

Book Review  
A Life of Alexander Campbell

*A Life of Alexander Campbell*, by Douglas A. Foster, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2020, 345, ISBN: 978-0-8028-7633-1; \$29.99.

*A Life of Alexander Campbell* by Douglas A. Foster is part of The Library of Religious Biography series edited by Mark A. Noll, Kathryn Gin Lum, and Heath W. Carter. This series explores the lives of religious leaders who had a significant impact on American history and culture.

Foster's work is a critical biography of the life of Alexander Campbell who was a leading influence in the early 19th century in America for the restoration of New Testament Christianity. The Restoration Movement (referred to by Foster as the Stone-Campbell Movement) is the largest indigenous religious movement in American history. Campbell's work not only was felt in America, but was truly international in its scope.

The book is divided into five sections with twenty-one chapters. Sections two and three constitute the bulk of the work. Section one examines the formative years in Ireland, Scotland, and America that would shape Campbell's career. The second section, focuses on the formation of his reform agenda. The third, details the rise of opposition to his agenda and his defense of it. The fourth, examines the final years of his life. Finally, Foster closes with a summation of Campbell's legacy.

The book begins with a preface where the author answers the question, "Why a biography of Alexander Campbell?" The preface is followed by acknowledgments. The book contains pictures, maps and other graphics that provide illustrations and give details of Campbell's life.

Section One, chapter one, gives the historical background that shaped the political and religious aspects of Ireland. Foster begins with the Scottish Reformation and the glorious revolution of 1688 which details the intertwining of the political and religious forces that shaped Ireland. There were significant tensions between Catholic and Protestant forces. Ireland remained predominantly Catholic up to 1609 when James I began the "plantation of Ulster" which moved English Anglicans and Scottish Presbyterians from Britain to the northernmost province of Ireland (9). This began a significant division of Ireland into Catholic and Protestant religious groups. The Ireland that Alexander Campbell was born into in 1788 was rife with religious, social, and political strife (13). Campbell's father, Thomas, was ordained as a minister in the Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian Synod of Ulster a body reflecting all of the internal Presbyterian divisions. As a Seceder, Thomas opposed the practice of "patronage." Patronage was the long-established custom that gave the hereditary owner of property donated to build a parish church the right to select and install the minister. Through patronage, it was possible that a Catholic could be appointed as a minister in a church. Opposition to patronage was an anti-Catholic stance. By 1745 the Seceders had grown large enough to form the Associate Synod. Thomas was a staunch Scottish Presbyterian who believed that he was part of the true church in contrast to the compromisers in the main body of the Church of Scotland (12). Not long after this, the Seceders divided into two groups labeled Burghers and Anti-burghers. Burgesses

were city officials. They were required to take a loyalty oath to the monarch George II and a list of other British authorities. They were required to declare that they held to “the true religion presently professed within this realm, and authorized by the laws thereof and that they would abide in and defend that faith to their life’s end” (12-13). In addition, they renounced the Roman Papistry. The controversy was over whether Seceders could legitimately take this “Burgess Oath.” Those who opposed the oath were called Anti-Burghers and called themselves the General Associate Synod. Later, these Anti-Burghers excommunicated all Burgher ministers (13). Thomas belonged to this synod. Still another division arose between “New Lights” and “Old Lights.” This controversy was over the section of the Westminster Confession of Faith that gave civil magistrates the authority to suppress ‘all blasphemies and heresies,’ and to prevent or reform “all corruptions and abuses in worship”, and to call and preside over synods (13). “Old Lights” supported this role of civil rulers. “New Lights” opposed it. Thomas belonged to the “Old Lights (21).” “New Lights” also tended toward easing strict adherence to Calvinistic doctrine, stressed the offer of salvation to all, advocated disestablishment of the state church, and challenged intolerance and the disposition to conflict (13-14). Foster affirms that Thomas’ attitudes seemed to align him more with the sentiments of the “New Lights” than his own group (21).

Chapter two of section one looks at the formation of Thomas Campbell, Alexander’s father. Thomas Campbell’s father, Archibald, converted from Catholicism to the established Church of Ireland after serving in the British military in America during the Seven Year’s War. Thomas was the oldest son of Archibald and when he was mature enough to make his own decisions, he became a Seceder Presbyterian part of the Anti-Burgher Synod of Ulster (Northern Ireland). Foster also reveals the political conditions at the time and how they were intertwined with the conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. When Alexander was seven years old, the Battle of the Diamond took place just ten miles from his family’s home at Market Hill. When he was ten years old, in May, 1798, one of the most significant events in modern Irish history began—the United Irishmen’s rebellion. This rebellion lasted from May to September. The British were able to put down the rebellion. In the months during the fighting Thomas Campbell’s church came under suspicion of sympathizing with the rebels. The church survived the scrutiny by the British, but the tensions continued to exist between both political and religious factions. Thomas was licensed to preach in 1791 by the Anti-Burgher Seceder Synod of Ulster. In 1798, he became the minister of the newly established church in the village of Ahorey. Also, in 1798, Thomas founded the Evangelical Society of Ulster(ESU). The aim of this organization was to decrease the antagonisms wracking Ireland and his religious group. His own Synod opposed his participation in the ESU and eventually in 1800 his name disappears from the society’s records. Thomas continued to work for unity among the Seceder groups but his efforts failed. Alexander was now 18 years old and watched his father’s attempts at unity fail. Thomas also developed a debilitating illness. His doctors recommended a sea voyage. April 8, 1807, he set sail for America. He arrived in Philadelphia after a thirty-five day voyage. Alexander was left at home until Thomas sent for the family. Thomas was welcomed by the Associate Synod of North America and assigned to the Charters Presbytery in western Pennsylvania. He settled near the town of Washington, Pennsylvania. His association with the new Presbytery did not

