, Popular Lectures, 236.

Proscribe every creed and manual, every catechism and formula of sound doctrine, from all the theatres of education of every name and of every party, rather than the Bible.⁶⁷

How could a government which had so recently declared the wisdom and necessity of the separation of church and state reverse itself by requiring that the Bible (specifically, the Protestant Bible) be used as a textbook in all common school under its supervision? Could the numerous Protestant sects (let alone Roman Catholics and Jews), who jealously guarded their traditions and doctrines and fervently competed with one another for members and influence, permit the Bible to be taught without their proper commentaries? Would the Protestant clergy allow the school teachers to usurp their position as the religious and moral authorities in the community? How can the Bible itself, so subject to personal interpretation and the center of dogmatic controversy, possibly be stripped of external interpretations and debate and be read in a generic fashion? Campbell had a ready answer to all of these questions.

On the issue of religious establishment, Campbell acknowledged (and appreciated) the political necessity of the separation of church and state. He recognized, however, that the United States was dependent upon Christianity for its moral foundation:

⁶⁷ Ibid., 310.

This free government of ours . . . was started under a sentiment of profound reverence for the Bible, and the Fathers of the Republic made it the anchor of the schools which they established . . . and Mr. Webster justly laid it down as a general principle, that Christianity is part of the law of the land, and if Christianity, surely the Bible, which is the fountain head of Christianity.⁶⁸

He argued that there was a de facto recognition of the centrality of Christianity and authority of the Bible in the political and legal systems in the United States:

We have no form of Christianity, nor of theology, by law established in our country. But we have Christian institutions by law established and by law sustained. . . for example, the Christian institution of matrimony.⁶⁹

Other examples of this particular expression of religious establishment offered by Campbell were the suspension of the legal courts on Sunday (the Sabbath rest) and the use of the Bible in the administration of civil oaths.⁷⁰ In addition to these, the prevalence of monotheism and a law code based on Judeo-Christian principles were, for Campbell, incontrovertible evidence that the state sanctioned the use of the Bible for moral purposes. The compulsory study of the Bible in the public schools was, therefore, not inconsistent with the political principle of religious disestablishment.

⁶⁸ Millennial Harbinger, 1858: 526.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 1853: 426.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 1835: 66-67.

In one word, let no squeamishness on the subject of a state religion, prevent the reading and teaching of the Bible: creeds and parties may be permitted to find their own quietus, but the Bible is the stronghold of the nation.⁷¹

In response to the question of cooperation among the various religious sects and the study of the Bible without sectarian interpretation, Campbell argued for the nonsectarian study of the Bible in the common schools on the basis of a "common Christianity" shared by all Christian denominations. At times he used the principle of catholicity to include all Christian bodies; on other occasions he appealed to a "pan-Protestantism" which, of course, excluded Roman Catholics. This was a common theme in his various addresses and essays:

. . . notwithstanding all our sectarian differences, we have . . . a common Christianity;--that there are certain great fundamental matters . . . in which all good men of all denominations are agreed; and that these great common principles and views form a common ground on which all Christian people can unite, harmonize, and cooperate in one great system of moral and Christian education.⁷²

This common Christianity reflected Campbell's theological convictions concerning the nature of the church. He argued for a catholic--universal--faith. The fundamental Christian doctrines and moral standards could never become the exclusive property of any sectarian group, Protestant or Catholic. Since all Christian denominations are agreed

⁷¹ Ibid., 67.

⁷² Ibid., 1841: 445.

on the existence and nature of God (as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), on the nature of Christ (human and divine) and the efficacy of his death and resurrection, and the necessity of faith and obedience, "why not, then teach, illustrate, and establish those truths in the minds, the consciences, and the hearts of our children?"⁷³

Since, then, these facts are admitted by every denomination of Christians, they may, with great propriety, in all their evidence and moral granduer, be taught in every school and college in Christendom; and that, too, without any censure or exception taken by any Christian denomination, Greek, Roman, or Protestant.⁷⁴

We demand no politico-ecclesiastical creed, rubric or platform, no red-book dictated and commanded or recommended by the civil sword or an intolerant priesthood. We want the Holy Bible of Protestant Christendom to be consecrated in the heads, the hearts, the consciences, and the lives of our sons and daughters.⁷⁵

Campbell was convinced that the Bible could be studied without the help of the clergy and ecclesiastical creeds. Commenting on Noah Webster's address to the trustees of Girard College, which had recently excluded the clergy from the faculty and the study of the Bible from the curriculum, Campbell asked: "does the exclusion of clergy mean exclusion of the Bible? I do not identify the Bible with

⁷³ Ibid., 1850: 171; see also Popular Lectures, 305.

⁷⁴ Campbell, Popular Lectures, 305.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 244.

the clergy."⁷⁶ Neither did Campbell see the Bible as a sectarian book:

But, it is alledged [*sic*], that if any one school makes the Bible the text-book of moral science or religion, it necessarily, that moment, becomes a sectarian school. What! is the Bible a sectarian book? What sect made it?

But, says an objector, the teacher is a sectary, and he will give it a sectarian interpretation! Why, then, not exclude the bible from the nursery, the Sunday-school, and the church, as well as from the college? Because, forsooth, every one gives it a sectarian interpretation! Nay, why have a Bible with notes, chapters, verses, marginal references, captial letters, commas, semicolons, colons, periods, interrogation or exclamation points, or paragraphs? Are not all these sectarian interpretations? The objection is as weak as it is absurd.⁷⁷

How should the teacher in the common school use the Bible in a nonsectarian fashion as a textbook? Campbell asserted that the Bible is a book of facts and can be studied "without one speculative oracle, on the part of teacher or pupil" by focusing on its literature, geography, chronology, history, biography, wisdom, eloquence, morality, and "grand epic."⁷⁸ He suggested that doctrinal controversy can and must be avoided.

. . . the Bible . . . may all be reduced to four categories--history, doctrines, precepts, promises. Of these, the most in controversy, is the second. It is the doctrine of the Bible, much more than its precepts, promises, or history, that is the bone of sectarian conflict. This, therefore, ought to be debarred from

⁷⁶ Millennial Harbinger, 1837: 204.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 1850: 170.

⁷⁸ Campbell, Popular Lectures, 235, 306; Millennial Harbinger, 1845: 27-28.

all public schools. Its history, its moral precepts, and its promises, are not partizan. Little controversy on these exists anywhere.⁷⁹

These "precepts" of the Bible are to be taught

. . . as other true sciences are taught--inductively. . . The inductive style of inquiring and reasoning, is to be as rigidly carried out in reading and teaching the Bible facts and documents, as in the analysis and synthesis of physical nature."⁸⁰

Campbell gave an example of this inductive style that should be used in the study of the Bible. If the first chapter of Genesis is the text, one begins by observation, classifying the facts of creation in order of development, then deduction: "What do you learn of God from this lesson?" The student is supposed to learn by making his or her own moral inferences. What if the answer deduced is contrary to the teacher's views or the student makes the wrong inference? Campbell suggests that the teacher should either assign further consideration and reading, refer to another student, and only after the whole class has discussed the matter should the teacher offer any opinion.

In this way the mind of the learner is properly disciplined; his attention is fixed, his powers are brought into action, and mental independence and enlargement must, in all cases, more or less, be the result.⁸¹

Campbell assured his critics that the Bible could be

⁷⁹ Millennial Harbinger, 1845: 524.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 1850: 171-172.

⁸¹ Ibid., 172.

carefully and effectively used as a textbook in the public schools without violating or advancing sectarian interests.

Although Campbell clearly advocated the "incipient bureaucracy" alternative for the establishment of common school systems, he did not abandon "democratic localism." He demonstrated political "democratic localism" at the Virginia Constitutional Convention in his speeches in favor of local control of the county courts. His plan to organize common schools in Virginia, outlined at the Clarksburg Convention, favored the bureaucratic state system, but suggested the localist alternative if the preferred plan was rejected: "whenever any county or number of counties in Virginia pleases, [common schools] can be adopted and made very efficient. . . . When we cannot accomplish all we want at once, we must do what we can."⁸² Campbell is a good example of the ambivalence toward centralization experienced by many in this period.

The main reason why Campbell accepted the bureaucratic alternative, however, was connected with his opinion of sectarianism. The state must establish, support, and direct the common schools to prevent their domination by any religious sect. Education must be nonsectarian, according to Campbell's theory, and the only guarantee of this principle was state intervention. This fact was

⁸²Campbell, Popular Lectures, 268.

enough to override Campbell's sectional tendencies toward "democratic localism." Campbell's status as a common school reformer rests upon his influence in the West on behalf of the acceptance of the bureaucratic alternative. Because of this influence, and the network of educational reformers of which Campbell was a part, the development of common schools in the West was very similar to that in the eastern states.

Alexander Campbell considered it "all-important . . . that we enter upon the stage on the right side of every question involving the moral destinies of the world."⁸³ This "perfect system of schools" was on the right side. Perceiving himself somewhat as a crusader for education, he concluded his essay on "What is Education, in its Full Import?" with these lines:

Fight on, ye conquering souls, fight on,
And when the conquest you have won,
The palms of victory you shall wear,
And in his kingdom have a share,
To endless day.⁸⁴

In the end, the republican concept of a virtuous citizenry was subjugated to Campbell's religious imperative: establishment of a widespread common school system was an important step in preparation for the millennial reign of Christ on earth.

⁸³ Ibid., 1846: 410.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 1862: 113.

CHAPTER FOUR

"THE BEST INTERESTS OF SOCIETY"

But so it was, that Bishop Purcell, of the Roman Catholic community, took exceptions against that allusion [to the literary influences of the Protestant Reformation], and made it the occasion of the most serious allegations against the Protestant religion, not merely in a literary point of view, but as deeply affecting the best interests of society in being the cause of infinite contention and infidelity.¹

On October 5, 1836, Alexander Campbell addressed the Western Literary Society and College of Teachers in Cincinnati, Ohio, on the subject of "Uniting the Moral with the Intellectual Culture of the Mind." In his opening remarks, he traced "the best literary, moral, and political institutions" of Anglo-American society to "the master spirit of the Protestant Reformation."² Campbell proclaimed that the "philosophic historian" must credit Luther for the creed that every man must think for himself and for "the general superiority of . . . our race."³ The

¹Alexander Campbell, ed., The Millennial Harbinger, 34 vols. (Bethany, Va.: A. Campbell, 1830-64), 1836: 606.

²Ibid, 579.

³Ibid.

College of Teachers' concern for education, Campbell asserted, was founded upon Protestant principles.

These remarks concerning the influence of Protestantism were directed toward the Right Reverend John B. Purcell, Roman Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Cincinnati. Purcell was a member of the College of Teachers and, along with one of his fellow priests, the Reverend Montgomery, had criticized an earlier address at the 1836 convention by Joshua L. Wilson, who had argued for the use of the Bible as a textbook in the common schools. Campbell had praised Wilson's remarks, and was somewhat surprised that there were Roman Catholics present at the convention who would be offended by them.

I had not the least expectation of meeting with any Roman Catholics in such a College; for amongst all their sins, that of being exceedingly zealous in diffusing information among all classes of society, and in supporting free institutions, is neither the most common nor the most mortal.⁴

Bishop Purcell took further offense at Campbell's remarks and, after some verbal sparring during the convention, a challenge from Campbell, and pressure from a group of Cincinnati citizens, agreed to a debate on the merits of the Roman Catholic religion, to be held in the Sycamore Street Meeting House in Cincinnati on January 13-21, 1837.

The debate itself dealt primarily with theological matters rather than the subject of schools and education.

⁴Ibid., 606.

Of the seven propositions debated, only the last addressed the place of Roman Catholicism in American society and, indirectly, its implications for public education. One finds in this incident, however, an important issue in the development of common schools in America in the antebellum era: the opposition to public schools on the part of most Roman Catholics and the anti-Catholicism of most common school advocates. Campbell was perceived by many witnesses of the debate to be the "Defender of Protestantism" against the supposed Roman Catholic plot to frustrate not only the public school systems but also American republicanism itself.

The study of this controversy over the public school systems is often limited to the eastern United States, where immigration into the urban areas during this period led to ever-increasing numbers of Roman Catholics.⁵ There were, however, important developments within Roman Catholicism on the western frontier during this era, and

⁵See Vincent P. Lannie: Public Money and Parochial Education: Bishop Hughes, Governor Seward, and the New York School Controversy (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1968); Vincent P. Lannie and Bernard C. Diethorn, "For the Honor and Glory of God: The Philadelphia Bible Riots of 1844," History of Education Quarterly 8 (Spring 1968): 45-104; and Mary Mason, Church-State Relationships in Education in Connecticut (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1953). A recent work that attempts to shift the focus to the West and South is Lloyd P. Jorgenson, The State and the Non-Public School, 1825-1925 (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1987).

the dispute over the public school was just as intense. Campbell's view of Roman Catholicism and his relationship with Bishop Purcell may provide important insight into the tension between Protestants and Catholics in the West, the particular character of their struggle over the common schools, and the issue of nativism as it was related to the public school advocates. One must first, however, examine the background of developments within Roman Catholicism and the nature of the nativist response.

John Tracy Ellis, in his study of American Catholicism, identified four major themes in the Catholic experience in America during the antebellum era: nationalism, the church as an Americanizing institution, nativist opposition, and the role of Roman Catholics in public affairs.⁶ These themes were directly associated with immigration of large numbers of Irish and German Catholics, which created not only shortages of clergy but also tension among the various national groups. Between 1820-1840 over 250,000 Irish Catholics emigrated to the United States, joined by at least another million in 1846-1851. There were approximately one and a half million German immigrants in 1820-1860, nearly one-third of whom

⁶John T. Ellis, American Catholicism, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 42.

were Catholics.⁷ To foster the assimilation of these immigrants into American society, the church instituted a four-fold program of private counseling of immigrants by the parish priests, instruction in Catholic schools, providing helpful information through an increasingly powerful Catholic press, and establishing institutions of charity such as shelters, orphanages, and hospitals.⁸ Efforts to combat nativist sentiment included debates between Catholic bishops and influential Protestant leaders and resolutions released to the public press in which Catholic leaders assured their fellow citizens that spiritual allegiance to the Pope did not offset civic loyalty to the United States government.⁹ These issues were just as important (and tension-filled) on the western frontier as they were in the eastern urban areas.

