

Book Review  
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*Alexander Campbell and His New Version* by Cecil K. Thomas, Eugene OR, Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011, 224, ISBN: 13: 978-1-61097-563-6, \$25.00.

This book is based upon a dissertation presented to the faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Theology by the author.

Cecil K. Thomas, the author, reviews the production by Alexander Campbell of a new translation the first of which debuted in 1826. The author develops his review of Campbell's work in two parts. Part One regards the production and publication of the New Version. It consists of four chapters. Part Two discusses the principles utilized by Campbell in the production of the New Version and consists of five chapters. The book concludes with appendixes, bibliography, an index of New Testament passages and a general index.

Alexander Campbell argued for a new translation of the Scriptures based on two primary points. The first is the change in meaning of English terms from the time of the printing of the King James Version until his day (19th Century). The second was the need to recover the ancient Greek text, free from the errors of manuscript copying.

In the Introduction, Luther Weigle mentions the one obvious defect of Campbell's translation. "He tended to substitute ornate words of Latin derivation for the ordinary words of common use." This is illustrated by the phrases, "A city situate on a mountain must be conspicuous," and "Whoever commits murder shall be obnoxious to the judges" (14).

Chapter One addresses the subject, "A Nineteenth-Century 'New Version.'" In 1826, Campbell published a new version of the New Testament. The work of translation was not done by Campbell. Instead, Campbell published the works of George Campbell of Aberdeen on the Gospels, James McKnight's commentary on the Epistles, and Philip Doddridge's work on the Acts and Revelation. Campbell desired to add prefaces to the work, critical notes, and emendations to Campbell, McKnight and Doddridge's works made from translations and from the Greek text (showing the latest critical analysis of the best manuscripts available). Campbell relied on the Greek text of Griesbach for his emendations. On April 19, 1826, Campbell announced that the New Version was off the press. The title page reads, "*The Sacred Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ, commonly styled the New Testament.*" The first printing consisted of about two thousand copies (20). Campbell designed the new version for popular reading and desired to give the reader adequate information to be able to understand the Scriptures. Some obscure passages were clarified. Archaic readings were modernized. Campbell used "nonecclesiastical" words such as "favor" for grace and "immersion" for baptism. Both George Campbell and James Macknight maintained in their notes that the original meaning of the Greek word was "immerse" (33). Campbell never used the term "Holy Ghost" in his new version. He used "congregation" instead of "church." Campbell did not use "hell" to translate the Greek word *haidēs*, instead he transliterated it "hades." Campbell also included results

from New Testament critical study. Thomas gives extensive illustrations of Campbell's version where he adjusted the text according to Griesbach's Greek text. "This venture became more daring when, in the third edition of 1832, many of these questionable passages were omitted altogether from the text and relegated to a section of the appendix, where they were listed as spurious readings" (40).

Thomas addresses the revision of the "New Version" in chapter two. The revision was worked on in earnest in 1828 and in January, 1829, orders were being filled. One of the most notable changes in the text was the adoption of modern pronouns instead of the archaic, and the dropping of "eth" from verb forms (45). The second edition failed to meet Campbell's expectations regarding size and readable font size. The third edition was produced and dated 1832 though not distributed until 1833. Campbell proceeded to make a Family Testament and later a pocket edition. The Pocket Testament (1835) was stereotyped from the Third Edition. It is designated a Fourth Edition in the preface, but was not called a "Fourth Edition." The Fourth Edition appeared in 1835 (59). Thomas was not able to find any trace of a Fifth Edition. The Sixth Edition of the Family Testament was dated 1839 (61). The publication of the stereotyped Pocket Testament and the fourth edition of the Family Testament may easily account for the fourth and fifth editions (62). Both the Pocket Testament and the Family Testament went through multiple printings. In addition to the American editions, several editions were printed abroad. Thomas gives many details of each of these editions. This section serves as the most comprehensive information on the various editions of Campbell's work that is in print.

In chapter three, Thomas reviews the public response to the New Version. He gives both the positive and negative responses. The widespread use of the New Version among Campbell's followers is an indication of its popularity. In 1842, Campbell wrote that forty thousand copies had been distributed, but he felt the number should have been even greater among a fellowship of 200,000 (69). Edmund Waller went on record as burning a copy of the version. Some said it was not the word of God. Many Baptists opposed it because it read differently than the King James Version. Specific readings were criticized. Some objected to the use of textual criticism. Campbell himself was accused of being a heretic.