last long. Campbell offered communion to individuals who did not belong to the Seceder Presbyterians. For this he was censured. The Charters Presbytery refused to give him preaching assignments. In May, 1809, he submitted a document titled, "Declaration and Address to the Associate Synod" in which he removed himself from their authority (26). Later, Thomas introduced a principle to a group meeting at the home of Abraham Altars as they attempted to form a new direction. The principle was, "where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." It was one of many principles that Campbell believed would help bring about unity. Some in the group feared that accepting this principle would mean an end to infant baptism. Campbell assured them it would not. The group directed Campbell to write a statement of what they were about and how they would be organized. Campbell produced his second, "Declaration and Address" of the year (26). He proposed that the group be called, "Christian Association of Washington." The desire of the group was to promote simple evangelical Christianity. In January, 1808, Thomas sent word to his family to join him in America. Alexander was twenty years old when he began the journey to the new land. The voyage would be interrupted by a ten month delay. During this time, Alexander experienced some education at the University of Glasgow which would serve to shape his mind for future work.

Chapter three of section one, focuses on the formation of the mind of Alexander Campbell. Foster identifies several major influences on the development of Campbell's intellectual powers. The first is Campbell's early years in Northern Ireland and his experiences in the Presbyterian Church that his father served which produced a strong anti-Catholicism. Campbell's own intellectual gifts produced what Foster calls "his condescension toward less-educated people"(31). His father, Thomas, made sure that Alexander had strong training in the classics. Alexander's first formal training was in an elementary school at Market Hill. This was followed by two years at an academy at Newry run by his uncles. After a period of disinterest in educational pursuits, Alexander once again took up his studies and his father made sure that he had exposure to the most important philosophers and theological writers in the English language. Alexander read John Locke. He studied Greek and Latin. At the age of seventeen, he was helping his father teach school at Rich Hill. Sometime during this period Alexander had a conversion experience. Reformed religions taught that a person must have some type of spiritual experience to confirm his/her election. Later, Campbell, through his own study of the Scriptures, would learn how one obtains the true assurance of salvation. After Thomas had landed in America, he sent for his family to join him. The first attempt of the family to make the voyage to America failed due to a shipwreck. However, during the delay, Alexander was able to attend the University of Glasgow for ten months. He interacted there with Scottish Independents who planted seeds that would help shape the future work and ministry of Alexander. Among these were: restoring the pure gospel and true church, a strict view of the silence of the Scriptures, separation of church and state, congregational autonomy, weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, and simple worship (35). Some influential leaders among the Independents were: Robert and James Alexander Haldane, John Gibson, George Fulton and Greville Ewing (35). Ewing strongly supported infant baptism. This subject would become a principal issue of Campbell's religious reform. Campbell took full advantage of his studies at the University of Glasgow. He studied the Scottish

common sense philosophy of Thomas Reid taught by George Jardine, one of Campbell's favorite teachers. Campbell also studied the works of Francis Bacon who articulated an early form of the scientific method. Campbell studied the Socratic method, logic, and sharpened his own analytic skills. In May, 1809, the term ended and the Campbell family sought to renew their journey to America. During the three months it took to secure passage, the semiannual communion season observed by the Seceder church arrived. Campbell qualified himself to participate in the communion, but, then, when the time arrived, he abstained. Later, he referenced this act of omission as a rejection of the sectarianism he had experienced in Ireland and Scotland (42). This set the stage for what would happen when he joined Thomas in America. The family set sail from Greenock, Scotland on August 3, 1809 and arrived in New York on September 29. Campbell believed that America would provide him and his father the opportunity to pursue the religious reforms already fermenting in their minds. The family was reunited on October 19. Thomas had just written the *Declaration and Address*. Alexander read the document and fully accepted its plan. Father and son united together in undertaking the restoration of the ancient gospel and order of things (43).

In Section Two, chapter four, Foster takes up the formation of the early career of Alexander Campbell. Campbell spent six months studying Scripture before preaching his first sermon on July 15, 1810 on Matthew 7:26-27. He shared preaching responsibilities with his father, Thomas, for the Christian Association of Washington, PA. Alexander preached 106 times that year (49). His preaching reflected his and his father's goals to present the pure gospel by clearing away any obstacles to God. At first, Alexander preached by writing out his manuscripts and committing the material to memory. As he grew, he began to use a more extemporaneous style. Not only was Campbell attracted to preaching, but he also desired to write. Foster indicates that Campbell's elitist attitude and his gift for biting sarcasm produced a provocative writing style. Campbell wrote articles that were printed in the *Washington Reporter* in which he attacked what he believed was the rude social behavior of the youth in the area. He also denigrated the Presbyterian school known as Washington College. This experience informed Campbell of the power of the press which he harnessed later through his own publishing operation at Bethany. On March 12, 1811, Alexander married Margaret Brown and a couple of weeks after the marriage moved into the Brown home where Campbell assisted his father-in-law in farming. Eventually, this home became Campbell's and he lived the rest of his life in it and in the community known as Bethany. One year and one day after the marriage, Margaret gave birth to the first child born to the couple. Infant baptism became a personal matter for Campbell and after an extensive study of the Scriptures, he concluded that he could only accept the immersion of a penitent believer as legitimate baptism. On June 12, 1812, he, his wife, both of his parents, sister Jane, and two other members of the Brush Run church were immersed on a simple confession of their faith in Jesus as the Son of God (53). This set of events moved Alexander into the chief leadership role of the reform. Foster shows from Campbell's letters that he had a great admiration for America. He thought America possessed the qualities that would help him advance his movement. Foster mentions the nation's Protestant character, its democratic style of government, its freedom of religion, and its separation of church and state (54). To