At the center of the Roman Catholic program to diffuse its internal problems and defend itself against nativist criticism was parochial education. Overt efforts to establish Catholic schools in America began in the 1790s with the founding of Georgetown Academy and St. Mary's Seminary in Maryland. Catholic schools had been forbidden

⁷Jay P. Dolan, The American Catholic Experience (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1985), 128, 130.

⁸Ellis, American Catholicism, 51-52.

⁹Ibid., 65-66.

during the colonial period and American Catholicism suffered from the "absence of a native educational tradition."¹⁰ The intensity of Catholic efforts in education in the first few decades of the nineteenth century quickly overcame the late start. In 1808 Mount St. Mary's College for boys in Emmitsburg, Maryland was founded and became a catalyst for the American Catholic leadership's educational endeavors. The school was closely aligned with the Sisters of Charity, an order of nuns which became the primary source of teachers for parochial schools. By the 1830s, most parishes in New York City had schools; and by 1840 there were over two hundred parochial schools, one-half of which were west of the Alleghenies.¹¹

Bishop Purcell was instrumental in the development of Catholic education in the West, leading in the establishment of colleges, academies, and parochial schools. When he arrived in Cincinnati, Purcell found very few schools. By 1850, four-fifths of the parishes had schools (at least thirty schools) with an enrollment of more than two thousand children.¹² He invited several orders of nuns to establish convents in Cincinnati: the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Ursulines, Sisters of

¹⁰ Ibid., 54.

¹¹ Dolan, Catholic Experience, 262; Ellis, American Catholicism, 52.

¹² Ellis, American Catholicism, 264.

Charity, Sisters of Mercy of Kinsale, Sisters of Francis of Cologne, Sisters of the Good Shepherd, and the Little Sisters of the Poor. There was certainly no shortage of teachers to staff the growing number of schools. Purcell also enlisted the aid of the Leopoldine Society of Austria, the Ludwig Society of Bavaria, and the Society of the Propagation of the Faith of France in building a new Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Cincinnati, as well as orphanages, asylums, and hospitals. He assisted the Jesuits in the founding of St. Francis Xavier College and encouraged the establishment of other colleges in the western region.

The success in the establishment of their own schools led most Catholics to oppose the "Protestant Common Schools." In addition to a perceived insensitivity on the part of public school teachers to language and cultural barriers experienced by Catholics, Roman Catholic leaders objected to the Protestant assumptions inherent in the common school system. Catholics feared proselytizing of their children and prejudice in offering them full educational opportunities.

Their fears were justified. Ruth M. Elson's analysis of common school textbooks in the antebellum period revealed a definite Protestant bias against Catholicism:

The school child in this period would associate Catholicism only with unpleasant behavior and subversive beliefs. He would imbibe not only the idea that its theology is false, but that it is inimical to industry, prosperity, knowledge, and freedom . . .

[and] has no place in the American past or future.¹³ The key issue in this opposition was the use of the Bible as a textbook in the common school, the primary means, Catholics asserted, that Protestants might convey their principles. Catholics in New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Maryland demanded that parochial schools receive a portion of the public funds designated for common schools.¹⁴

Typical Roman Catholic opposition to common schools may be found in Purcell's report to the College of Teachers in 1836. Purcell, ironically, had been appointed chairman of a committee to discuss the expediency of introducing selections from the Bible, instead of the Bible itself, into the public schools.¹⁵ In his report, Purcell cautiously skirted the issue by first affirming that it would be presumptive for anyone

¹³Ruth M. Elson, Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 53.

¹⁴Ibid., 263; Ellis, American Catholicism, 62; Carl Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 166-167.

¹⁵John W. Picket, ed., The Western Academician and Journal of Education and Science 1 (January 1837): 590. Purcell began his report by stating: "The chairman of that committee begs to observe that he was not aware of the nature of the task assigned him, when the subjects of the reports were distributed at the last annual meeting of the College, else he would have then respectfully asked leave to decline appearing on the committee."

. . . to divest himself of religious prejudice to cull from the sacred text only those passages which may be equally favorable to every denomination, without introducing any thing to recommend his own sectarian peculiarities."¹⁶

The bishop assured the College that the Catholics were not opposed to the Bible, but rather to the abuse of scripture by "unqualified teachers" in the public schools. His solution to this problem was submitted for the consideration of this gathering of educators:

. . . that Protestant Bibles be not placed in the hands of the Catholic youth in our schools; that our common-school teachers be strictly forbidden to give any sectarian bias to the minds of their pupils--and, to obviate all inconveniences, that one day, or two days in every week, be selected, and that the students of different creeds be assembled together, to be instructed in the Bible and in their religious and moral duties generally, by their own pastors.¹⁷

In the 1840s, Purcell sought compromises with the common school advocates, asking that schoolbooks be amended to remove hostility toward Roman Catholics, that the Catholic version of the Bible be made available in the schools in addition to the King James Version, and that some public funds be made available for parochial schools. Purcell failed in this attempted compromise and by the 1850s abandoned his efforts within the common school movement and turned to the development of his own schools. He occasionally, however, returned to the ring. The

¹⁶ Ibid., 591.

¹⁷ Ibid., 592.

Cincinnati Board of Education, responding to pressure from Purcell, voted in 1869 to exclude Bible reading, religious instruction, and hymn singing from the public schools. This decision sparked intense controversy, being first overruled by the Superior Court of Cincinnati, and finally upheld by the Supreme Court of Ohio in 1870.¹⁸

In 1826 there were three dioceses west of the Alleghenies--Bardstown (Kentucky), Cincinnati, and St. Louis, with fewer than 7500 parishioners. By 1850 this same region included eleven dioceses with at least 400,000 members.¹⁹ The rise in nativist sentiment in the western states paralleled the extraordinary success of the Roman Catholic Church. Many Protestant Americans feared that Roman Catholics would achieve their goal of religious establishment in the western states a goal most Catholics disavowed. They perceived the church's relation with its "foreign potentate," the Pope, bishops making frequent trips to Rome, and enlistment of foreign missionary societies to aid in the establishment of schools and benevolent institutions as clear evidence of a desire for foreign control of American interests.²⁰

¹⁸ Dolan, Catholic Experience, 264, 267, 269.

¹⁹ Robert F. Trisco, The Holy See and the Nascent Church in the Middle Western United States, 1826-1850 (Rome, Italy: Gregorian University Press, 1962), 16.

²⁰ Benjamin J. Blie, Austrian Aid to American Catholics, 1830-1860 (Milwaukee: By the Author, 1944), 73, 110.

The nativist movement was directly tied to immigration. A variety of motivations and degrees in intensity of anti-Catholicism existed among nativists which produced a spectrum of nativist sentiment. Moderates were usually suspicious and critical of the theological and political tenets of Catholicism, questioned Catholics' loyalty, and feared their influence in the political system, but were not supportive of measures to limit immigration or deprive Catholics of civil liberty. At the other end of the spectrum were extreme xenophobics who would by law remove any influence Catholics might seek in the United States. The Know Nothing Party of the 1850s was the culmination of nativism, and its success (though short-lived) indicated the popularity of its members' convictions.

Know Nothings portrayed themselves as the only party that could save republicanism because they alone openly challenged the foreign and Catholic menace and they alone of all political parties were dedicated to having Americans rule America.²¹

It appeared in the 1850s that nativism rivalled slavery as

²¹Michael F. Holt, The Political Crisis of the 1850s (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1978), 169.

the important political and social issue.²² Campbell prophetically suggested this trend in an essay in the 1835 Harbinger:

I confess that there is much reason for alarm. . . . The Roman hierarchy and Negro slavery, or the former by means of the latter, may, and in all probability, dash the American ship upon a rock, and engulf us all in one common ruin.²³

This suspicion of Catholics may be clearly seen in Lyman Beecher's Plea for the West, an address delivered numerous times and published in 1835. Beecher saw in the West a great conflict between liberty (identified in Protestant terms) and despotism (identified with Catholic rule) over the character and the destiny of the nation.

It is equally plain that the religious and political destiny of our nation is to be decided in the West. . . . It is equally clear, that the conflict which is to decide the destiny of the West, will be a conflict of institutions for the education of her sons, for

²²". . . in 1854, the results of the elections, although in some respects ambiguous, seemed to indicate the possible triumph of Know-Nothingism rather than of antislavery. At that juncture, there seemed to be a likelihood that the Catholic or immigrant question might replace the slavery question as the focal issue in American political life." David M. Potter, The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861 (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 249-250. See also Ray Billington, The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), 390-394.

²³Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1835: 65.

purposes of superstition, or evangelical light; of despotism, or liberty.²⁴

He feared that uneducated immigrants might be easily controlled by the "sinister designs" of Catholic priests loyal to the "potentates of Europe."²⁵

A tenth part of the suffrage of the nation, thus condensed and wielded by the Catholic powers of Europe, might decide our elections, perplex our policy, inflame and divide the nation, break the bond of our union, and throw down our free institutions.²⁶

Beecher did not advocate depriving Catholics of their civil and religious rights as American citizens, but called upon Catholic leaders to denounce their political aims. Shortly after this address was published, Alexander Campbell suggested to Beecher that some kind of Protestant association be formed in the western states to defend Protestant interests.²⁷ The American Protestant Association was established in 1842.

Beecher was accused of stirring up a mob that burned an Ursuline Convent at Charlestown, Massachusetts in 1834.

²⁴ Lyman Beecher, A Plea for the West (Cincinnati: Truman and Smith, 1835; reprint ed. Arno Press, 1977), 11-12; Campbell quoted from this work during the Purcell debate and suggested that it "ought to be in every family; and read by every adult in the great valley, who feels any interest in the preservation of our free and happy institutions." Campbell-Purcell Debate, 331.

²⁵ Ibid., 49, 54.

²⁶ Ibid., 59.

²⁷ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1843: 182; This remark was made in Campbell's notice of the founding of the American Protestant Association by Beecher in 1842.

Ten years later a nativist riot in Philadelphia led to the burning of two Catholic churches and thirteen deaths: the issue was the Philadelphia Board of Controllers' refusal to allow the Catholic Bible as well as the King James Version to be read in the public schools.²⁸ Ray Billington has suggested that nativist sentiment and activity were eclipsed by more pressing issues--the Oregon boundary issue, Mexican War, Wilmot Proviso, slavery in the territories--by 1845, only to be revived with renewed fervor in response to a new wave of immigrants (primarily Irish) in the late 1840s and early 1850s.²⁹

Beecher's son, Edward, wrote a treatise entitled The Papal Conspiracy Exposed (published in 1855) in which he appealed to American citizens to judge the supposed efforts of Roman Catholics to undermine the freedoms of American citizens:

The great criminal arraigned for trial before this bar is that peculiar corporation claiming the right to be called the church of Rome.

You are called on to decide whether this corporation, for treason against God and hostility to the human race, deserves the execration of mankind and the righteous and avenging judgment [sic] of God.

. . . Above all, to expel by law from this land the sworn pecuniary agents of the foreign head of this corporation, . . . undeniably guilty of a treasonable

²⁸ Jorgenson, State and Non-Public School, 76-83.

²⁹ Billington, Protestant Crusade, 238-239.

conspiracy with foreign Romish powers to subvert the constitution and laws of these United States. . . .³⁰

Like most common school advocates, Alexander Campbell was in sympathy with such convictions. The origins of Campbell's anti-Catholicism lay in his Scotch-Irish background. Alexander was the fifth generation of Campbells to be born in Ireland after his family had emigrated to Northern Ireland from Scotland. Campbell's grandfather, Archibald Campbell, was raised as a Roman Catholic but became a member of the Church of England shortly after his term of service in the British army under General James Wolfe--"according to the Act of Parliament," he claimed.³¹ Although Archibald Campbell remained a strict Anglican until his death at age 88, he did not demonstrate the type of intense commitment to the Christian faith that would emerge in his son and grandson. For example, he strongly discouraged his son, Thomas, from entering the ministry, one reason why Thomas taught school in addition to his work in the church.³² Thomas Campbell

³⁰Edward Beecher, The Papal Conspiracy Exposed, and Protestantism Defended, in the Light of Reason, History, and Scripture (New York: M.W. Dodd, 1855; reprint ed. Arno Press, 1977), 3, 6.

³¹Alexander Campbell, Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell Together With a Brief Memoir of Mrs. Jane Campbell (Cincinnati: H. S. Bosworth, 1861), 7-8, 21.

³²Lester G. McAllister, Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1954), 23.

found the Anglican Church unsatisfying and in his late teens joined the Presbyterian Church, a commitment which would be heightened by his experience at Glasgow University and by his marriage to Jane Corneigle. The Corneigles were Huguenots who had fled from France to Ireland after the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1681. They were rigid Calvinistic Presbyterians and, being quite affluent, purchased land and erected a church building and a school shortly after their arrival.³³ Alexander Campbell's maxim that "maternal influence is paramount to paternal influence" probably suggested that it was primarily through Jane Corneigle Campbell that he acquired a dislike for Roman Catholics.³⁴ The county--Antrim--in which Alexander Campbell grew up was one of the few counties in Northern Ireland that retained a large number of Roman Catholics and was a hotbed of Catholic rebellion, secret societies and violent conflict.³⁵ There was no immediate geographic connection between Campbell and Bishop Purcell's family in Ireland, the latter having lived in Mallow in the southern region.