Chapter four is titled, Editor Turned Revisor. Thomas gives the account of Campbell's venture into independent translation. Campbell translated the book of Acts for the American Bible Union. Thomas relates the history of conflict within the American Bible Society and the American and Foreign Bible Society. Out of these conflicts, the American Bible Union was developed. On June 10, 1850, the American Bible Union was organized. The constitution provided that the purpose of the Union was "to procure and circulate the most faithful versions of the Sacred Scriptures *in all languages* throughout the world" (90). At the 1852 Convention rules were adopted for creating a new translation. The Greek text to be used was Bagster's and Sons, octavo edition of 1851. Campbell was employed to translate the book of Acts. His work of revision was completed in 1855. He received \$1,000 for the work but donated the entire amount to the Union. A small preliminary edition of the whole New Testament was issued by the American Bible Union in 1864 (94). A Family and Pulpit Edition of the New Testament, finally revised, was issued as the Second Edition in 1866 (94). Thomas gives an analysis of the sources used by Campbell to accomplish the

translation and the characteristics of the translation from word choice to textual emendations.

Part Two of the book commences with chapter five. Thomas attempts to disclose the principles that guided Alexander Campbell in the production of his New Version and translation of the book of Acts. Chapter five deals with Reason, Revelation, and Faith. Alexander Campbell's view of knowledge involved two areas. The first is that which can be known by the five senses (natural knowledge). The second is that which is revealed by God (supernatural knowledge) (119). Reason pertains to natural knowledge and revelation pertains to supernatural knowledge. By means of reason, one can compare and classify the qualities and properties of material objects. Revelation is "a disclosure of things *unknowable* by any other means in the reach of mortals" (119). Revelation pertains to supernatural things. To Campbell, revelation now is a matter of history or testimony and is contained in the Bible. "The character of the Bible is such that we may recognize it axiomatically as true" (120). Campbell rejected the idea of natural religion and innate ideas (121). Campbell believed that it is by faith that we can know that God exists and that He is the Creator of all things. Campbell reviewed a sermon by Dr. Caldwell of Transylvania University where Caldwell argued that through reason the philosopher could look up "through nature's works to nature's God." Campbell asserted that the Bible "declares that it is by faith and not by reason that men can know the world was created. It declares that we must believe that God exists--and that we cannot reason ourselves into a knowledge that God exists" (122) (*Christian Baptist*, Oct. 3, 1825, p. 72). Campbell affirmed that religious truth consisted of whatever God, or some one deputed by him, has spoken (124). The communications referred to deal with spiritual things, especially with man's relations with God. These communications are to be used as "first and fixed principles never to be called in question, as rules and measures by which all moral principles are to be tried" (124). A "Thus says the Lord" settles all disputes and becomes authoritative in all questions dealing with the spiritual and eternal world (124) (*Millennial Harbinger*, 1832, 97,98,99). Thomas also addresses Campbell's view of faith. The main difference between faith and knowledge is that when we have witnessed a fact ourselves we are said to *know* it. When it is reported to us by credible persons, we may be said to *believe* it. Faith is testimony believed. Campbell concluded that the natural order is fact, testimony and then faith. Campbell believed that faith is assent to testimony and consent and reception of it.

Chapter Six examines the important problem of inspiration. Thomas investigates Campbell's understanding of the difference between history and supernaturally revealed truth; how the Holy Spirit supernaturally guided the writers of the New Testament; the authority of the Scriptures; and the nature of biblical language. Campbell gives a distinction between revelation and inspiration. "There are, narrated in the Bible, many historical facts which it would be absurd to call an immediate revelation from God. The term "revelation" must be limited to the communication of spiritual and eternal truths by God himself. Inspiration, on the other hand, can be applied to guidance given to the writers, whether in things "human" or things supernatural. Jesus' promise of leading the apostles into all truth and of bringing all things to their remembrance by the Holy Spirit, includes "all that we understand by inspiration in its primary and secondary import" (133).

Campbell believed that the sacred writers were infallible. The infallibility of the writers of the New Testament extended to the record of divine communications and the narratives which the writers related as well (132).

Campbell also defined the manner in which the Spirit guided the eight writers of the New Testament. "...while the ideas were suggested by the Holy Spirit, the inspired person was left to the choice of words and to his own mode of expressing himself; and therefore we find each of them distinguished by idiomatic or peculiar modes of expression, as much as by his own name. Though we must regard these writers as using their own modes of speech, and as selecting their own words, both in speaking and writing; yet, so plenary was their inspiration that they could not select an improper term or a word not in accordance with the mind of the Spirit" (134, *Millennial Harbinger*, 1834, pp. 200, 201).