Campbell, a man in America was judged by his genius, virtue and knowledge and not by his nobility (social or political status based on paternity in a monarchy or appointment by a monarch—Aristocracy). Foster levels this critique of Campbell, “Campbell, like others before him, came to see “European” destructive attitudes of dominance and aristocracy inherent in American slavery. Because of this, he resisted the institution not as a moral evil but as a detriment to the advancement of white America” (55). Foster also claims, “...his hatred of aristocratic tyranny and his celebration of democracy did not make him at home with the white American populist vision of the “common person” as the source of all virtue. Despite his participation in the antiaristocratic rhetoric of the early republic, Campbell never embraced its democratized notion of equality” (55). These critiques are not proven by the author and certainly stir debate. Was Campbell motivated more by politics, social constructs or the Word of God? Campbell was still in his formative years and zealously pursued a knowledge of God’s Word which he had the courage to follow in all matters that pertained to life and religion. If he was not guided by Scripture and lived in harmony with what he understood Scripture to teach, he would have been a hypocrite. The final point considered by Foster is Campbell’s millennialism. Thomas and Alexander believed that they could affect the millennial age through education, evangelism, and the removal of evils blocking the coming of that blessed age (57). Their view of end time events was postmillennial. “Literally, the term signifies that Christ’s second coming would be after the millennium—the thousand years of blessed existence on earth” (58). “Campbell believed that God had prepared the United States for the restoration and spread of what he came to call the “ancient gospel and order of things” (59).

Chapter five of section two addresses the creation of the ancient gospel and order of things (61). Foster identifies the following aspects of this development. Central to the development of his beliefs was the immersion of believers into Christ. Campbell preached for the Brush Run church which was named in 1811 and became a congregation of immersed believers. In 1815, the group joined the Redstone Baptist Association. Between 1820 and 1823, Campbell debated Presbyterian ministers John Walker and William Maccalla. On September 1, 1816, Campbell preached his famous “Sermon on the Law” at a Redstone Baptist association meeting. In this sermon, Campbell made the distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament thereby invalidating the use of the Old Testament to justify infant baptism or any other religious rite. Campbell’s position contradicted the Baptist Philadelphia Confession of Faith and put him at odds with many of the Baptists. Foster gives the background for the Campbell-Walker debate. The debate was held June 19-29, 1820 at Mount Pleasant, Ohio. Walker was a Presbyterian. Foster believes that the Quaker meeting house built in 1814 in the village served as the location for the debate. The debate focused on who should be baptized and how to baptize. Also, the discussion took up the purpose of baptism. Walker argued that there was one divine covenant of grace for God’s people since the Fall, and that baptism had taken the place of circumcision as the seal of that covenant for Christians (67). Infants of God’s people, he argued, had a right to baptism (sprinkling). This was his only argument and Campbell argued that there were two covenants (Heb. 8) and that Scripture did not teach that baptism had taken the place of circumcision as the sign of God’s covenant. Foster points out that

Campbell's theology about baptism was not completely developed in the debate, but that it was largely Baptist in substance (67-68). Three years later, Campbell debated another Presbyterian by the name of William MacCalla. Before this debate, Campbell left the Redstone Association and the Brush Run church and became a member of the church at Wellsburg, VA which joined the Mahoning Association in order to avoid being excommunicated by the Baptists in the Redstone Association. This assured his good standing among the Baptists and his participation in the debate (70). The debate took place on October 15-21, 1823 at Washington, KY. Campbell made the most explicit statement on the purpose of baptism in this debate declaring that it was "for the remission of sins." Campbell's own understanding of the purpose of baptism continued to evolve. Foster states, "He continued to separate the actual forgiveness of sins that occurred at the time of one's belief in Christ and "formal" remission that took place in the act of baptism" (72). This position removed him from Baptist theology and set him on the course of accepting, by 1828, that baptism (believer's immersion) was essentially and unambiguously connected to conversion and redemption (72). Campbell began the *Christian Baptist* in 1823 to advance his ideas regarding the ancient order of things. In 1830, he began a new paper called the *Millennial Harbinger*. Through this publication, Campbell could answer his objectors and continue the dissemination of his ideas. In February, 1824, Campbell began a series titled "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things." The series contained thirty-two articles that examined matters of theology, practice, and church order that he believed needed scrutiny (74). He developed detailed aspects of the Christian system: simple worship, local congregational leadership, weekly Lord's Supper, insistence on Scripture alone, and strict adherence to biblical terminology in all aspects of life and church (74). Later, he published this systematic work in the *Christian System* first published in 1835 and expanded in 1839 (74). Foster turns his attention to the role that Walter Scott played in the development of the ideas central to the reform movement of Campbell. Campbell and Scott had discussed the purpose of baptism at length in 1821 ever since reading a tract by Henry Errett. In 1827, Walter Scott was appointed by the Mahoning Association as a traveling evangelist. This gave him the opportunity to proclaim and practice baptism for the remission of sins. Scott developed a baptismal formula whereupon he baptized individuals into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for the remission of their sins. The baptism was based upon their simple confession that Jesus was the Son of God. Anyone who heard the gospel could respond and receive remission of sins by being baptized. This was a new teaching for many and gave them hope. Salvation was possible to any person who believed and obeyed the gospel by being baptized for the remission of sins. Thousands responded to Scott's invitation. Alexander sent his father to investigate the work of Scott. Thomas endorsed it completely and Scott quoted from a letter by Thomas to him in his journal *The Evangelist* in which Thomas declared that this was the first time he had seen, "the direct exhibition and application" of the ancient gospel (76). Alexander also recognized the work of Scott in the October 1831 issue of the *Millennial Harbinger* and stated that Scott had, in the , "Fall of 1827, arranged the several items of Faith, Repentance, Baptism, Remission of Sins, the Holy Spirit and Eternal Life, restored them in this order to the church under the title of Ancient Gospel, and successfully preached it for the conversion of the world" (76). Later, Campbell and Scott would be involved in a