In his introduction to Campbell's Familiar Lectures on

³³ Campbell, Memoirs of Thomas Campbell, 309.

³⁴ Ibid., 316.

³⁵ Lawrence J. McCaffrey, Ireland: From Colony to Nation State (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1979), 11, 16, 30-31.

the Pentateuch, W. T. Moore suggested that Thomas Campbell imbued within Alexander a hatred toward Catholics in his early education: "As Hamilcar swore the boy Hannibal to a life-long enmity to Rome . . . so Thomas Campbell trained young Alexander to a perpetual war against the Papal and all other corruptions and sins."³⁶ One must recognize, however, that this statement may reflect Moore's own bias rather than Campbell's attitude toward Catholicism. Robert Richardson recorded Campbell's general assessment of Roman Catholicism thus:

He found the Catholics, numerous in his own country, for the most part an ignorant, priest-ridden, superstitious people, crushed, as it were, to the earth, as well by their own voluntary submission to an unrestricted spiritual despotism, as by the pressure of the social and political burdens resting upon them. . . . The young student, in contemplating the whole system of Romanism in its superstitions, its ceremonies, its spirit and its practical effects, conceived for it the utmost abhorrence--a feeling which remained with him though life.³⁷

Campbell was not, however, outspokenly anti-Catholic in his early writings in the Christian Baptist. He used "popery" in primarily a generic sense--in reference to any established religion--and disliked "the lordly and

³⁶Alexander Campbell, Familiar Lectures on the Pentateuch; Delivered Before the Morning Class of Bethany College; . . . Edited with an Introduction and Occasional Notes by W. T. Moore (Cincinnati: H. S. Bosworth, 1867), 13.

³⁷Robert Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1868, 1870), 1:49-50.

aristocratic Episcopalians" and the Church of Scotland as much as Roman Catholics.³⁸ The anti-Catholicism in the Christian Baptist was not only in the context of discussions on the union between church and state, but also in reference to any authoritarian Christian body: "every sect that holds a human creed and an ecclesiastical court is a legitimate daughter of the holy mother."³⁹

Campbell directly addressed the Catholic issue in the Millennial Harbinger in 1832, and continued with a series on "Catholic Controversy" in 1833. He wrote about Catholic criticism of the common schools in the 1835 volume and discussion of the Purcell debate regularly appeared in the 1836-1838 volumes. Otherwise, Campbell's concern with Roman Catholicism did not furnish a major theme for the Harbinger. Three of the Popular Lectures and Addresses--"The Anglo-Saxon Language," "The Destiny of Our Country," and "Education"--exalted the role of Protestantism and included repudiation of the Roman Catholic system. With the exception of the Purcell debate,

³⁸ "A state or national religion is necessarily Popish in its spirit." Ibid., 1:63.

³⁹ Campbell, Christian Baptist, 7 vols. (Buffalo Creek and Bethany, Va.: A. Campbell, 1823-30), 1823: 34; Lunger points out that Campbell took little notice of important developments within Roman Catholicism during this time (1823-30), such as immigration, the trustee controversy, and the Papal Jubilee of Leo XII in 1827. Harold Lunger, The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1954), 151.

in which he attacked the Catholic church on theological grounds, nearly all of Campbell's remarks on Catholicism (and reprints of articles from other sources) were related to education and the public schools.

After trips to Ireland in 1847 and Canada in 1855 Campbell reported a significant difference in education, prosperity, and attitude between Protestant and Catholic regions of the countries.⁴⁰ He seemed to become more intensely anti-Catholic after the Ireland tour. His most extreme anti-Catholic statements appeared in the Harbinger as he noted the return of John Hughes, Bishop of the Diocese of New York, from a visit to Rome.⁴¹

Campbell appeared to share the nativist sentiment of someone like Lyman Beecher. In "The Destiny of Our Country," Campbell declared that "the reign of Popery ever must be a reign of terror to all who love liberty of thought and freedom of speech."⁴² He later referred to Roman Catholics as "a people confederate against the liberties of mankind."⁴³ He referred to Roman Catholic colleges as "secret societies" and called them "pure

⁴⁰ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1848: 671; 1855: 536.

⁴¹ Ibid., 1851: 541.

⁴² Campbell, Popular Lectures and Address (Philadelphia: James Challen and Son, 1863), 174.

⁴³ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1853: 431.

crystallizations of selfishness . . . more to be feared than to be loved. . . . Their influence is the only portendous cloud in our horizon."⁴⁴ After quoting a vehemently anti-Catholic article from the Cross and Baptist Journal on "Roman Catholics in the Valley," Campbell noted that he "had predicted that in fifty years Catholicism would be established in the United States by law . . . and I was stared at and laughed at as one that dreamed."⁴⁵

It was in his debate with John Purcell, however, that Campbell emerged as a popular "Defender of Protestantism."⁴⁶ It should be noted that even though the debate was prompted by educational concerns and aroused interest because of the popularity of anti-Catholicism, Campbell's primary concern in the debate was neither education nor nativism, but enhancing the prestige of his own movement and advancing his own theological convictions.

John Baptist Purcell was born in 1800 in Mallow, Ireland, and emigrated to Baltimore in 1818. He obtained a teacher's certificate from Asbury College, and after two years of working as a private tutor entered Mount St. Mary's College, where he was considered an impressive

⁴⁴Campbell, Popular Lectures, 178.

⁴⁵Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1835: 64-65.

⁴⁶Ibid., 1836: 551; See also Bill J. Humble, Campbell and Controversy (Rosemead, Calif.: Old Paths Book Club, 1952), 130.

scholar. After completing his theological education in Paris, Purcell was ordained a priest at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in 1826. Returning to the United States, he was assigned the chair of moral philosophy at Mount St. Mary's College and in three years became president of that institution. Purcell was installed as the Bishop of the Diocese of Cincinnati in 1830, ruling over a diverse population of parishioners. This began a long and distinguished career for Purcell, who was named Archbishop of the Diocese of Cincinnati in 1850, an office in which he continued until his death on July 4, 1883.⁴⁷ Well-known in Rome and Austria, as well as throughout the United States, Purcell rivalled John Hughes as the second most influential figure (behind John Carroll) in the history of American Catholicism.⁴⁸

Purcell was at the center of all of the major issues affecting the development of Roman Catholicism in America during this period. Purcell tactfully dealt with the large

⁴⁷Mary Agnes McCann, "The Most Reverend John Baptist Purcell, D.D., Archbishop of Cincinnati, 1800-1883," The Catholic Historical Review 6 (July 1920): 172-199. McCann's work is also the chief source used in the Dictionary of American Biography, 1957 ed., s.v. "Purcell, John B.," by Richard J. Purcell.

⁴⁸This claim is made by several historians of American Catholicism, including Richard J. Purcell (Dictionary of American Biography), Jay Dolan (Catholic Experience, 264), and John T. Ellis (American Catholicism, 282).

German Catholic population of Cincinnati and gained its support thus diffusing the problem of ethnic rivalries. He was also relatively successful in diminishing nativist opposition through debates and editorials, fervently declaring his personal loyalty as an American citizen and the patriotic character of his fellow Catholics. His most significant contribution, however, was in the realm of education--the essential component of the Americanization of Catholic immigrants, and the controversial element in the involvement of Catholics in the public arena.⁴⁹

From Campbell's perspective, Purcell's rejection of the use of the Bible in the public schools was enough to convict him as being anti-American and anti-education. The fact that the bishop was an active member of the Western Literary Institute and College of Teachers--an organization notable for its role in common school reform--did nothing to lessen Campbell's convictions. The best interests of American society were at stake: the source and genius of American freedom, Protestantism, must be defended against "the lofty and bold pretensions of that ancient sect."⁵⁰

Campbell set forth seven propositions for debate, the first six of which were theological in nature. Campbell

⁴⁹ Ellis, American Catholicism, 65-66; McCann, "Reverend Purcell," 176-177; Dolan, Catholic Experience, 264.

⁵⁰ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1836: 606-607.

argued that the Roman Catholic Church was not the "Mother and Mistress of All Churches" but the oldest existing sect and an apostasy from the true church. He questioned its doctrine of apostolic succession and claims to infallibility, and asserted that ideas such as purgatory, indulgences, confession, and transubstantiation were "immoral in their tendency, and injurious to the well-being of society, religious and political."⁵¹ The seventh proposition revealed Campbell's distrust of Roman involvement in American society, a cornerstone of nativist doctrine:

7. The Roman Catholic religion, if infallible and unsusceptible of reformation, as alleged, is essentially anti-American, being opposed to the genius of all free institutions, and positively subversive of them, opposing the general reading of the scriptures, and the diffusion of useful knowledge among the whole community, so essential to liberty and the permanency of good government.⁵²

Campbell began his argument of this proposition by asserting the close connection between civil liberty and religious liberty, accusing the Roman Catholic Church of diminishing freedom of thought and speech and calling the Catholic population "abject slaves to their priests."⁵³

⁵¹ A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion . . . between Alexander Campbell, and the Rt. Rev. John B. Purcell (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Company, 1837), viii.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 311.

Campbell then focused upon papal claims to temporal power and declared that this violated "the genuis of our government."⁵⁴ He quoted the oath of allegiance that naturalized American citizens must take, compared it with Catholic oaths taken by priests, bishops, and the Jesuit order, and maintained that the Catholic oaths superseded and nullified the oath of naturalization. Campbell's impassioned conclusion proclaimed that

The gentleman is under the "Holy Lord the pope."
I am not a foreigner in this sense.

But still better, I am the father of a family: my children are native Americans: and through these I am more akin to the great American family than he ever can be. Without perjury or apostacy [sic] from his office he can never have a wife, nor family. He is a stranger to those near and holy relations. He has no country--no home. He lives and he must die under the command of foreign superiors; and they may . . . remove him to Europe or Asia at pleasure. For these and other reasons I am identified with Protestant America, and claim a relation here to which his heart shall ever be a stranger.⁵⁵

In Campbell's view, Roman Catholicism stood in direct opposition to the theological, political, and social ideals of the American people. His vision for the United States was Protestant, republican, Jeffersonian, and family-oriented. As long as the Catholics persisted in their loyalties to church tradition over scripture alone, doctrines of papal authority, and commitment to clerical

⁵⁴ Ibid., 312.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 334.

celibacy, Campbell would consider them an apostasized and anti-American Christian sect.

Although Campbell was known as a gracious and courteous debater, his relationship with Bishop Purcell was quite antagonistic during and after the debate. As late as 1853 Campbell was still upset at what he considered Purcell's "tampering with . . . mutilating . . . and revamping . . . " the record of the debate and sarcastically referred to his opponent:

Bishop Purcell--I beg his lordship's pardon, Archbishop Purcell--is indebted to me for his Papal Arch prefix, in consequence of my condescending to debate with him years since, on the body, soul and spirit of Romanism.⁵⁶

Several articles in the 1837 Harbinger dealt with the controversy over printing the record of the debate, in which Campbell accused Purcell of breaking prior agreements over the final edition of the debate.⁵⁷

The majority of Campbell's articles on Catholicism in the Harbinger dealt with the common schools. As was earlier noted, Campbell's vision for the public schools was thoroughly Protestant: "The very word Protestant implies thought, examination, dissent, and self-reliance. . . . The Protestant Reformation . . . was the regeneration of literature, science, art. . . ."⁵⁸ Campbell proclaimed

⁵⁶ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1853: 96.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1837: 105-112; 184-187; 223-233; 322-325.

⁵⁸ Campbell, Popular Lectures, 32.

that

. . . to this same Protestantism we, as a people and a nation, owe the common school system of education, . . . And for this very reason, the subjects of the papal monarch . . . are now conspiring against [it], and determined . . . to crush and to annihilate it.⁵⁹

He called Catholic opposition to the common school system "one cloud ominous of evil."⁶⁰

When the Bishops and Archbishops of papalism in this country so universally, so undefatigably, and so unambiguously, preach, write, and publish against common schools, and against the Bible in common schools, we cannot doubt, that had they the power in this land of light and liberty, how soon both would be extinct, and their own dark ages spread night and moral desolation over this fair land, and amongst the good people that extended to them equal rights, privileges, and honors. . . .⁶¹

In the 1838 volume of the Millennial Harbinger Campbell referred to a published letter from Purcell to the Archbishop of Vienna (and the Leopoldine Society) in which Purcell complained of the prejudice toward Catholics in the American public schools. Campbell sarcastically offered sympathy to Purcell for having to endure "the palpable evil of common and free schools, over which he has shed so many tears," and apologized for the erection of so many buildings for common schools. If Purcell and the Leopoldine Society had their way, Campbell asserted,

⁵⁹ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1853: 427.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 425.

⁶¹ Ibid., 150.

. . . We would have Spain, Italy, and Portugal manners and customs in their stead. This hint from the Bishop of Ohio I sincerely hope will not soon be forgotten by the friends of humanity in this land of liberty and equal rights.⁶²

Campbell took notice of the Roman Catholic attempts to secure public funds for their own schools in New York City in 1840 and the subsequent controversies over appropriation of public school monies in that state, as well as in Massachusetts and Maryland. He saw this as clear evidence that American Catholics desired religious establishment in the United States and declared that only free public education could thwart their goals:

They speak a language but too evident . . . as to the real object of the petitioners. The church, and not the State, should educate. The church, and not the State, should give law. . . . The greatest barrier to the introduction of this state of things in our country, is perceived to be the prevalence of the Common School System. The intelligent Roman Catholic need not be told, that the cornerstone of our Republic is general intelligence--the education of the masses. . . . Such are some of the objects, aims, and attributes of a great politico-ecclesiastic power, now rising and struggling for power in our midst.⁶³

For Campbell, the solution to the Catholic problem lay in his concept of nonsectarian education. He would have agreed with Purcell's report to the College of Teachers that the Bible should not be left in the hands of sectarian teachers or editors. He took exception to Purcell's declaration to the Archbishop of Vienna that Roman Catholic

⁶² Ibid., 1838: 73-74.

