

Sermon Outline on Revelation 20:11

by Alexander Campbell

Alexander Campbell's sermons emphasize the importance of living a righteous life, following God's commandments, and being prepared for judgment.

Scripture: Isaiah 57:14, Isaiah 62:10, Acts 21:21, 2 Corinthians 6:17, Revelation 18:4

Topics: "Biblical Reformation", "Christian Unity"

Description

Alexander Campbell addresses the Christian Association of Washington, defending their principles and design for promoting a scriptural reformation. He refutes objections raised by ignorance or opposition, emphasizing the removal of stumbling blocks and adherence to the Bible as the only rule. Campbell highlights the importance of separating from corrupt practices, preparing the way for reformation, and lifting up the standard of Jesus Christ. He clarifies their stance on infant baptism, advocating for forbearance and adherence to scriptural principles.

Transcript

First Public Attempt--Active Labors--Methodical Training--Application to

Synod of Pittsburg--Controversy of Truth and Error.

HE "Christian Association," formed for the purposes specified in the "Declaration and Address," had occasioned no small stir in religious circles. Many of the people were pleased with the objects in view, and several ministers, personal friends of Thomas Campbell, expressed their approbation of the movement, but refrained from taking an active part in it until they could be more assured of its success. Others of the clergy were in doubt, or regarded the project as chimerical; but the more knowing ones among them, mindful of the effects of similar efforts to reform, began to take the alarm and to keep a watchful eye upon the progress of affairs. To propositions for Christian union so kindly offered, they could, indeed, make no direct opposition, nor could they fail to realize that a certain degree of respect was due to a society, many of whose members were conspicuous for piety, and possessed of great influence in the community. No minister stood higher, as respected ability and moral and religious worth, than Thomas Campbell. No man in the county of Washington had more influence than Thomas Acheson, whose signature was attached, along with that of Mr. Campbell, to the "Declaration and Address." He was usually called General Acheson, [311] being Lieutenant Colonel Commandant of the Twenty-second Regiment Pennsylvania Militia, and was universally esteemed and actively engaged in everything calculated to promote the public interests. Besides these, there were other influential persons and families, more or less connected with

the religious communities around, whose character and standing gave a considerable degree of importance to the Association in the estimation of the religious public.

At the time of its organization (August 17, 1809), a regular semi-annual meeting of the Society had been appointed for the first Thursday of May and of November; but, as formerly stated, Thomas Campbell continued to preach, as usual, on every Lord's day, first at private houses and afterward at the meeting-house erected at the cross-roads. Alexander, after his arrival, always attended his father's meetings, and as he had already signified his determination to engage in the proposed reformation, his father, after some time, began to express the wish that he would take some public part in these meetings. From his youthfulness, however, and the fact that he was as yet unaccustomed to public speaking, this was for some time delayed, until at length, in the spring of 1810, his father being about to address a congregation at a private house (Jacob Donaldson's), told him that after preaching he would have a short intermission, and would expect him afterward to address the people. Accordingly, after the meeting was resumed, Alexander arose and spoke for a short time, chiefly, however, in the way of exhortation. His father appeared to be much pleased, and at the close of his son's remarks, said, as it were, involuntarily, but loud enough to be heard by those sitting near, "Very well," and then went on to close the [312] meeting. This was really Alexander's first attempt at speaking; and although his remarks were brief and not in the usual form of a regular sermon, the result inspired him with confidence, so that, upon being afterward urged to prepare and deliver a public discourse, he agreed to do so, and an appointment was made for him for the 15th of July, to address those who chose to assemble, in a grove on the farm of Major Templeton, some eight miles from Washington.