personal feud that would threaten the peace within the movement. Foster discusses one last issue in this chapter that concerns Campbell's attitude—his acrimony when writing or debating. Campbell defended his tone saying that his tone, "was exactly what the apostles would use if they were to come back and see all the defects and apostasies in the church"(80).

Chapter six and section two focuses on the role of Christian unity in Alexander Campbell's agenda. Unity and restoration were inseparable to Campbell. Campbell recognized that there were obstacles to unity that had to be removed. He also knew that the Scriptures were the only safe guide in all matters that pertain to religion. It was Thomas Campbell who believed that it was crucial to work for reform as part of an existing Christian body (83). However, as they studied the Scriptures and discovered discrepancies between Scripture and the doctrines of the churches they were members of, they fell into conflict with those same churches. This necessitated eliminating all confessions of faith and creedal statements and forge absolute reliance upon the Scriptures for guidance. Unity would result from restoration to Scripture. This proved to be difficult and arduous work. The purpose of restoration of the ancient order of things was unity and unity was in turn essential to the conversion of the world (88). Another arm of unity involved removing human opinions as a ground for admission into, or exclusion from, the Christian Church (87). Human judgments were not on equal footing with Scripture. Campbell did not desire that individuals give up opinions, but that they would not impose them upon others. He did recognize that some opinions were more dangerous to the body of Christ than others. Separating matters of obligation from matters of opinion proved to be difficult hermeneutical work. The method of interpretation became a matter of disagreement making unity more elusive. The center of Campbell's unity efforts focused on the purpose of baptism. In 1851, he wrote, *Christian Baptism With Its Antecedents and Consequents*. Foster calls this Campbell's masterwork (89). Campbell affirmed that baptism (immersion in water) was the act alone that translates one into the kingdom of God's Son (89). Those not immersed were not saved, were not Christians, were not members of the church. There were members of the restoration movement that did not believe this central fact of the gospel. They held that one could be baptized by a mode other than immersion and demonstrate by their lives their devotion to Christ and still be Christians. Unity proved elusive.

Chapter seven in section two takes up a discussion of Campbell's New Testament. Alexander Campbell believed that when freed from the shackles of human creeds and confessions, anyone could read, understand, and follow the teachings of the New Testament (91). He believed that a clear, accurate translation of the Bible was crucial to his restoration of the primitive church (91). Campbell held that the truth could be learned from the King James Version which was widely used among Protestants of his day. However, he also believed that the KJV had flaws and needed updated with regard to text and language. The first edition of Campbell's work appeared in 1826. This volume was the New Testament that appeared in London in 1818 which brought together translations by Scottish scholars George Campbell (the Gospels), James Mcknight (the Epistles), and Philip Doddridge (Acts and Revelation) (92). It included Campbell's own contributions as *Prefaces to the Historical and Epistolary Books; and an Appendix, Containing Critical Notes and Various Translations of Difficult Passages*.

The version became known as *The Living Oracles*. This version was based on the Greek text of Johann Griesbach. Perhaps the most significant change in this translation was the use of the word *immersion* as a translation of the Greek word *baptizo* (94). Within fifteen years, Campbell reported that his new version sold thirty-five thousand copies (95) with an additional five thousand having been distributed for free. Yet, he complained that with a membership in the churches in his movement of two hundred thousand he should have sold more. Campbell's version sold more copies in America than any other translation except the KJV until the American Standard Version appeared in 1901 (95). Campbell's version was not the only one that appeared at this time. During the early nineteenth century, American religious leaders produced dozens of new versions. Thirty-five new translations were completed by 1880 (92). There were plenty of individuals who opposed Campbell's translation especially among the Baptists. Foster also includes the role Alexander Campbell played in the American Bible Union's translation. Campbell translated the book of Acts for this work. The first parts appeared in 1862. This translation was based upon the *Textus Receptus*. It is also an "immersionist" translation.