⁶³ Ibid., 1853: 293-294.

children go to common schools at the peril of their damnation. Campbell stated that "what perils a Romanist equally imperils a Protestant."⁶⁴ This reflected Campbell's conviction that the Bible was a catholic book and could be read without bias, Protestant or Roman Catholic. Using the Bible as a textbook in the public schools and reading it in a nonsectarian fashion would not offend Catholics, in Campbell's view, and would ensure the proper education of Catholic immigrants and the protection of America's free institutions. For this reason Catholic children should be educated in public, rather than parochial, schools.

Catholics are pouring, like a torrent from the mountains, into the Valley of the Mississippi. . . . But there is an ark of safety. . . . That ark is universal education--education patronized, sustained, guarded, and controlled by the State. Enlighten all, Catholic and Protestant.

Let it be the first care of every state to have all its children well educated. Let there be state funds, state teachers, state schools, and state laws compelling all to be enlightened. . . . An enlightened community cannot be enslaved--an ignorant and uneducated society cannot be free.⁶⁵

The "true theory of education" that Campbell advocated would not make distinctions between Protestants and Catholics in a sectarian fashion. By focusing on the catholic foundation for the Christian faith (tenets of Christian doctrine to which all Christians could assent)

⁶⁴ Ibid., 428.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 1835: 65-66.

and emphasizing moral education, republican virtues could be taught and free institutions preserved without the distractions of religious questions.

Campbell may be seen as a moderate nativist. Although he was theologically opposed to the Roman Catholic system and considered it an apostasy from the "one true, holy, apostolic, and catholic church of Christ,"⁶⁶ he maintained the historical continuity of the Christian Church: "I cannot paganize the Greek and Roman communions . . . ejecting them from the Christian family and make the Protestant faith the only true faith."⁶⁷ In the Purcell debate he made a distinction between the Romanist system and individual Catholic citizens:

I disavow the idea. and the language of hatred towards Romanists, as such. We feel the same humanity and benevolence towards Roman Catholics, as men, as to Protestants. We always discriminate between tenets and men, a system or theory, and those who hold it. . . .⁶⁸

Campbell was not in favor of limiting immigration--he himself was an Irish immigrant--nor depriving them of equal rights under the law:

What then can be done? . . . Yes, says one, let our government prevent their migration hitherward and more--then down goes our temple of equal rights and our

⁶⁶ Campbell-Purcell Debate, vii.

⁶⁷ Campbell, The Christian System, In Reference to the Union of Christians . . . as Plead in the Current Reformation (Bethany, Va.: A. Campbell, 1839), 85.

⁶⁸ Campbell-Purcell Debate, 169-170.

boasted indifference to all political concern in religion. We cannot place Catholics under disabilities. If they swear allegiance to our heretical government, though they have the Pope in their heart as large as life, still they must be citizens and eligible to all honor and political office.⁶⁹

He would not deny opportunity--political, economic, or social--for advancement to individual Catholics: "We fear the exclusive . . . and despotic system of Romanism; but we feel nothing but benevolence to Roman Catholics."⁷⁰

Campbell discussed the accusation that he had been associated with the Know Nothing Party in Virginia in a letter written to James Wharton in 1857, in which he denied any affiliation with the nativist party: "I have no faith in any political party. I stand aloof from them all. I should be very sorry to be affiliated with Know Nothings as such or anti-Know Nothings as such."⁷¹ Lunger has suggested that one reason why Campbell should not be considered an extreme nativist was his aversion to revivalism which sparked the nativist, abolitionist, and temperance movements--he simply was not an "emotional crusader."⁷² Because of his Protestant background,

⁶⁹ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1835: 65.

⁷⁰ Campbell-Purcell Debate, 170.

⁷¹ Alexander Campbell to James E. Wharton, April, 1857. Microfilm Reel 161, "Lecture Notes, sermon outlines; and index of notes, 1809-1862." Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society.

⁷² Lunger, Political Ethics, 152.

theological orientation, millennial views on the destiny of America, and convictions concerning the use of the Bible in the public schools, Campbell definitely held anti-Catholic views and demonstrated as such in his debate with Bishop Purcell, his advocacy of common schools, and his public lectures. He considered Roman Catholics, if they insisted on strict obedience to the Roman hierarchy, to be enemies of American institutions and personal liberty. If left unopposed to pursue their goals, Roman Catholics would undermine the best interests of American society:

The Papistical attack upon common schools, and common school education, and the Bible in them, demands from us more than a passing notice . . . because it involves more of our good or evil destiny, as a people, than any politico-ecclesiastic question now before the public mind.⁷³

After the Purcell debate in 1837, Campbell was congratulated by Lyman Beecher and "a large meeting of the citizens" of Cincinnati for his "spirit and temper, and . . . power of argument and authorities" in sustaining the cause of Protestantism.⁷⁴ Perhaps as one last swipe at Purcell, Campbell donated his share of the proceeds from the sale of the record of the debate (some eight hundred dollars by 1838) to the American Bible Society, an

⁷³ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1853: 440.

⁷⁴ Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 2:427, 433.

association well-known for its anti-Catholic stance.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Ibid., 2:433; Jorgenson, State and Non-Public School, 29, 34, 41.

CHAPTER FIVE

"A NEW INSTITUTION"

I am now about to divulge . . . a favorite scheme deeply impressed upon my mind; long cherished, and in the establishment and supervision of it, it is probable, if the Lord will, I shall close all my earthly projects.¹

Alexander Campbell's educational theory and his concern for the establishment of schools were formulated as he was actively involved as a teacher. The crucible of experience formulated and refined his views on the subject. As noted in a previous chapter, Campbell took over his father's school in Ireland after the latter left for America in 1807, and also worked as a private tutor for children from several prominent families while a student at Glasgow University in 1808-9.² After arriving in the United States in September 1809, Campbell began an intense program of self-education in conjunction with his emergence as a preacher and leader of an incipient church reform

¹Alexander Campbell, ed., Millennial Harbinger, 34 vols. (Bethany, Va.: A. Campbell, 1830-64), 1839: 446.

²Robert Richardson, ed., Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1868, 1870), 1:139.

movement. He founded Buffalo Seminary in 1818 and operated this school for young boys until 1823. The culmination of his efforts in the field of education, however, was Bethany College, established in 1840. Campbell served as President and Professor of Moral Philosophy at Bethany from its inception until shortly before his death in 1866.

These two schools--Buffalo and Bethany--served different purposes in Campbell's role as an educator. Buffalo Seminary was established very early in his career and became a "trial-by-error" enterprise in which he developed, clarified, and adjusted his educational theories. One may discover several important themes emerging from his experience with this school that would shape his later views. Bethany College, on the other hand, represented Campbell's mature thought on education and was an overt effort to put his theories into practice. Rather than provide a narrative history of the college, this chapter focuses on how Campbell implemented his views on education at Bethany. An important postscript to Campbell's own work in founding these schools was his influence on the impressive educational tradition of the Disciples of Christ which originated in the nineteenth century and was often patterned after Campbell's institutions.

Campbell opened Buffalo Seminary in January 1818 in his home as a school for young boys (although some females

were admitted). He "resolved to devote a few years to teaching" for at least three reasons: to offer children in his community "a better education than they could otherwise obtain"; to implement the new methods of teaching that he was becoming increasingly familiar with by reading educational reports (chiefly from Europe); and, most importantly, to prepare young men to enter the ministry and advance his ecclesiastical reforms.³ In view of Campbell's preoccupation at this time with theological matters, the latter purpose must be seen as the chief object of the seminary.

Campbell's early success in attracting students to Buffalo was due to his father's reputation as an educator in Washington County and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The elder Campbell moved from Pittsburgh to Burlington, Kentucky in 1817, and left several prospective students--"sons of the leading men in Pittsburgh"--who later enrolled at Buffalo.⁴ The majority of Alexander's pupils, however, were from Campbell's immediate community and surrounding counties in Pennsylvania and Ohio.⁵ He often bemoaned the fact that he had to limit the number of students and therefore enlisted the aid of his sister,

³Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1848: 522; Richardson, Memoirs, 1:491.

⁴Richardson, Memoirs, 1:492.

⁵Ibid., 1:491-492.

Jane, to help with their increasing number. Thomas Campbell returned from Kentucky in the summer of 1819 to assist Alexander and Jane with the teaching responsibilities. Campbell was quite pleased at the number of students Buffalo attracted and, reflecting on this aspect of the Seminary, later declared in 1848 that it had "succeeded greatly beyond my expectations."⁶

Campbell called Buffalo a "classical school." The curriculum apparently placed great emphasis upon the study of languages--Greek, Latin, Hebrew and French--and encouraged students to pursue law and medicine as well as Biblical studies. He also offered "a good English education": grammar, reading, and writing. His advertisements presented Buffalo as a grand academic enterprise: "Tuition, \$5.00 per quarter . . . for any or all the branches usually taught in academies."⁷ This distinctive combination of liberal and Biblical education would later emerge in Campbell's campaign to use the Bible as a textbook in the common schools and reach its mature form in the curriculum of Bethany College.

At least two areas of Campbell's educational theory were prominent at Buffalo. First, his conviction that education was best accomplished in a family atmosphere was

⁶ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1848: 522.

⁷ Richardson, Memoirs, 1:492.

an important component of the seminary. He boarded students in his own house, conducting classes in the parlor for two years; and later he constructed a large addition to the upper side of the house exclusively for the school. Second, Campbell was also committed to the moral education of his pupils, maintaining strict discipline in and out of the classroom and using the Bible as the chief textbook.

By boarding them in his own family, directing their studies and imbuing their minds with a knowledge of the scriptures, in the daily recitations and lessons of instruction which he carefully kept up at the morning and evening devotions of his household, he thought that the desired object might thus be gradually attained.⁸

These two themes--the importance of the "Family School" (what he would call the Buffalo-like elementary school at Bethany) and the use of the Bible in moral instruction--were cornerstones in his later educational theory.

Buffalo's five-year existence seems more remarkable when considering the frequent distractions which Campbell had to endure. Reflecting on the Buffalo years, Campbell reported that he operated the seminary "amidst considerable sectarian opposition and strife."⁹ Campbell had alienated first the Presbyterians by his adoption in 1812 of baptism by immersion and then many influential Baptist leaders of the Redstone Association (of which Campbell's church was a

⁸ Ibid., 1:492.

⁹ Ibid., 2:48

member) with his views by 1817 on the nature of Biblical covenants. Robert Richardson recorded several occasions during this period at which Campbell had to defend himself against objections from both the Presbyterian and Baptist clergy. Although this criticism was not levelled at the school, it certainly detracted from Campbell's educational endeavors. Richardson observed:

In addition to all this, public opinion was altogether in the hands of the clergy, and was consequently entirely opposed to him. His task was extremely difficult. When public opinion is favorable to any enterprise, it is like the oil which is applied to the bearings of a machine. . . . His task was like the attempt to launch a ship where the ways were inclined in the wrong direction.¹⁰

Campbell decided to discontinue the school in the early spring of 1823 for a variety of reasons. His son, John Brown, had died in infancy the previous November; and Campbell's own health began to suffer from the rigors of operating a school, burgeoning family responsibilities (his eighth child, Margretta, was born in December 1823), and an expanded preaching itinerary. He considered his "labors in the gospel" to be more important than the school and was concerned that he had neglected this responsibility at a time when he was increasingly in more demand as a preacher.¹¹ Discovering the power of the press, he was

¹⁰ Ibid., 1:489-490.

¹¹ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1848: 522; Richardson, Memoirs, 2:48.

anxious to begin work on The Christian Baptist, which he published from 1823-30. With the success of his preaching, the growth of several churches under his leadership, notoreity as a debater (his first debate was in October 1823 with the Reverend W. L. McCalla of Kentucky), and the promise of a more widespread influence, Campbell was entering the prime of his career and was compelled to close the seminary.

Campbell also apparently had become disenchanted with his students as well. He felt that he was merely pampering spoiled children of rich parents and that his moral instruction fell on deaf ears. Perhaps his later advocacy of common schools "for patrician and plebeian alike" stemmed to a large degree from his experience at Buffalo. Although Campbell was pleased that his students were acquiring a good classical education, "he had a much higher object in view," Richardson reported, "than merely to prepare young men for secular pursuits."¹² His primary object in founding the seminary was the training of young men for the ministry and he did not have the kind of success that he had expected in this matter.

Campbell seemed to view Buffalo Seminary as a somewhat frustrating learning experience. A school like Buffalo was not, from Campbell's perspective, the best alternative for

¹² Ibid., 1:493.

the education of children, in light of the improved development of the common school and proper infant training in the home. In his 1845 address to the Western Literary Institute, Campbell compared his experience at Bethany with that of Buffalo:

I am still more than ever before, devoted to this great and good work, and have really become a professional teacher in a school got up more in unison with the spirit of the age and with the present attainments of society, than that over which I presided some quarter of a century ago.¹³

One must point out, however, that even though Campbell did not consider Buffalo to be "in unison with the spirit of the age," he persistently incorporated the key feature--the "family"--of the seminary in his later educational project, Bethany College, with similar frustrating results.

In the ensuing years between the dissolution of Buffalo and the founding of Bethany, Campbell urged caution among those within his movement who were eager to establish schools. For example, he was hesitant to allow John Bennet of New Albany, Indiana, to advertise plans for a school in the Millennial Harbinger, a wise policy considering the fact that Bennet took a large amount of money raised for his proposed school and left the state.¹⁴ A more sincere effort by Guerdon Gates and J. T. Jones of Louisville, Kentucky, still evoked a tentative response from Campbell,

¹³Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1845: 521.