The previous labors of Thomas Campbell, and the novelty of the plea urged by the Christian Association, had excited, as before stated, considerable inquiry throughout this region of country. The interest prevailing and the expectation which had been created by rumors of the promising abilities possessed by Alexander, had drawn together in the grove quite a large assemblage to hear the first discourse of the youthful preacher. He was now in his twenty-second year, still preserving the freshness of complexion and bloom of the cheeks with which he left Ireland; but he had grown somewhat taller, and his figure was somewhat more developed. When the hour arrived, he rose up with modest dignity, in the temporary stand erected for the occasion, in front of which the audience were seated upon rough planks or upon the grass beneath the shady maples, and, the meeting being opened in the usual form, he took up the New Testament and read, from the close of the seventh chapter of Matthew, the following passage:

"Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And every one [313] that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, I will liken unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and bent upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

Having read thus from the twenty-fourth to the twenty-seventh verses inclusive, he went on, by way of introduction, to speak, first, of the importance of Christ's sayings; passing, secondly, to a brief notice of the Author of the sermon on the Mount, he, in the third place, called attention to the comprehensiveness of this wonderful discourse of Christ, and, fourthly, to its practical character; and thence, fifthly, to its simplicity and plainness of style, closing his introduction with some observations on Christ's method of teaching by parables. Entering, then, upon the main subject, in order to evolve the doctrine or lesson taught, he went on to describe the wise man and the foolish man; first, contrasting them with each other as

to the respects in which they agreed, and, secondly, as to the respects in which they differed. He showed that they agreed in three respects: 1, in their external privileges, 2, in their employment, 3, in their trials; and likewise that they differed in three respects: 1, in their character, 2, in their manner of employment, 3, in the end or result. While treating of these particulars, he took occasion to explain the metaphorical words, house, rock, sand, wind, rain, etc., and having thus led the audience to contemplate the vivid pictures presented in the passage, he proceeded, in his application, to describe, first, the wisdom and blessedness of those who hear Christ's sayings and do them; and, secondly, the folly and misery of those who hear Christ's sayings and do them not. He then made an application of the whole to the [314] audience before him, closing with an eloquent and appropriate exhortation.

In the delivery of this discourse, the trepidation natural in such a case, and observable in the beginning, soon disappeared. Anxious to succeed in his first trial, he had taken the pains to write out the sermon in full and commit it to memory, so that finding, after he had fairly commenced, and as his clear, ringing voice resounded through the grove, that he could command the fixed attention of the audience, he felt encouraged, and was enabled to proceed without embarrassment and with increasing animation to the close.

There was, indeed, in the matter of the discourse nothing that was startling from its novelty, as the passage and the subject were familiar. The arrangement, too, was simple, as well as the manner of delivery, which was almost wholly without gesticulation. But there was something in the reverential bearing of the speaker, in the unaffected simplicity of his manner, in the appropriateness of his expressions, and in the earnest and distinct intonations of his clear and commanding voice, that seemed to rivet the attention of all upon the thoughts and the pictures he presented. Nor did the discourse itself, in its general features, fail to indicate that quality in his mind which became afterward so marked--the power of generalization, and of taking wide and expanded views. Before entering upon the particular lesson of the passage, he must survey, with an enlarged vision, the infinite perfections and authority of the Divine Author, and take a general view of the character of his teaching, and particularly of that of the sermon on the Mount. Having thus prepared the minds of his auditors, and elevated their conceptions to his own lofty stand-point, he could now, [315] with the utmost facility and effect, fix their attention upon the great truths and practical lessons which were to be impressed upon them.

After the audience was dismissed, there seemed to be but one opinion as to the qualifications of the speaker. All seemed to be forcibly struck with what they had heard. The young gazed upon the youth with wondering eyes, while the older members said one to another, in subdued tones, "Why, this is a better preacher than his father!"--a decision which, in view of Thomas Campbell's reputation as a speaker, was one of the highest compliments they could bestow. Both the theme selected for the occasion, indeed, and the surrounding circumstances, seemed remarkably appropriate, and as if Providence had so arranged them in order to shadow forth the future. It was the determination of the speaker himself to hear the sayings of Christ and do them, and, in now entering upon his career as a religious reformer, to teach both by precept and example that the religious world should no longer follow the commandments and doctrines of men, which rest upon the sandy and unstable basis of opinion, but that they should secure for themselves permanent habitations, founded upon the unshaken rock of Divine authority. Nor was it less appropriate that he who was destined to call men away from human plans and systems should deliver his first discourse, not in any sectarian temple or place of worship built by human hands, but in the open air of free America and beneath the overarching trees which God had planted.