In chapter eight of section two, Foster examines Campbell as a defender of Protestant Christianity. Two public debates shaped Campbell's career at midstage. The first was with Robert Owen, an atheist and skeptic, in 1829. The second was with John Baptist Purcell, a Catholic bishop of Cincinnati, in 1837. Foster gives the backgrounds to the debates and the major points of contention. Foster also points out that Campbell criticized Protestantism for its role in creating doctrinal disparity and conflict with the Scriptures on crucial doctrinal points. These debates elevated Campbell's standing in the religious world of his day.

In chapter nine, of section two, the author focuses on the creation of two crucial institutions—Bethany College and the American Christian Missionary Society. Campbell had a passion for education and saw it as a vehicle to advance his movement. He had always been involved with education. He taught in schools run by his father and he operated Buffalo Academy from 1818 through 1822 at Bethany. Campbell felt strongly that the facts of the Bible should be at the center of the curriculum for any school. Campbell established the college at Bethany in 1840. The land utilized was part of his own extensive farmland. Course offerings as noted by Foster included: ancient languages, ancient history, English grammar, logic, sacred history, Christian evidences, chemistry, geology, physics, astronomy, zoology, botany, physiology, and mathematics (142). Campbell sought out the best teachers in every area of study. Soon, Bethany College became one of the premier educational institutions in its day (143). Next, Campbell turned his attention to church organization and missions. He worked continually to bring about the establishment of the American Christian Missionary Society in 1849. Campbell felt that the only way the churches that made up his movement could maintain unity and expand was by systematic cooperation. Church organization would facilitate church cooperation by which means much could be achieved in the dispersion of the Bible and missionary accomplishments. In 1845, the American Christian Bible Society had been formed. These two societies, Campbell believed would be instrumental in advancing his movement. However, some within the movement opposed the missionary society. Eventually, this would cause a rift that could not be repaired.



Chapter ten is the first chapter in section three which Foster titles, “Defense and Conflict.” This section contains eight chapters. This chapter looks at the rise of opposition to Campbell’s ideas and work. Foster remarks that as soon as Campbell launched the main concepts of his restoration movement, he met with opposition. Campbell’s first major clash was with the Presbyterians—the group he was affiliated with in the very beginning and then, the Baptists. Sometime in the mid 1820’s his detractors labeled his teaching as *Campbellism*. The earliest printed use of the term “Cambellite” appeared in September, 1824 by a Baptist minister named Lawrence Greatraker (151). He attacked what he called Campbell’s false gospel based on the fact that Campbell denied the Holy Spirit’s work in conversion and ridiculed Christian experience in conversion. Campbell’s first printed reply to the charge of Campbellism appeared in the June, 1828 issue of the *Christian Baptist*. Campbell’s reply affirmed, “It is a nickname of reproach invented and adopted by those whose views, feelings, and desires are all sectarian; who cannot conceive of Christianity in any other light than *ism*.” Campbell went on to say that anyone who would use such a term when the recipient repudiated it was a “railer or reviler, and placed among the haters of God and those who have no lot in the kingdom of heaven” (152). Presbyterian Thomas T. Skillman also attacked Campbell along with men inside of the movement namely, Sidney Rigdon, Barton W. Stone and Walter Scott. Presbyterian Nathan L. Rice also opposed Campbell and wrote scores of books, pamphlets and articles against him. Eventually, Campbell would debate Rice.

In chapter eleven, Foster discusses the Lunenburg Letter. A letter to Campbell from a “conscientious sister” in Lunenburg, VA provoked the controversy. The controversy began in September, 1837 and lasted for three years. The focus of the discussion was on who was a Christian and how one became a Christian. Foster reveals in a footnote (158) that the writer was Luisa Anderson, wife of Virginia church leader Albert Anderson both supporters of John Thomas. Thomas began in Campbell’s good graces, but Campbell wrote against some of Thomas’ views such as: no separate existence for the soul and body; only those who had heard the gospel would be resurrected everyone else would remain in “soul sleep” after death, and rebaptism of Baptists who wanted to become members of a restoration group. Eventually, Thomas withdrew from the movement and started the Brethren in Christ later known as Christadelphians (159). In answer to the Lunenburg letter, Campbell said that a Christian is, “every one that believes in his heart that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God; repents of his sins and obeys him in all things according to his measure of knowledge of his will” (160). This answer seemed to contradict what Campbell said in earlier writings about the essential aspect of immersion for the remission of sins. Campbell went on to say, “I cannot, therefore, make any one duty the standard of Christian state or character, not even immersion into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and in my heart regard all who have been sprinkled in infancy without their own knowledge and consent, as aliens from Christ and the well-grounded hope of heaven” (160). Foster points out that “For Campbell, something even more fundamental than the crucial act of baptism was the ultimate proof that one was a Christian: “It is the image of Christ the Christian looks for and loves, and this does not consist of being exact in a few items, but in general devotion to the whole truth as far as known...He that infers that none are Christians but the immersed, as

greatly errs as he who affirms that none are alive but those of clear and full vision” (160-161). Campbell’s response set off a fire storm of controversy. Foster remarks that “the exchange reflected a struggle over the very identity of his reform...” (163). Imbedded in the controversy with Thomas was a dispute over what name the followers of Campbell should use. Campbell believed that “Disciples” was more ancient and acceptable. However, his own father, Thomas, and Barton W. Stone disagreed. Both of these men thought the name “Christian” was more appropriate. Foster concludes this chapter by saying that Campbell held what seemed to be contradictory understandings in a tension still felt among his heirs today (170).