¹⁴Ibid., 1833: 189-190; 240.

who advised a six-month waiting period for more discussion.¹⁵ By the mid-1830s Campbell had begun thinking again about establishing another educational institution and was somewhat annoyed by the founding in 1836 of Bacon College in Kentucky by several of his close associates. Bacon began without his personal support, though Campbell certainly did not discourage its development. Campbell had learned the strenuous effort required to operate a school (on any level) and admonished those who undertook such projects:

It is no common, no easy, no every-day occurrence, to institute . . . and make useful one good college. . . . These mere academic colleges--or rather high schools--with three, four, or five officers each, are, however useful as schools, lean and decrepid substitutes for colleges or universities worthy of the name. I could, I presume to say, write the history of three-fourths of these contemplated colleges . . . before they shall call their first roll.¹⁶

The establishment of his "New Institution"--Bethany College--was announced in the September 1839 issue of the Millennial Harbinger.¹⁷ Campbell would incorporate within

¹⁵ Ibid., 1836: 198, 200, 202, 377.

¹⁶ Ibid., 1855: 538.

¹⁷ Ibid., 1839: 446. For narrative histories of Bethany College see W. K. Woolery, Bethany Years: The Story of Old Bethany from the Founding Years Through a Century of Trial and Triumph (Huntington: Standard Printing and Publishing Co., 1941) and D. Duane Cummins,

Bethany all of the elements of his "true theory" of education, which by that year had begun to reach its maturity. In his proposal for the college in the Harbinger, Campbell explained that Bethany was the logical extension of his educational views:

Having now completed full 50 years, and on my way to 60, the greater part of which time I have been engaged in literary pursuits, and imagining that I possess some views and attainments which I can in this way render permanently useful to this community and posterity, I feel in duty bound to offer this project to the consideration of all the friends of literature, morality, and unsectarian Bible Christianity.¹⁸

The objective of the remainder of this chapter is to compare Campbell's intent with his practice. What aspects of Campbell's thought were included in the establishment of Bethany? Was the entire scope of his philosophy of education--holistic, liberal, utilitarian, moral, Biblical, nonsectarian--implemented? How successfully were these

The Disciples Colleges: A History (St. Louis: CBP Press, 1987). For a more interpretive view see Perry E. Gresham, Campbell and the Colleges (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1973) and Educational Beginnings and Present Problems: The Centennial of Higher Education Among the Disciples of Christ, 1836-1936 (Indianapolis: The College Association of Disciples of Christ, Department of Higher Education of the United Christian Missionary Society, 1936).

¹⁸ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1839: 449-450.

ideas incorporated? Was Campbell forced to adjust his theory in light of practical considerations? Were there certain features of the college that did not work?

The design of Bethany College was outlined in a series of essays in the Harbinger beginning in September 1839 and continuing through May 1841--five months before the college actually opened. Bethany was introduced as "the union of Four Institutions in one--the combination of the Family, the Primary School, the College, and the Church in one great system of education."¹⁹ Campbell dreamed of building a "model family establishment," incorporating "a hundred or more children" and "a paternal and maternal government" into a "Christian household."²⁰ This "Family School" would be an elementary (primary) and preparatory school mainly for boys ages 7-14--though Campbell suggested that a similar house for females could be added later.²¹ This strongly resembled Buffalo Seminary in its emphasis on the family setting and moral training. Campbell apparently thought that he had learned from his mistakes (and had overcome his frustration) from his Buffalo experience and remained committed to the "family school" concept. In addition, provision would be made for promising older

¹⁹ Ibid., 1839: 446.

²⁰ Ibid., 1839: 447.

²¹ Ibid.; 1840: 62.

students to live in the professors' homes, thus creating a family atmosphere for the college as well.

Campbell was somewhat ambivalent in his definition of the "Primary School," eventually including at least four "schools" under this designation: an elementary school for ages 7-14, a preparatory school for ages 14 and up, an "Academy of Arts and Sciences," a type of vocational school "for those who do not take the liberal or College course but who desire a scientific education adapted to agriculture, commerce, or the mechanical professions,"²² and a Normal School for the training of teachers. He wanted to establish a comprehensive institution, but at this early stage of planning he was apparently uncertain about the specific forms these ideas would take. As will be seen later in this chapter, the "Primary School" at Bethany was to be shaped more by practical considerations than Campbell's ideals.

It is surprising that Campbell devoted little space to his plans for the "College Proper" in these preliminary essays. He included two rather vague descriptions of the nature of the curriculum:

. . . the immoral and profane poets and writers would be excluded, and selections of only what is rational, moral, and subservient to good taste and criticism be substituted for the demoralizing and unrestricted

²²Ibid., 1841: 272, 378.

readings and studies too often tolerated . . . in literary institutions.²³

. . . it is contemplated to have a very liberal and extensive course of scientific studies--and to give to the sciences, both physical and mental, a space proportional to their relative value and importance in the intellectual and moral development and improvement of the human faculties.²⁴

Perhaps Campbell assumed that he did not need to explain this aspect of Bethany to his readers.

The fourth "institution" of Bethany was the "Church," a concept that, according to Campbell, "need[ed] more explanation than any other."²⁵ By "Church," Campbell did not just mean the establishment of a Christian congregation on the campus. Rather, Christian principles and lifestyle were to be incorporated within the daily operation of the school. Campbell expected the majority of his students to be Christians who would therefore desire a thorough study of the scriptures: hence, the Bible would be read and studied daily in the dormitories, homes, and classrooms. Reflecting his commitment to the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice and his rejection of the use of creeds (and their supporting theological systems) to define and restrict church membership, Campbell insisted that no "scholastic theology" would be taught at Bethany.²⁶ He

²³ Ibid., 1839: 448.

²⁴ Ibid., 1841: 330.

²⁵ Ibid., 1839: 448.

also expected his students to pursue a moral lifestyle based on Christian principles: Bethany "will resemble the West Point military school: not theory alone but the military camp, the practice, the daily discipline . . . not the theory of a church . . . but the daily practice."²⁷ The "Church" would be "in session seven days a week," Campbell declared, "and the professor in attendance will be bishop pro tempore of the Church."²⁸ Students were not to be admitted to Bethany without guarantees of their good moral character and were to maintain a "republican simplicity" in dress and habits.²⁹ This "churchly" dimension of Bethany was not only to establish a forum for Campbell's religious views but also to ensure the "moral excellence" of his students.

Campbell outlined his plans for Bethany's physical plant in his September 1839 introductory essay: "An explanation of the uses of these buildings will develope [sic] some of the more prominent attributes and designs of this institution."³⁰ He proposed the erection of eight buildings: a dormitory (Stewart's Inn), Family House,

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 449.

³⁰ Ibid., 447.

three "mansions" for the professors, rooms for the primary school, the College Proper, and church "edifice." By May 1840 Campbell was more encouraged by the financial response of his constituency and announced that construction on the college building and Stewart's Inn would soon commence, a project that did not get underway until over a year later.³¹

Campbell closed his introductory essay with this summary: "The objects will be to model families, schools, colleges, and churches according to the divine pattern shown to us in the oracles of reason, of social philosophy, and of divine truth."³² Bethany was to be a "literary and moral institution" with an all-encompassing appeal to a variety of ages and educational objectives. All of the elements of Campbell's basic philosophy of education were included in his initial plans for the institution. Again, the emphasis in these plans was on the family aspect (he devoted the third essay in his "New Institution" series to "infant training")--quite similar to his earlier efforts at Buffalo Seminary. In spite of his former frustrations with this at Buffalo, Campbell remained committed to the "family school" and attempted to establish it as one part of Bethany. In Campbell's view, the unique nature of his

³¹ Ibid., 1840: 219; 1841: 273.

³² Ibid., 1839: 449.

endeavor was not the college itself, but the creation of a college along with the "Family" and "Church" ideals.

Taking note of Bacon College in the September 1839 essay (and wishing it success), Campbell pointed out that it was only a college proper: "the institution that I contemplate is one of an entirely different character."³³

Bethany College received its charter from the Commonwealth of Virginia on March 2, 1840 as "a seminary of learning for the instruction of youth in the various branches of science and literature, the useful arts, agriculture, and the learned and foreign languages."³⁴ At the first meeting of its trustees on May 11 of that year Campbell deeded a large portion of his farm to the college and concrete plans for the first buildings were laid. The original eighteen trustees were primarily local Virginians and included Campbell's father, brother-in-law (Matthew McKeever, Jane's husband), and three sons-in-law.

The trustees authorized the drafting of by-laws and hiring of four professors. Campbell was appointed as president of Bethany, a position he held until his death in 1866. The trustees announced that students would be received on October 21 and classes would commence on November 1 of 1841. The school year would last ten months,

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 1840: 176.

divided into two five-month terms, beginning in September with graduation on July 4.³⁵ Campbell warned that Bethany could not accommodate more than one hundred students--an amusing prospect considering no buildings were close to being completed and not even a meager number of professors was yet secured.³⁶ Campbell's goals, however, appeared more attainable as interest and financial support increased by the winter of 1840.

When Bethany opened its doors to approximately one hundred students in the fall of 1841 the campus consisted of a four-story college building and the almost-completed Stewart's Inn dormitory. Construction had begun on the College Common Hall (two classrooms large enough for one hundred students each) and the family house, one wing of which would be finished by September 1842 to accommodate twenty-five boys and a "matron and patron."³⁷

Because of "unfavorable circumstances," Campbell had difficulty in establishing the various departments he had earlier outlined. Campbell's attempt to put his plans for Bethany into place was hindered by inadequate space, which forced him to house all of the students--"almost a hundred youths of every variety of temper and training"--together

³⁵W. K. Woolery, Bethany Years, 33.

³⁶Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1841: 272.

³⁷Ibid., 1842: 319-320.

and even conduct some classes in the dormitory.³⁸ In practice, there was not as clear a distinction between the primary and preparatory schools (intended for students ages 7-14), Academy, and Normal School (for ages 14 and above) as Campbell had first made. Six professors--Campbell, W. K. Pendleton, Robert Richardson, A. F. Ross, Charles Stewart, and W. W. Eaton--taught all of the classes in these schools as well as the college courses. The Academy of Arts and Sciences only lasted the first year and then took on the characteristics of a college preparatory school. The Normal School was not formally added (as a separate department) until 1845.³⁹ In its first few years, therefore, Bethany consisted of a primary school, a preparatory school, and a college.

The key feature of the primary school was, in Campbell's estimation, the family house. The combination of classwork and moral training in a family setting would, according to Campbell, "raise the school from a mere technical system to one of intelligence, . . . beneficial occupations, . . . [and] improvement of character."⁴⁰ Yet he never achieved his original goals for this department. Only one wing of the "Family Mansion" was completed,

³⁸ Ibid., 239.

³⁹ Ibid., 1844: 431.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1840: 156.

housing twenty-five children rather than the projected one hundred.⁴¹ There was constant difficulty in retaining capable patrons and matrons because of discipline problems with the students, a situation exacerbated by long hours, crowded facilities, and inadequate compensation. Campbell's frustration was evident in his 1842 article on moral training at Bethany: "Schools and colleges cannot often act the part of fathers and mothers."⁴² This complaint hearkened back to Campbell's evaluation of Buffalo Seminary; his apparent "recovery" did not last long.

Campbell attempted, however, to keep the family school open in spite of these problems. Charles L. Loos, a talented teacher who taught at Bethany for thirty-four years, took full responsibility for the Mansion and the primary school in 1846 and maintained it under very difficult circumstances until 1852.⁴³ The trustees decided in that year to dissolve the primary department. The 1856-57 Catalogue announced: "It is not in harmony with the present policy of the institution to receive boys . . . under fifteen years of age."⁴⁴ Campbell felt that this

⁴¹Ibid., 1842: 319; Woolery, Bethany Years, 33.

⁴²Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1842: 16.

⁴³Woolery, Bethany Years, 33.

⁴⁴Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Bethany College for the Fifteenth Session . . . (Wheeling: Daily Intelligencer Job Office, 1856), 19.

policy brought Bethany more in line with other colleges and improved moral character of the student body:

Our experience satisfies us that the College . . . is not the place for boys. . . . We are enabled to erect a high standard of scholarship . . . and to adopt an elevated and manly method of discipline and instruction, because our students have, for the most part, attained to a degree of mental maturity.⁴⁵

The "family school" idea was shifted to the preparatory school and college, with the addition of more space for students to board in private homes (usually the professors').⁴⁶ Although Campbell remained committed to the family idea, he never perfected the logistics of operating such a school, because of a combination of neglect--Campbell had very little personal contact with the day-to-day maintenance of the primary department--and the nearly impossible task of supervising a large number of small children with a limited staff.

By 1845 the Academy of Arts and Sciences, originally intended as a type of vocational school for students who did not want to take the full college course, was abandoned and replaced with the preparatory school and Normal department. This seemed to result from practical considerations, such as inadequate space and limited teachers, which led to a streamlining simplification of the academic program. Bethany continued to offer, however, a

⁴⁵ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1857: 173.

⁴⁶ Thirteenth Catalogue (1854), 15.

Certificate of Science for students who completed two years of classes on practical, vocation-oriented topics.

The preparatory school was established to give students the opportunity to make up deficiencies in their educational program and, as noted above, was intended for students aged fourteen and above who had plans to enter the college course. The Normal School attempted to equip students to teach in public schools without having to complete the Bachelor's degree. This reflected Campbell's commitment to the common schools: "In all the Departments, very special attention is given to the art and science of teaching."⁴⁷ Of the 301 graduates listed in the Nineteenth Annual Catalogue for the years 1841-60 only twenty-five were designated as "teachers." Of course, this does not include the unknown number of teachers who elected not to take the Bachelor's degree (consistent with the policy of the Normal School). Enrollment figures for these schools were not listed in the college catalogues.