Campbell believed that the Bible was the final, complete and authoritative word of God to mankind. He rejected latter day revelation claims.

Campbell also believed and taught that God communicated to man in language that could be understood, believed and obeyed. Thomas gives an important quote from Campbell, "We will only premise one sentence, viz. that as God kindly revealed himself, his will, and our salvation in human language, the words of human language, which he used for this purpose, must have been used by his Spirit in the commonly received sense amongst mankind generally; else it could not have been a revelation; for a revelation in words not understood in the common sense is no revelation at all" (139, *Christian Baptist*, Dec. 1, 1823, p. 121). Consequently, the words of Scripture are to be interpreted according to the same rules of interpretation applied to all writings of the same antiquity; or, indeed, to any human writings, ancient or modern (139). Campbell rejected the necessity of special guidance from the Holy Spirit in order to understand the Bible (139).

In chapter seven, Thomas addresses the principles of interpretation of the Scriptures. Campbell rejected the rationalistic approach to biblical interpretation and he rejected the traditional approach. He favored the grammatical-historical approach which was practiced in America, especially in the Andover school by Moses Stuart. This approach used both the historical information and the literary and grammatical context to interpret Scripture. Campbell also rejected the spiritual or allegorical method and wrote against it (144). Campbell believed that every person has the right of personal judgment and can investigate the Scriptures for himself. For Campbell, the Scriptures are the final authority not church dogma. Campbell also emphasized the use of common sense in interpretation of the Scriptures. Thomas then proceeds to enumerate the specific rules and practices of the interpreter given by Campbell. There are too many to list here, but are found on pages 154-168. By giving these rules, Campbell realized the need for a sound hermeneutic process in order to correctly interpret the Scriptures. This is a valuable section of the book.

The tribulations of the translator are discussed in chapter eight. Campbell was dissatisfied with the King James Version, though he respected it. He felt that the aim of the translator was to keep the Bible in the living language of the people. The KJV contained language that was difficult to understand for the contemporary student of the Bible. Campbell objected to the KJV on two primary grounds. The first was theological. He believed that the KJV reflected the bias of Anglicanism (172). The

second was linguistic. The language reflected a different time and period and needed to be updated or modernized (173). Campbell maintained that the translator must be a person who possessed great skill. The translator must seek fidelity to the original languages and thought of the author rather than seek to be novel. He also believed that the translator must be honest. He believed that there was a difference between translation and revision. The translator has much freedom in the selection of wording and style. A reviser can use new words and make new sentences, but must preserve the style and the verbiage of the work which he revises. The translator or reviser must make judgments regarding the choice of words to be used to convey meaning. This word choice is one of the tribulations of translation.

Chapter nine concludes the second part of the book. This chapter represents the evaluations and conclusion that the author draws from Campbell's New Version and his ideas regarding the work of translation. Thomas identifies two principles that guided Alexander Campbell in his work. First, the Scriptures are to be interpreted by the same principles as is any other literature (181). Second, that the Scriptures should be translated into the vernacular in such a way that they could be understood by the common reader as well as by the theologian or scholar (182). Campbell followed the Greek text of Griesbach which was considered by him to represent the best textual criticism of his day. Modern scholars have followed this theory of textual criticism. Campbell's revision reflects the changes in the Greek text that Griesbach introduced. Campbell used common words of his day to translate Ecclesiastical terms like *baptism* which became *immersion*. Campbell's New Version was and is known as an immersionist Bible. He substituted *congregation* for *church*. He used *institution* for *testament* or *covenant* even though it was highly ambiguous and *testament* was the contemporary term in his day. He made a distinction between *hell* and *hades*. He distinguished between *preach* and *teach* based upon the Greek words. He also distinguished between *repent* (Campbell's word was *reform*) and *regret* (Campbell's word was *repent*). In the final section in this chapter, Thomas shows how some modern translators may have relied upon Campbell's version for their own work in translation (191-205).

The book concludes with two Appendices. Appendix I gives a list of the works of Alexander Campbell relating to the interpretation and translation of the New Testament. Appendix II gives a list of the versions and editions used by Alexander Campbell, i.e., Greek, Latin, Greek-English, and English. The lists presented in these appendices are a reflection of the books included in Campbell's library.

The book also has a Bibliography, an Index of New Testament Passages and a General Index.