Chapter twelve of section three addresses the controversy between Campbell and the Mormons. Alexander Campbell denounced in strong terms the chicanery of Joseph Smith. He was first to publish an examination of the Book of Mormon (171). In 1831, Campbell published a tract, “Delusions” that refuted the Book of Mormon’s claim to inspiration. Campbell’s motivation to speak out against Mormon’s came from the fact that a member of the restoration movement, Sidney Rigdon, embraced Smith’s ideas in 1830. Rigdon went on to become one of the closest advisors and fellow leaders among the Mormons. Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery certified that they had seen the golden plates from which Smith translated the Book of Mormon. Both of these men had been part of Campbell’s movement to restore New Testament Christianity and their defection influenced thousands of members to defect to Mormonism (172). Campbell exposed the false premises of the Book of Mormon and Foster relates the main concepts that Campbell opposed (173). Foster concludes this chapter by noting the circumstances of Joseph Smith’s death. Smith had declared himself to be a candidate for president of the United States in 1844. This and other events encouraged antagonism against him. He was murdered along with his brother Hyrum by the hands of a Carthage, Illinois mob in June, 1844. Campbell stated, among other things, “An outlaw himself, God cut him off by outlaws. He requited him according to his works...” (178).

Chapter thirteen examines the conflict between Alexander Campbell and the Presbyterians, especially, Nathan L. Rice. This conflict resulted in the debate between Campbell and Rice which was characterized by personal attacks and charges of dishonesty by both contestants. Foster declares that this was the most acrimonious debate of Campbell’s career (180). The debate was held between November 15 and Dec. 2 (excepting Sunday) 1843 at the Reformed Church in Lexington, KY. The focus of the debate was on the subject of baptism. Foster indicates that the Presbyterians were looking for an opportunity to slow the growth of Campbell’s movement in the state of Kentucky. The caustic environment of the debate itself manifested Campbell’s weakness and lured him into a petulance and pettiness that were unflattering (190).

Chapter fourteen summarizes bitter clashes with the Baptists. Campbell was the recipient of “Anathemas” from various Baptist associations: Beaver (1829); Tate’s Creek (1830); and Dover (1830). The Baptists in these groups identified doctrinal differences between Campbell and Baptist doctrines. Some of these were: there is no promise of salvation without baptism; that baptism should be administered to all who say they believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God without examination on any other matter; that there is no direct operation of the Holy Spirit on the mind prior to baptism; and that baptism procures the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit

(191-192). James Robinson Graves (1820-1893) was one of the most relentless opponents of Campbell. Graves was the founder of the Landmark Baptist movement. He believed in Baptist successionism—that there is an unbroken chain of true (Baptist) churches since the days of the apostles, and that Baptist churches could not recognize baptisms performed outside the Baptist church as legitimate. Only Baptist churches were churches—all others were merely religious societies (197). In 1854, James Madison Pendleton published these principles in a booklet titled *An Old Landmark Reset*, which gave Landmarkism its name (197). Campbell affirmed his Christian orthodoxy and used Baptist scholars to prove his case. In 1854, Graves published *Campbell and Campbellism Exposed* which was a reply to Campbell's writings in the *Millennial Harbinger*. Campbell also clashed with Jeremiah Bell Jeter. In 1855, Jeter wrote, *Campbellism Examined*. In it he examined the beginnings, development, teachings, and tendencies of Campbellism, with a summary conclusion (203). Jeter thought it was necessary to force Campbell and his followers out of Baptist churches in order to preserve the ministry of Baptist churches. Jeter opposed: Campbell's teaching that the Holy Spirit had no direct role in conversion other than through the words of Scripture, that Campbell equated regeneration, conversion, and baptism; that prayer is not a duty of the unbaptized and that communion should be celebrated weekly (205). Campbell replied immediately to Jeter upon receiving a copy of his book. He identified Jeter's criticisms of his teaching with Graves. Campbell intended to write a book in reply to Jeter but was never able to complete it. Instead, Campbell enlisted the help of Moses E. Lard to respond to Jeter. In 1857, Lard produced his *Review of J. B. Jeter's Book*.

Chapter fifteen focuses on Campbell's clash with Walter Scott. Scott came to America with his uncle in 1818. He studied at the University of Edinburgh. After arriving in New York, he made his way to Pittsburgh and became part of a school and church led by George Forrester. Forrester followed the Haldanes who led in Independent Churches. In 1820 Forrester drowned, and Scott took over the school and the church. In 1821, he went back to New York seeking Henry Errett, a leader in the Scotch Baptist church who had written a tract on baptism for the remission of sins. Errett's tract convinced Scott of the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins and, discouraged by the church in New York, he left there, and returned to Pittsburgh and became a tutor to the Richardson family. This family was well acquainted with the Campbells. In 1821, Scott met Alexander Campbell for the first time. Scott and Campbell clashed over who was the chief catalyst for the restoration movement's success. Scott emphasized: faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life (210). Scott claimed that the whole gospel was restored in 1827. Campbell argued that remission of sins was proclaimed by him in 1823 (the Maccalla Debate), however, he objected to the idea that the gospel was restored implying that the church was not in existence for an extended period of time. Foster points out that the printer had inscribed, *Christianity Restored* on the first edition of *Campbell's Christian System* (212). After many years, the controversy died down and the two men were able to be more amicable to each other. Scott died in 1861, eleven days after the beginning of the Civil War.