With the diminishing role of the other departments, Campbell's hopes for Bethany rested upon the college. Contrary to his experience with other aspects of Bethany, Campbell was able to assemble a competent faculty, erect adequate facilities, and attract a promising number of students for the college. His early (1845) evaluation of

⁴⁷Fifteenth Catalogue (1856), 19.

Bethany College was positive as he spoke of "our present prosperity . . . [without] any just ground for complaint or disappointment."⁴⁸ He pointed to a sound financial basis ("without endowment or patronage"), active trustees, and a devoted faculty (four of the five original faculty members were still at Bethany in 1857 and the average tenure for the nine professors hired in the 1840s was nineteen years).⁴⁹ An analysis of matriculation and graduation figures for 1842-60 reveals an average yearly enrollment of 135 students and 14 graduates. During the Campbell years enrollment peaked in 1857 with 145 students and the highest graduation class was 32 in 1859.⁵⁰

The curriculum of the college was organized much like that of the University of Virginia.⁵¹ Campbell greatly

⁴⁸ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1845: 473.

⁴⁹ Ibid.; Woolery, Bethany Years, 280.

⁵⁰ The matriculation and graduation figures were compiled from lists in the college catalogues for these years. In comparison, consider the number of students at Lyman Beecher's Lane Seminary: (1831) 50 students; (1833), 40; (1834), 60; (1835-1840), averaged 5 students (Stuart C. Henry, Unvanquished Puritan: A Portrait of Lyman Beecher, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973, 189, 238). Oberlin College began in 1834 with 50 students; after Charles Finney's appointment enrollment increased to 300 students (1835), 400 (1836), and over 1000 by 1852 (Robert S. Fletcher, A History of Oberlin College: From Its Foundation Through the Civil War, 2 Vols., Oberlin, O.: Oberlin College, 1943; 1:121, 131, 186, 189, 501).

⁵¹ For Jefferson's influence on Campbell see Millennial Harbinger, 1842: 82; Gresham, Campbell and the Colleges, 47-49, 90-92; and Leroy Garrett, Alexander Campbell and Thomas Jefferson: A Comparative Study of Two Old Virginians (Dallas: Wilkinson Publishing Co., 1963).

admired Thomas Jefferson's philosophy of education and was familiar with the arrangement of the university's course of study. W. K. Pendleton, Bethany's Professor of Natural and Moral Science from its inception and Campbell's successor as President (and also Campbell's son-in-law--twice) was a graduate of the University of Virginia and apparently assisted Campbell in organizing the curriculum. Much of the academic program's design, however, corresponded to the number of professors available and their particular expertise, and was shaped by practical rather than theoretical concerns.

Campbell divided the curriculum into initially five "schools" or departments: the School of Sacred History and Moral Philosophy, the School of Ancient Languages, the School of Mathematics and Astronomy, the School of Natural, Intellectual, and Political Philosophy, and the School of Chemistry, Natural History, Physiology, and Rhetoric (a sixth, the School of Hebrew and Modern Languages, was added as an elective course of study in 1859).⁵² A student was

⁵²The School of Sacred History and Moral Philosophy included classes in Evidences of Christianity, Sacred History, Biblical Literature, Ecclesiastical History, and Moral Philosophy. School of Ancient Languages: Latin--Virgil, Sallust, Livy, Cicero, Horace, and Tacitus--and Greek--Xenophon, Herodotus, Homer, Plto, Thucydides, Sophocles, and Aristotle. School of Mathematics and Astronomy: Algebra, Plane Geometry, Trigonometry, Solid and Spherical Geometry, Analytical Geometry, Surveying, Mensuration, Calculus, and Astronomy. School of Natural, Intellectual, and Political Philosophy: Mechanics of Solids, Mechanics of Fluids, Acoustics,

required to complete the coursework in a department (which took two to four years, depending upon the department), pass a comprehensive examination approved by both the President and the professor of that department, and pay a graduation fee (\$3.00) to receive a certificate of graduation from that particular school. When one graduated from all of the five schools, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree. Campbell later added a Master of Arts program for five-year "distinguished" students with "exemplary character" (and ten dollars for the graduation fee).⁵³

This flexible academic program imitated the University of Virginia's elective system and reflected Campbell's educational philosophy that the needs of the student, rather than a rigid system, should be foremost in any course of instruction:

The arrangements of the Institution are such that the students are not restricted to a fixed routine of classes . . . without regard to age or proficiency. On the contrary, the classes are arranged with a strict regard to the proficiency of each student, so that there are no barriers in the way of the most rapid

Electricity, Magnetism, Optics, Intellectual Philosophy, Political Economy, Logic, Constitutional Law, and International Law. School of Chemistry, Natural History, Physiology and Rhetoric: Heat, Light, Galvanism, and Chemical Philosophy, Inorganic Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Mineralogy, Geology, Agricultural Chemistry, Botany, Physiology, Zoology, Natural Theology, English Language and Literature, Rhetoric, Elements of Criticism, and English Classics. School of Hebrew and Modern Languages: Hebrew, German, and French. This list of classes is from the Fifteenth Catalogue (1856), 13-19.

⁵³ Fifteenth Catalogue, 22.

progress, and those who are possessed of superior natural capacity, or greater maturity of mind, will not be delayed in their course by any arbitrary restrictions in the progress of a particular class.⁵⁴

Campbell wanted to allow for individual progress and proficiency and therefore eschewed the traditional European and American systems which strictly required specific courses for the Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior year.⁵⁵ The University of Virginia was the first to adopt the elective system (1825) and Bethany was among several colleges and universities that followed its lead.⁵⁶ This allowed for individual progress and gave the student more control over his academic program. It also permitted non-degree students to take specialized courses in one subject without having to take unrelated classes. For example, a student could earn a certificate in the School of Mathematics and Astronomy, which included classes in surveying and mensuration, and pursue a vocation in this field. This practice also reflected Campbell's concern that education should fulfill utilitarian, as well as literary, purposes.

Campbell emphasized physical education at Bethany, although formal physical education classes were not

⁵⁴ Thirteenth Catalogue, 20.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Philip A. Bruce, History of the University of Virginia 1819-1919, 5 vols. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1920), 2:98.

incorporated into the regular curriculum. Advertisements for the college in the Harbinger and Bethany catalogues often included a description of the physical advantages of the college's location.⁵⁷ Campbell encouraged his students to work outside as much as possible and to pay careful attention to their diet and sleeping habits. The first class of the day met at 6:30 A.M. and was intentionally taught by Campbell himself:

To form and establish that most healthful and useful habit of rising early, I chose that early hour for my lectures on sacred history . . . [which] gave me . . . a very invigorating exercise of riding or walking that distance every morning before daylight.⁵⁸

Campbell's emphasis on physical education not only reflected the progressive educational theories originating among leading European educators but also his personal Calvinistic background as well. Proper physical development and discipline were as necessary for the soul and mind as for the body.

Campbell's perspective on teaching encouraged a well-balanced, broad education, with an emphasis upon language, history, and literature. In suggesting certain textbooks to his students, he began with history--"first in

⁵⁷Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1840: 60.

⁵⁸Ibid., 1842: 34.

order, because first in importance."⁵⁹ He had what one might call a "Great Books" approach to literature: "Search out the master spirits. . . . Most young men wish to read many books. Great men read but a few."⁶⁰ Campbell also achieved his goal of devoting half of the curriculum to the sciences.

Campbell's personal teaching style was extemporaneous and conversational: "He was not cramped by . . . the cumbersome machinery of written discourse."⁶¹ He always remained seated and often used the Socratic method in conducting his class. One of Campbell's students, W. T. Moore, effusively described Campbell's "Morning Class Lectures":

These Lectures were not intended to exhibit logical arrangement, concise reasoning and regular sequence of thought. In manner, they were simply conversations; in matter, they sought only to impress . . . the inestimable treasures of the Word of God. . . . they were wholly extemporaneous efforts, frequently called forth by a note found upon his desk, after he had taken his seat. He seemed never to know the chapter to be discussed, until attention was called to it by the young man whose time it was to read. . . . He needed no

⁵⁹ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1845: 320. Campbell suggested the use of Bancroft's History of the United States, Guizot's History of European Civilization, Burke's European Settlement of the Americas, and Gibbon's Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire as historical texts.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 323.

⁶¹ Campbell, Familiar Lectures on the Pentateuch: Delivered Before the Morning Class of Bethany College, During the Session of 1859-60, ed. W. T. Moore (Cincinnati: H.S. Bosworth, Publisher, 1867; reprint ed. Rosemead, Calif.: Old Paths Book Club, 1958), 51.

written discourse upon any subject; for his mind seemed to be one vast manuscript in which were already prepared the richest thoughts upon all subjects. . . . He seemed rather to avoid any thing like the regular style of professional lectures.⁶²

It is doubtful that Campbell allowed his colleagues at Bethany this kind of latitude and spontaneity in conducting their classes.

Campbell's plans for Bethany insisted upon the importance of moral training, the use of the Bible as the chief textbook, and a nonsectarian attitude and practice. These three concerns dominated his philosophy of education and objectives for the college and must be considered in order to evaluate adequately Campbell's work at Bethany.

Moral education was one of the primary concerns in the establishment of Bethany College. In a report on the progress of the school, Campbell reminded his supporters that "we have proposed a moral institution as well as a literary and scientific one."⁶³ In his announcement of the opening of Bethany in the January 1842 Harbinger Campbell noted that three things were sought "for the accomplishment of moral purposes": (1) a rural location ("Being entirely in the country, . . . it is secluded from those haunts of dissipation and those vicious associations so fatal to youth in cities."); (2) "enlightened, energetic, and

⁶² Ibid., 54-56.

⁶³ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1842: 82.

moral professors"; and (3) "youth as uncontaminated as the times would afford."⁶⁴ Appropriate moral behavior was also required of all employees of the institution.

Although Campbell rejected the communal idea early in his career, the design for Bethany resembled an attempt to establish a moral utopia. The emphasis on moral "culture" was to be central to the Family House experience and the preparatory school. A rigorous schedule and strict discipline was required for these young boys. Students were in no way to be "pampered and indulged," and "aristocratic attitudes" were not to be tolerated. As will be seen, most of the disciplinary problems were found among these younger students and failure to see immediate moral improvement was one factor in the decline of these departments.

It was within the college proper, however, that this attempt to institutionalize moral training was most obvious. Several steps were taken to ensure the prominence of moral education at Bethany. Prospective students were requested to submit testimonies concerning their character along with other pertinent information required for admission. During the matriculation process students took a moral oath:

⁶⁴ Ibid., 79; Thirteenth Catalogue, 21.

Having carefully read the laws of Bethany College, I do hereby subscribe myself a student thereof. And I do hereby solemnly promise, that during my connection with it, I will faithfully observe and obey all its Rules and Regulations; and particularly that I will be diligent in study, . . . strictly moral in language and conduct . . . ; that I will abstain from every kind of gaming, from the use of intoxicating liquors, and that I will neither keep nor use fire-arms nor any other kind of deadly weapon whatever.⁶⁵

A key element in moral training was the use of the Bible as a textbook, which will be discussed later in this chapter. All college students were required to take Campbell's course on sacred history (one exception to the elective system) in which, of course, he emphasized moral themes. Campbell announced in 1844 that he had already seen "evidences of moral progression" among the students in his Morning Lecture.⁶⁶ Campbell himself took personal responsibility for the moral guidance of Bethany's students:

No institution, literary, civil, or religious, can be long kept pure without strict supervision. I never knew a school or college succeed well destitute of a steady, firm, and scrutinizing discipline.⁶⁷

Other faculty members were also expected to supervise moral behavior; the disciplinary appeal board was made up of all the faculty members. Finally, a student government council was elected "for the preservation of good order among

⁶⁵Fifteenth Catalogue, 21.

⁶⁶Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1844: 431.

⁶⁷Ibid., 1842: 286.

themselves."⁶⁸ Rules were included in the by-laws of the college, annual catalogues, and in the Harbinger and other publications concerning the college:

The Discipline of the College is in harmony with the benevolent object of its founder, in establishing an Institution for the promotion of a pure literature, and a liberal Christian education. Hence no student can be permitted to remain who indulges in card-playing, intemperance, profanity, neglect of study, or any other vice or impropriety.⁶⁹

It is difficult to evaluate the success of Campbell's program for moral education at Bethany. Most of the disciplinary problems were with the younger students of the primary and preparatory departments. In 1842 Campbell reported several cases of "severe discipline": two students expelled, some dismissed for the session, and several "rusticated" ("even among the sons of our most influential and devoted patrons and friends.").⁷⁰ The fact that all of the students, regardless of age, were housed in one dormitory for the first few years was discouraging to Campbell: "we were for a time struggling against oppressive odds in our essays at good moral order and general decorum, with but little apparent success."⁷¹ One function of the student council was to divide Stewart's Inn

⁶⁸ Fifteenth Catalogue, 24.

⁶⁹ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1842: 83.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 81.

⁷¹ Ibid., 240.

into four "wards" with older students supervising the younger ones. Campbell was also disturbed that many saw his concern for moral education at Bethany as an invitation to send "undesirable" students simply for the purpose of moral reformation.

Some . . . have . . . wholly mistaken . . . the intentions of our Institution. They seem to have regarded it as a sort of Penitentiary institution, to which youth of either doubtful or desperate character may be sent in the hope of reformation. . . . We intend a school for the acquisition of learning and science, and for the formation, corroboration, and salvation of moral character.⁷²

Campbell's complaints about the lack of discipline and appropriate moral behavior declined after the dissolution of the primary school. Subsequently, there were only occasional faculty recommendations to trustees for expulsion of students. In 1845 an Alabama student was expelled for attacking a fellow student with a knife; his appeal for reinstatement was denied. Ten years passed before the board of trustees heard another appeal (two students had been expelled for fighting).⁷³ This would indicate that most disciplinary problems were of a minor nature and were resolved by the faculty without further incident. Proper moral conduct also improved as Campbell's objectives for the college became more obvious and the number of students who were Christian and in sympathy with

⁷² Ibid., 80.

⁷³ Woolery, Bethany Years, 73.

Campbell's religious principles increased. Campbell considered the inclusion of moral education a success, and listed "sound morality" among the positive accomplishments of Bethany College in an 1858 evaluation.⁷⁴ In Campbell's concept of moral culture, education was the basis for morality and knowledge was the best defense against vice. He had no use for students whose primary goal was not a liberal education and moral excellence.

The use of the Bible as a textbook was the most common means of ensuring moral education in all departments. Daily Bible reading and recitation were routine in the elementary and preparatory department. The Bible was the standing text in the college's School of Sacred History and Moral Philosophy, which included courses in sacred and ecclesiastical history, evidences of Christianity, Biblical literature, and moral philosophy:

During the prosecution of the above course of study, the Bible is made a text-book of daily study, recitation, and examination. . . . At no period of the college course is the regular study and recitation of the sacred volume intermitted, and it is now made as necessary . . . to stand an approved examination upon this volume, as upon any other text-book, or course of lectures.⁷⁵

Campbell claimed that Bethany was the first chartered college in the United States to be founded exclusively upon

⁷⁴ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1858: 479.

⁷⁵ Fifteenth Catalogue, 13.

the basis of the Bible "as its grand text-book."⁷⁶ This claim can be considered valid only if one first recognizes that not every course at Bethany used the Bible as its chief text (usually only Campbell's classes). It is also important to note that most Biblical studies in the antebellum era were relegated to the graduate theological seminaries or theological departments, not required of all students. Albea Godbold has argued that there was little formal teaching of the Bible in the church colleges of the antebellum South.⁷⁷ Although most catalogues announced that the Bible was a part of the course of instruction and the ministry was at the top of lists of their graduates' occupations, institutions such as Randolph-Macon College, Davidson College, Mercer University, and Greensboro College had no Bible classes or courses that suggested the use of the Bible as a textbook.⁷⁸ Most Bible classes were taught on Sunday in the usually compulsory church school. Godbold has concluded: "Throughout the period prior to the Civil War, college courses for serious, systematic Bible study were relatively few. Regarding them there was more talk

⁷⁶ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1858: 211; 1852: 642.

⁷⁷ Albea Godbold, The Church College of the Old South (Durham: Duke University Press, 1944), 81.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 191-195.

than action."⁷⁹

In his introductory lecture to the Morning Class for the 1859-60 term, Campbell included an apologetic for his use of the Bible as a textbook. He argued that the object of education was to develop the whole person--"physically, intellectually, and morally"--in relation to his future destiny, a goal that required the use of the Bible as the text:

This was our rudimental conception, in the establishment of Bethany College. The Bible is the true theory of man; and being the only book, that contains and imparts this knowledge, it is essential that every school which has for its object the enlightenment and happiness of man should adopt it; not simply as an occasional reading book, but as a preceptive subject of daily consideration.⁸⁰

Campbell made a distinction between "Natural Science" and "Moral Science" and observed that while there are many textbooks that should be used for the former ("because of the large field presented to the vision and understanding of man"), only one "infallible text-book, and that is the Holy Bible--the charter of morality," was appropriate for the latter.⁸¹

As Campbell outlined in his theory of education, the Bible was used to study ancient history, geography,

⁷⁹ Ibid., 125.

⁸⁰ Campbell, Familiar Lectures, 61-63.

⁸¹ Ibid., 65.

chronology, biography, morality, and religion.⁸²

Campbell's Morning Class lectures on the Pentateuch covered a variety of topics ranging from the nature of human beings to the composition of the air. He noted that "the same common sense and common education competent to appreciate the oracles of men is competent to appreciate . . . the oracles of God."⁸³ Campbell's hermeneutic reflected the influence of John Locke and the Scottish Common Sense philosophy and emphasized the inductive method.⁸⁴ The Bible was to be studied "according to the Baconian system of acquiring and communicating truthful and veritable science":

The doctrine of the Bible, on any particular subject of inquiry, can be clearly and satisfactorily ascertained only by a full induction of all that is found in it upon that subject. When the induction is perfect and complete and fully comprehended on any one point, we can never have any more divine light upon that subject. This is our method of learning and of teaching what the Holy Spirit has taught on any given subject.⁸⁵

Consistent with Campbell's philosophy of the use of the Bible in education, Bible facts were to be examined like

⁸² Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1845: 27-28.

⁸³ Ibid., 1858: 212.

⁸⁴ A recent synthesis of Campbell's hermeneutical principles may be found in Michael Casey, "The Origins of the Hermeneutics of the Churches of Christ; Part Two: The Philosophical Background," Restoration Quarterly 31 (Fourth Quarter 1989): 193-206.

⁸⁵ Campbell, Christian Baptism: With Its Antecedents and Consequences (Bethany, Va.: A. Campbell, 1851), 184-185.

those of all subjects: "We teach it as Astronomy and Geology are taught--by analysis and synthesis and not from a priori assumptions and presumptions."⁸⁶

Campbell's view of the importance of the Bible as a textbook was closely tied to his conviction that Bethany was not a sectarian institution: "We teach the Bible as the only infallible text-book in the study of Divinity and humanity. This is Catholic and not Sectarian in its aspects and attitudes."⁸⁷ This argument for catholicity was the same one used by Campbell in justifying the use of the Bible in the common schools. In fact, Campbell maintained that the proper inductive method of examination of the scriptures would prevent sectarian interpretations from distorting Bible facts: "We want no scholastic or traditionary [sic] theology. We desire, however, a much more intimate, critical, and thorough knowledge of the Bible."⁸⁸

Campbell pointed to the fact that Bethany had no school of theology or courses in systematic theology as clear evidence of its nonsectarian character. This was consistent with Campbell's definition of sectarianism--any church that embraced a creed as the definitive statement of

⁸⁶ Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1858: 213.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 1839: 448.

its faith and practice was sectarian. The fundamental principle of Campbell's religious reform was the abandonment of all creeds (and their supporting theological systems) and the adoption of the Bible--especially the New Testament--as the sole authority for church doctrine and government. Article Fourteen of the charter of Bethany College proscribed the establishment of a theological school: "That nothing herein contained shall be so construed as at any time to authorize the establishment of a Theological Professorship in the said College."⁸⁹

Campbell remained adamant in this conviction, even though there were attempts to amend the charter as the college became more exclusively aligned with the Disciples movement. Evidently prompted by a movement among some supporting churches to make Bethany more "denominational" in character, a proposed revision of the charter and by-laws of the college in 1855 omitted Article Fourteen, in order to secure an endowment for a ministerial department. J. P. Robinson and Isaac Errett, two active trustees and influential Disciples church leaders, designed a plan for the Ohio churches to sponsor a department at Bethany for the training of ministers. This department would certainly be construed as "theological" and would be in direct violation of the charter. While Campbell was away on a

⁸⁹ Ibid., 1840: 179.

preaching and fund-raising tour, the trustees gave Robinson and Errett permission to raise funds and W. K. Pendleton announced the scheme in the Millennial Harbinger:

It is not designed to establish a Chair of dogmatic Theology, but to drill the student in the critical study of the Scriptures . . . to give alike inspiration and ornament to the Christian preacher's life.⁹⁰

Pendleton added a footnote to the announcement concerning Campbell's absence:

The Senior Editor having left home some days prior to the receipt of the preceding circular, we lay it before our reader without any remarks from him at present. They will doubtless be submitted in a future number.⁹¹

Oddly enough, however, Campbell made no reference at all to this project in subsequent volumes of the Harbinger. An editorial comment concerning Bethany, written soon after his return, stated that Bethany had been successful for fourteen years and deserved to be liberally endowed to relieve the financial burdens of its officers, but contained no mention of Robinson or Errett.⁹² A later article which recorded an address to a small body of ministers was on the subject of an endowment--for Campbell's own Chair of Sacred History and Bible Literature.⁹³ Campbell probably considered Robinson and

⁹⁰ Ibid., 1855: 475.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 580-581.

⁹³ Ibid., 657.

Errett's efforts as a lack of confidence in his own abilities to educate ministers and hence preferred to endow his chair rather than a new ministerial department. The proposed revision was evidently never voted on and Bethany's charter remained unchanged. Other more pressing issues, such as the fire which destroyed the main building in 1857 and the slavery issue which prompted the dismissal of several students in 1856 and 1857, took precedence over the endowment effort.

Additional attempts to preserve Bethany's nonsectarian character included refusing to make church membership a criterion for admission and providing an open forum within the college for ministers of all denominations. Campbell boasted that in its inaugural year over one-third of his students were "professors of religion"; in 1860 he rejoiced that 72 out of 124 students were members of the church.⁹⁴ Students came to Bethany with a variety of denominational backgrounds, though by 1860 the majority of students were from Disciples churches. Bethany's by-laws stipulated that the College Hall was to be opened every Sunday for worship and instruction, "to be performed by respectable ministers

⁹⁴ Ibid., 1842: 35; 1860: 291; Campbell defined church membership as those persons who professed faith in Jesus Christ, obeyed according to their knowledge, and visibly participated in a local Christian congregation. In this case, he was not referring specifically to members of his own communion, even though one can assume that most of these students did indeed have a Disciples background.

of various denominations."⁹⁵ Free tuition was offered to "ministers of the gospel, and pious young men of indigent circumstance, preparing for the ministry in any of the religious denominations."⁹⁶

How can Bethany be considered a nonsectarian institution when its purpose was so clearly connected with Campbell's religious movement, drew most of its support from Disciples churches, and instructed ministerial and other students in Campbell's theological principles and ecclesiastical reforms? Campbell's Familiar Lectures on the Pentateuch contained nearly all of these fundamental principles and reforms and his "extemporaneous" lectures focused on long-familiar themes. One-third of the Bethany graduates (97 out of 301) during the Campbell years were trained for the ministry. The majority of these ministers served Disciples churches. Campbell referred to Bethany, Bacon College, and Franklin College as "our colleges" in the Millennial Harbinger.⁹⁷ Does this not indicate sectarian status?

An examination of the definition of sectarianism in the early nineteenth century may be helpful in this evaluation of Bethany College. Horace Holley, minister of

⁹⁵ Ibid., 1842: 30.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 1845: 30.

the Hollis Street Unitarian Church in Boston and later president of Transylvania University in Lexington, connected sectarianism with strict adherence to a creed; an example of this was Princeton Theological Seminary: "Every person, elected to a professorship in this Seminary, shall . . . solemnly subscribe to the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, and Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church. . . ." ⁹⁸ This zealous guardianship of articles of faith and church government was perpetuated, Holley argued, because of a fear of the Andoverians' supposed corrupting influence on the Westminster Creed. He concluded that "the two can never meet, till one shall yield, or both exchange their human compositions for the Word of God." ⁹⁹ This is the same solution Campbell would have proposed.

Holley went on to make a distinction between "catholic" educational institutions and "sectarian" ones:

We shall use the word catholic, for those colleges which adopt the Bible as the rule of faith without any supplement, and whose system of instruction favors rational and simple Christianity. Any man is a sectarian, whether Papist or Protestant, who insists upon others subscribing to a creed, or standard, of his own or his party, beside the Bible, in order to Christian communion [*sic*]. . . . The general standard of faith, i.e. the standard which all Christians profess to receive, is the Bible. The party standard is the given creed of the sect. Those who have separated from the standard left by Christ and his

⁹⁸ Richard Hofstadter and Wilson Smith, eds., American Higher Education: A Documentary History, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 1:182.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

apostles are sectarians. Those who hold to it are the true catholics.¹⁰⁰

Although Campbell would have disagreed with Holley's theology, he would have supported his definition of sectarianism.

Philip Lindsley, President of the University of Nashville, commented on the problems of sectarian competition among the colleges of the West and included in his criticism certain criteria which defined the nature of sectarianism: (1) all of the worship services at the college were directed by the one sect; (2) inequalities existed between students who were members of the sect and students who were not; (3) the college refused access to its facilities to members of other traditions; (4) the college was situated in a secluded rural area away from easy public access; and (5) party names were jealously guarded.¹⁰¹ According to this standard, Bethany, with the exception of its rural location, would not have been considered sectarian.

Therefore, according to Campbell's definition and that of at least two of his contemporaries, Bethany was not a sectarian institution:

It is not a theological school, founded upon theology nor a school of divinity, founded upon the Bible; but a literary and scientific institution, founded upon the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 187-188.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

Bible as the basis of all true science and true learning.¹⁰²

By modern standards, however, Bethany obviously served the interests of the Disciples movement and was clearly a denominational school. Perhaps one way to resolve this impasse is to refer to David B. Potts' contention that "the current historical conception of the denominational college more closely coincides with realities of institutional development after rather than before 1850."¹⁰³ Potts has argued that most antebellum colleges were more local than denominational in orientation and control. Bethany fits Potts' model for localism: primarily local trustees, elementary and preparatory schools which served the community, and the involvement of the professors in the community through lectures and literary society exhibitions. Bethany took on a more denominational--the modern counterpart to sectarian--character after the death of Alexander Campbell, as the Disciples movement experienced unprecedented growth in membership and began to forge institutional organizations and networks. During the Campbell years Bethany, like the movement itself,

¹⁰²Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, 1850: 221.