In chapter sixteen, Foster considers the clash between Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone. Stone led a religious movement in Kentucky at the beginning of the

nineteenth century before Alexander Campbell came to America. The two men were drawn together due to the similarity in their desire for unity based upon Scripture alone. Like Campbell, Stone began in Presbyterian theology but soon developed strong doubts about some aspects of its doctrines including: the Trinity, predestination, the use of formal confessions of faith and various tenets of Calvinism (230-231). Foster gives the historical details of the Cane Ridge Meeting as part of the great religious awakening in America at the time. He relates the writing and importance of the *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery (1804)*. Stone and his followers adopted the name *Christian*. Two of the original signers of the *Last Will and Testament* went back into Presbyterianism. Two signers left and went into the Shaker religion. This left Stone to advance his ideas alone. Stone struggled with the notion of substitutionary atonement, the Trinity including the deity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit (he did not believe that the Holy Spirit was a separate person in the Godhead). Campbell came to believe that Stone and his reform were deficient if not heretical on key doctrinal issues. He attacked the doctrines with which he disagreed: Jesus was not the eternal Son of God, He was coequal with God (235). Campbell wrote that Stone was abandoning his commitment to unity by advancing Unitarianism (237). Campbell challenged Stone on his view's which permitted unimmersed people into the church (240). Campbell emphasized his view that the word *disciples* better identified the followers of Jesus than *Christian* because he associated the name *Christian* with the followers of Stone. Stone argued from the Scriptures that the name *Christian* was divinely called upon the followers of Jesus (Acts 11:26) (242). The men went back and forth for several months until in January, 1832, there was a union of Christian and reformers in Georgetown and Lexington, KY (245). While the union was significant, Foster relates that it did not go smoothly and Campbell eagerly pointed out what he believed to be the deficiencies. Foster noted, "The irony of the wide acceptance in the twentieth century of the scholarly designation "Stone-Campbell Movement" for the global Christian tradition that emerged partly from his reform would surely be a distressing surprise to Campbell" (253).

Section three closes with chapter 17 which examines *The Ferguson-Fanning-Richardson Affair*. Arthur Crihfield's observation that Campbell seemed to be at war with the whole world seems indisputable. Campbell was involved in many conflicts as he advanced his ideas. He battled those outside of his movement as well as those within it. Campbell debated Obadiah Jennings in 1830 over Campbell's denial of the role of "Christian experience" in conversion and his teaching that baptism was the new birth and regeneration (254). The debate was published in 1832 by Jennings's nephew, S. C. Jennings, editor of the *Christian Herald*. The book drew Campbell's fire the next year. Another battle was a written debate with Universalist Dolphus Skinner between 1837 and 1839. Campbell entered a painful dispute with the coeditor of the *Millennial Harbinger*, Robert Richardson. Campbell's conflict with Richardson grew out of his attack of Jesse B. Ferguson over an article Ferguson wrote in the April, 1852, *Christian Magazine*. Ferguson took the position on I Peter 3:18-20, that Christ, in spirit form, actually went and preached the gospel to spirits in the realm of the dead who had never heard the gospel proclaimed in their life times. This sounded like Universalism to many (258). In June, Campbell responded with a vengeance. Campbell exposed the fallacies involved in Ferguson's interpretation specifically that this teaching would give

solace to those who had rejected Christ in this life and destroy any motivation for Christian mission on the earth (258). Ferguson went on to publicly espouse Universalism, Unitarianism, and spiritualism (259). Tolbert Fanning became involved in the Ferguson affair in refuting Ferguson and preserving a remnant of the congregation Ferguson had disrupted in Nashville. Fanning began the *Gospel Advocate* in 1855 largely due to Ferguson's teaching. In the meantime, Robert Richardson wrote an article in the *Millennial Harbinger* in which he affirmed that human understanding was not the sole legitimate interpreter of Scripture (262). Fanning understood Richardson's teaching as supportive of Ferguson's doctrines and responded to Richardson in the *Gospel Advocate* in October, 1856. The battle was on. At some point, Fanning came to Bethany to enlist Campbell's help in stopping Richardson's destructive ideas (263). The controversy between Richardson and Campbell erupted in September, 1857. Campbell did not believe that philosophical systems and faith based upon Scripture should be mixed. However, he did believe that there was a legitimate use of the word philosophy in the sense of knowing why things are as they are—the pursuit of wisdom (265). No true philosophy would ever contradict the Bible. Consequently, Campbell did not believe that Richardson should have been writing about "faith versus philosophy." The controversy resulted in Richardson's resignation as associate editor of the *Millennial Harbinger*. Richardson also resigned from Bethany College and took a teaching position at Kentucky University in Harrodsburg (266-267). In the meantime, the main classroom and administrative building at Bethany College burned to the ground on Friday, December 11, 1857. Campbell urged Richardson to stay at Bethany and restored him to his editorial duties at the *Millennial Harbinger*. Richardson resumed his editorial duties, but went to Harrodsburg. Campbell turned his attention to Fanning and attacked him exclaiming that Fanning was wrong to assert that Richardson had abandoned the principles Campbell had believed and taught (268). Foster sums up the results of the affair, "In the course of the controversy with Ferguson, Richardson and Fanning, Campbell managed to attack all three. Ferguson left the movement, Fanning became permanently estranged from Campbell, and Richardson was exonerated, becoming again one of Campbell's closest colleagues" (268).

Section Four contains three chapters beginning with chapter eighteen which examines the movement's greatest threat—slavery. Foster indicates that Campbell did not see slavery as a major threat to his movement. Campbell, according to Foster, assumed the myth of white supremacy (273). Foster indicates that Campbell was antislavery, but, like Thomas Jefferson, opposed it because it was unhealthy for the nation and for the white citizenry (273). In order to avert disaster for his movement, Campbell decided to take a moderate position on slavery. Campbell insisted that the Bible did not condemn slavery as inherently evil (275). Yet, he conceded that it was not in harmony with the "spirit of the age." Campbell was for a slow progress toward freeing the slaves which would soften the blow economically and culturally to the nation. Foster acknowledges that Campbell, in his earliest writings on slavery, seemed to be making a moral argument against slavery (275). Later, however, Campbell's writing reflected a need to avoid the political aspect of the subject. Eventually, circumstances in the nation prevailed upon him and he had to address the topic in earnest. Foster examines the division in the Baptist and Methodist Churches, the

Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, the Dread Scott Decision of 1857, and a student revolt at Bethany College. He also investigates the work of abolitionists in Scotland that led to the jailing of Campbell in 1847. While in Scotland, Alexander's son, Wickliffe Campbell (1837-1847) died by drowning. Campbell was not aware of his son's death until he returned home. These events took their toll on Campbell's mental and physical health.

In chapter nineteen, Foster turns his attention to the Civil War. When the Civil War began in 1861, Campbell was seventy-two years old. Campbell was involved in a fund raising campaign to raise funds for Bethany College after the main building was destroyed by fire in 1857. Foster captures Campbell's vision for the ushering in of the millennium. America, Protestantism, and the Anglo-Saxon race were to play a role in bringing this about (294-295). Campbell believed that he played a part in bringing the millennium about by being a harbinger of it. The Civil War marked a national division that impacted Campbell's movement severely and negatively. Campbell urged his followers not to allow the war and slavery to divide them. At the same time, his own family was seriously divided. Alexander Jr., who lived in Louisiana during the war, served as a colonel in the Third Louisiana Cavalry (299). With the end of the war on April 9, 1865, Alexander Campbell Jr., was charged with treason against West Virginia which became a state during the war in 1863. Through family connections, Alexander Campbell Jr., received a full pardon in September 1865 from President Andrew Johnson (304).

In chapter twenty, Foster reviews the circumstances leading up to the death of Alexander Campbell. Soon after the War, Campbell began a decline in health and vigor. Campbell showed signs of age-related dementia. Selina, his wife, reported that, shortly before his death, Campbell had preached a stirring sermon on Christ's second coming entirely in his sleep (306). Campbell's final decline began in 1866. He attended worship service at Bethany church on February 11 his last time to be able to publicly worship. Just before midnight on Sunday evening, March 4, 1866, Alexander Campbell died at the age of seventy-eight. Eulogies and tributes appeared in pulpits and newspapers around the country. Campbell was noted as a pioneer of reform that appeared rarely, but had the power to bring about significant religious changes. He aimed for Christian unity by tearing down sectarian creeds and dogmas in order to let the light of truth shine brightly. Foster closes this chapter with a discussion of the dispute among family members regarding Campbell's will. James Garfield argued the case concerning validity of the will in behalf of Selina's side of the family as opposed to Campbell's daughter, Margaret, whose grandchildren had contested the will on the basis of mental competency. Garfield won the case and the will was upheld as valid.

Section Five contains one chapter on Campbell's legacy. The person closely associated with Alexander Campbell for almost four decades, his close personal physician, instructor of chemistry and an administrator at Bethany College, and a coeditor of the *Millennial Harbinger*, Robert Richardson, was commissioned by the Campbell family to write his official memoirs. Richardson attended to Campbell in his final days and preached his funeral. The first volume, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, appeared in 1868. The second volume was published two years later in 1870. Foster notes that Richardson was selective in recounting the events of Campbell's life omitting many of the bad details. Foster states, "...the biography functioned as a powerful component in the creation of Campbell as a saint—a hero who became the greatest

religious reformer in the history of reform” (322). There were other written works about Campbell’s life that added to this mystic: Selina’s *Home Life and Reminiscences of Alexander Campbell* (1882) and Charles Segar’s *Notes on the Pentateuch* and many others (322). Foster acknowledges that many of the heirs to the movement Campbell was instrumental in forging were ignorant of who he was. He also notes that some of the less desirable traits of Campbell had been dismissed in the historical accounts of his life. Foster’s own work is a critical biography of Campbell’s life where he attempts to give a more accurate assessment of Campbell’s character and life’s work. The reader is left with the task of judging just how successful Foster is at this task. It is a well-known observation of Campbell’s life that he originated principles that took years for him and his followers to work out in the practical aspects of religious devotion. This produced a complexity of writings through years of evolution in thought and character. No doubt he made mistakes which reveal human foibles, but the principles he deduced have been tested and proven in many instances to be right. The idea that restoration after apostasy can be achieved by following the Scriptures alone is still effective in our present time.

Foster concludes his volume with an index. Footnotes are conveniently given at the bottom of the page where they occur in the text. This feature of the book gives the reader easy and immediate access to additional information that is useful in developing the complete context of historical events.