¹⁰³David B. Potts, "American Colleges in the Nineteenth Century: From Localism to Denominationalism," History of Education Quarterly 11 (Winter 1971): 363.

maintained its nonsectarian status.¹⁰⁴ Perry Gresham has contended that Campbell's primary motivation was not the advancement of his own movement:

His argument for the founding of Bethany College was that the country needed good institutions of higher learning and that it was the responsibility of this nascent religious body to do its share in providing them. That college training would redound to the benefit of his movement he did not doubt. He believed, however, that a college should exist for the enrichment of the lives of the students and the improvement of society and should not be prostituted to the advancement of any particular sect.¹⁰⁵

As a postscript to Campbell's work as an educator one should mention his influence on the educational tradition of the Disciples of Christ. Over one hundred colleges, academies, seminaries, institutes, orphan schools, and Normal schools were established by Disciples before the Civil War.¹⁰⁶ These institutions often reflected Campbell's "true theory" of education, the curriculum of Bethany College, and his particular concerns for moral

¹⁰⁴There is heated debate among Disciples as to when or if the movement became a "church" in the denominational sense. Resolution of that issue--if possible--is outside the scope of this study.

¹⁰⁵Gresham, Campbell and the Colleges, 51.

¹⁰⁶Claude E. Spencer, "Educational Institutions of Disciples of Christ," (Unpublished paper, Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1955). Disciples colleges founded in the antebellum era included Bacon College (Georgetown, Kentucky, 1836), Franklin College (Nashville, 1845), Eureka College (Eureka, Illinois, 1848), Hiram College (Hiram, Ohio, 1850), Northwestern Christian University (later Butler University; Indianapolis, 1850), and Culver-Stockton College (Canton, Missouri, 1853). All of these colleges except Franklin survived the Civil War.

education and use of the Bible as a textbook. Robert Richardson has noted Campbell's influence upon these schools:

The talented and educated preachers sent out from Bethany College were at this time giving a great impulse to the cause of the Reformation throughout the Western States. New colleges, high schools and female seminaries were springing up under their influence . . . sensible of their indebtedness to Mr. Campbell's energy and foresight. . . .¹⁰⁷

Most of these antebellum educational institutions did not survive the Civil War, however, but they provided the first chapter in a significant tradition within the movement which continues to the present. It would be difficult to evaluate the degree of loyalty that these schools had to Campbell's educational theory, but, as John Morrison has observed:

. . . if not all the branches, at least the roots of this almost frenzied founding of colleges come from Campbell's incinerative awakening of his people to their educational responsibilities.¹⁰⁸

Although Campbell lived until 1866, the beginning of the Civil War marked an end to his active career. Bethany College remained open during the war years but the number of students and financial support were severely diminished. By 1861 there were seven full-time professors at Bethany besides Campbell; and he had surrendered much of his

¹⁰⁷ Richardson, Memoirs, 2:595.

¹⁰⁸ John L. Morrison, "Alexander Campbell: Moral Educator of the Middle Frontier," West Virginia History 36 (April 1975): 195.

teaching load and wrote only occasionally for the Harbinger. In December 1864, amid failing health at age 77, Campbell relinquished all teaching duties and turned over the editorship of the Harbinger to W. K. Pendleton. Campbell died on Sunday, March 4, 1866.

Campbell constructed and refined his philosophy of education through practical experience. The establishment of Buffalo Seminary was important in the development of several central components of his educational views. Bethany College was his intentional attempt to put these principles into practice. Campbell considered himself to have succeeded in this endeavor and also in his attempt to make a significant contribution to the amelioration of society:

Our College . . . is the offspring of a deep and long established conviction that the theory and practice of education are yet greatly behind the onward progress of the age, and that to improve education . . . is . . . most likely to improve and reform the world.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Introductory Addresses delivered at the Organization of Bethany College . . . with an Appendix containing the By-laws of the Institution (Bethany, Va.: A. Campbell, 1841), 81.

EPILOGUE

In his "Memorial Discourse" at the funeral service for his friend and associate Alexander Campbell, D. S. Burnet declared: "The lives of distinguished men are the property of the public; not only of the generation they serve, but of all succeeding generations."¹ Campbell was recognized as a "distinguished man" by his contemporaries. James Madison exclaimed that "it was my pleasure to hear him very often as a preacher of the gospel, and I regard him as the ablest and most original expounder of the Scriptures I have ever heard."² In the audience at the Campbell-Owen debate was Frances Trollope, the English observer of American society, who commented on Campbell's skill as a debater and his amiable personality: "Mr. Campbell . . . quizzed Mr. Owen most unmercifully, pinched him here for his parallelograms; hit him there for his human perfectability,

¹D. S. Burnet, A Memorial Discourse on the Occasion of the Death of President Alexander Campbell (Baltimore: Innes and Maguire, 1866), 3.

²Robert Richardson, ed., Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lipincott and Co., 1868, 1871), 2:313.

and kept the whole audience in a roar of laughter."³ She noted that neither opponent lost his temper and seemed surprised to discover that Campbell and Owen dined together each evening "and on all occasions expressed most cordially their mutual esteem."⁴ Hugh Grigsby's fears that the presence of a clergyman such as Campbell at the Virginia Constitutional Convention might lead to undue controversy were "soon dispelled" by Campbell's demeanor and conduct:

In his personal appearance, in his dress and manners, in his style of speaking, he was a man of the world; and it would not have been suspected that he was other than a layman. . . . He had a great fund of humor. . . . He was a fine scholar, and, with the younger members of the body who relished his amusing thrusts, his pleasant address and social feelings rendered him very acceptable. As a controvertist he had some great qualities; he was bold, subtle, indefatigable, and as insensible to attack as if he were sheathed in the hide of a rhinoceros.⁵

Although Madison's contention that Campbell was best known "as a theologian" was correct, his peers saw him in several different roles: farmer, lecturer, debater, author, publisher, postmaster, convention delegate, and, of course, educator.⁶

The "succeeding generations," however, know Alexander

³Frances Trollope, Domestic Manners of the Americans (London: Whittaker, Treacher, and Co., 1832), 209.

⁴Ibid., 212.

⁵Hugh Grigsby, The Virginia Convention of 1829-30: A Discourse Delivered before the Virginia Historical Society (Richmond: MacFarland and Ferguson, 1854), 68.

⁶Richardson, Memoirs, 2:313.

Campbell almost exclusively as a religious reformer. Many connect him solely with the religious revival on the American frontier or with the denomination he founded. His theological and philosophical background, religious principles, and efforts leading to the establishment and growth of his influential movement have been well documented by scholars. No story or analysis of religion in nineteenth century America is complete without reference to Campbell.

This study accentuates the need to view Campbell in a new context. He was, in Grigsby's words, "a man of the world." He was not an isolated individual, wrapped up in his church reform efforts or oblivious to his surroundings. Campbell was a man of incredible energy and intellect, a multi-dimensional figure who addressed the social issues of his day, as well as his religious concerns. His role as a social reformer deserves serious scholarly attention, to understand better both Campbell and the historical period in which he lived. All aspects of his varied life's work must be explored.

What was Campbell's legacy in the realm of social reform? Nearly all of the antebellum reformers' themes may be found in his writings: peace, temperance, anti-slavery, women's rights, and prison and asylum conditions. His work on behalf of these causes, however, would not warrant his consideration as a reformer of society. Rather, Campbell

deserves a place among the other prominent religious leaders of antebellum social reform because of his accomplishments as an educator.

Campbell's "true theory" of education broadened the definition of "school" to include the home and church, as well as formal private and public institutions of learning. The emphasis on family education, and Campbell's persistent attempt to foster the family setting at his own schools, reflected his conviction that the school cannot and must not replace the home and church in the socialization and moral training of children. The school itself, whether public or private, could never be fully responsible for the development of the intellectual and moral nature of men and women.

Yet, as much emphasis as Campbell placed upon the necessity of the establishment of common schools, it was clear that he did not rely solely on schools for the elimination of crime, poverty, or other social problems or for the reformation of society. Free government-supported public schools were just one component in an educational system that combined school, home, and church in one "grand scheme" of education. His dissemination of new educational ideas through his publications, work on behalf of the common school movement in local communities and in legislative halls, and establishment of a school like Bethany College qualify Campbell for consideration as one

of the leading educators of the antebellum period.

Robert Richardson's final chapter of Campbell's Memoirs attempted to summarize Campbell's "success as a reformer." Richardson asserted that Campbell "had left upon the religious and educational endeavors of the age the impress of his power."⁷ Had Campbell a lasting influence--a legacy? Richardson offered this tentative conclusion:

In the slow progress of human affairs time must be allowed for the operation of great principles and for the building up of mighty structures. Thus far the results of Mr. Campbell's labors have been, it must be confessed, most extensive and remarkable. As to the future--it has as yet no history.⁸

⁷ Ibid., 2:671.

⁸ Ibid.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE OF ALEXANDER CAMPBELL*

- 1788 Born, September 12, in Antrim, Ireland
- 1795 Began formal education at Market Hill School, Newry, Ireland
- 1800 Began tutelage under his father, Thomas Campbell
- 1807 After father sailed to America, Campbell became head of the Rich Hill Academy (for young females)
- (October) Campbell and family shipwrecked off coast of Scotland en route to America; decision to enter the ministry
- 1808 Enrolled at Glasgow University
- 1809 Campbell and family arrived in Washington, Pennsylvania and rejoined Thomas Campbell
- Declaration and Address published by Thomas Campbell
- Christian Association of Washington formed
- 1810 Published the "Clarinda" essays; first preaching tour
- 1811 Assumed leadership of the incipient Disciples Movement
- Marriage to Margret Brown, March 12
- 1812 Daughter, Jane, born March 13
- Campbell's Brush Run Church received into the Redstone Baptist Association
- 1813 Daughter, Eliza, born September 13

*Adapted from John P. Thompson, "Alexander Campbell: His Life and Thought, 1827-1837" (B.D. thesis, University of Missouri, 1967), 129-142.

- 1814 Received farm (550 acres in Bethany, Virginia) from father-in-law, John Brown
- 1815 Daughter, Maria Louisa, born November 20
- 1816 Preached "Sermon on the Law" which marked the beginning of the separation of the Disciples and Baptist churches
- 1818 Opened Buffalo Seminary for young males
- Daughter, Lavinia, born January 17
- First meeting with Walter Scott, who later emerged as major leader within the Disciples Movement
- Wrote the "Candidus" letters on moral societies
- 1820 First debate (with John Walker, Presbyterian minister)
- Daughter, Amanda, born in August and died shortly thereafter
- Mahoning Baptist Association formed (Ohio)
- 1821 Daughter, Clarinda, born July 4
- 1822 Son, John Brown, born November
- 1823 Began publication of the Christian Baptist
- Formal withdrawal of the Brush Run Church from the Redstone Baptist Association
- Debated Robert McCalla (Mason County, Kentucky)
- Toured Kentucky churches with Barton W. Stone
- Daughter, Margretta, born December 16
- 1825 Publication of series of twenty-seven articles on the "Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things" in the Christian Baptist
- 1826 Death of Margretta
- 1827 Published his "authorized version" of the New Testament
- Death of wife, Margret, October 22

- 1828 Disciples churches reached significant numbers on
 the Western Reserve
- Expanded farm with importation of Merino and
 Saxony sheep
- Marriage to Selina Blakewell
- 1829 Debate with Robert Owen in Cincinnati, Ohio
- Selected as a delegate to the Virginia
 Constitutional Convention
- 1830 Began publication of the Millennial Harbinger
 (discontinued publication of the Christian Baptist)
- 1831 Daughter, Jane, died in June
- Son, Alexander, Jr., born
- 1832 Formal union of the Stone and Campbell churches
- 1834 Daughter, Virginia, born
- Mother, Jane Corneigle Campbell, died
- 1835 Published first of several editions of a hymnal
- 1836 Dr. Robert Richardson (Campbell's biographer)
 joined staff of the Millennial Harbinger
- Published Christian System
- Addressed the College of Teachers in Cincinnati
- 1837 Debated Roman Catholic Archbishop John Purcell
 in Cincinnati
- Son, Wickliffe, born June 24
- Debated Skinner (Universalist) and Lynd (Baptist)
 in Cincinnati
- 1839 Daughter, Eliza, died July 9
- 1840 Bethany College chartered with Campbell as
 President
- Daughter, Decima, born October 12

- 1841 Keynote Address at Virginia regional education convention in Clarksville
Daughter, Maria, died September 14
Bethany College opened (October)
- 1842 Son, William, born and died shortly thereafter
- 1843 Debated N. L. Rice in Lexington
- 1845 Second address to the College of Teachers in Cincinnati
- 1846 Daughter, Lavinia, died May 29
- 1847 Toured "Europe" (primarily England, Ireland, and Scotland); imprisoned in Scotland because of disagreements over his supposedly pro-slavery views
Son, Wickliffe, drowned during his absence
- 1851 Daughter, Clarinda, died January 10
- 1852 Addressed State Legislature of Missouri
- 1853 Addressed Kentucky State Constitutional Convention
- 1854 Father, Thomas Campbell, died January 4
- 1857 Main building at Bethany College destroyed by fire
- 1858 Tour through South to raise funds for rebuilding; Bethany College re-opened
- 1860 Published Popular Lectures and Addresses
- 1861 Published Life of Thomas Campbell
- 1864 Relinquished editorship of the Millennial Harbinger
- 1866 Died, March 4, at Bethany

VITA

L. Thomas Smith, Jr. was born on December 25, 1956 in Elizabethton, Tennessee. He attended public schools in Carter County, Tennessee, graduating from Hampton High School in 1974. After attending Milligan College, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Johnson Bible College (1978), Knoxville, Tennessee and a Master of Arts in Religion degree from Emmanuel School of Religion, Johnson City, Tennessee (1986). He received a Doctor of Philosophy degree in History from the University of Tennessee in May 1990.