The effect of this discourse was very marked, not only upon the people, but upon the speaker himself. With the former, it at once established his reputation, and the members of the Christian Association who [316] were present were delighted with this powerful accession to their cause, and unanimously agreed to present to the youthful preacher a formal call to the ministry of the Word. Upon himself, the effect was not less decisive. He realized, to his great joy, that he had not mistaken his vocation. He felt that in addressing the great congregation upon themes that had impressed his heart from boyhood and brightened the visions of his youth, he was in his proper sphere, and that all the hopes and purposes of his life were destined to be happily fulfilled. From this time his services were in continual requisition, and they were, on his part, most freely rendered, as will be seen when it is stated that in the course of this, his first year, he preached no less than one hundred and six sermons. These were delivered at the cross-roads; at Washington, and at Buffalo--several at Middletown; some in private houses, and, toward the latter part of the period, a few in the contiguous portions of Ohio, at Steubenville, Cadiz, St. Clairsville, etc.

His first discourse, just noticed, was on July 15th. On the following Lord's day, 22d, he spoke at the cross-roads, from Gal. iii. 28, 29, upon Christian unity. In his introduction he took a grand, comprehensive view of religion from Adam to Christ; and, in the method of his discourse, went on, 1. To point out how and in what respects all believers were one in Christ Jesus; 2. To consider how their being all one in Christ makes them the seed of Abraham; 3. To make some remarks on what is implied in being heirs according to the promise; and, 4. To make some practical inferences. He then considered the particulars under each of these heads; as, the arguments made use of by the apostle to convince both Jews and Gentiles of their oneness in [317] every respect under the Christian dispensation, and then the similitudes made use of to represent the oneness of believers in Christ: 1. Members of the same body, 2. Branches of the same vine, 3. Stones of the same building, and, 4. As represented under the emblem of a shepherd and his fold. Having, in like manner, illustrated scripturally the second and third heads, he drew from the whole the practical inferences: "1. If all believers be one in Christ Jesus, what love, what charity, what benevolence, what forbearance ought to be manifested! 2. How shall we be honored if members of Christ's body! and, 3. How foolish, vain and absurd are all associations formed for the purpose of cementing men more closely by means of oaths!" adding an exhortation to seek this oneness in Christ; and closing with regrets for the divided state of the Church, and with a brief consideration of the motives for rejoicing in being heirs according to the promise. This sermon also was written out in full and committed to memory before delivery; and, being on a subject so appropriate to the designs of the Christian Association, was heard by the audience with great satisfaction.

On the following Lord's day, the 29th of July, he preached at Washington from Matt. xvi. 26: "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" In the introduction he dwelt generally upon the tendency of mankind to forget their best interests and the value of their souls, and to put a false estimate upon the worth of the world. The method of the discourse was: 1. What are we to understand by the whole world, here supposed to be the object of pursuit--the thing to be gained? 2. Inquire if the gain of the world necessarily implies the loss of [318] the soul. 3. Inquire into the greatness of the loss sustained by him who should gain the whole world and lose his own soul. 4. Examine what is necessarily presupposed and implied in so loving the world that it may become the unhappy occasion of losing our souls. 5. Make an appropriate application." This discourse was also written out in full and committed to memory, and was delivered a second time at Buffalo, on the 5th of August. On the 19th of August he preached again at Washington. The minutes of this sermon are as follows:

"Revelation xx. 11: And I saw a great white throne, etc. INTRODUCTION, with remarks on the nature and solemnity of judgment in general.

METHOD.--I. Describe the preparations made for judgment. II. The appearance of the Judge. III. The persons to be judged. IV. The manner in which they were judged. V. The subject of trial.

The text thus divided:--(1.) "And I saw a great white throne." (2.) "And him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away." (3.) "And the Sea gave up the dead that were in it, and Death and Hell delivered up the dead that were in them, and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." (4.) "And the books were opened, and another book was opened, which was the book of life." (5.) "And they were judged, every man according to his works."

I. Particulars under first head.--I. The throne--how to be understood. 2. The greatness of it. 3. Its whiteness--emblem of purity and righteousness.

II. Particulars under second head.--The Judge described.

III. Particulars under third head.--What we understand by small and great--the Sea, Death and Hell giving up their dead.

IV. Particulars under fourth head.--1. The Book of the law of Nature. 2. The Book of the law of Moses. 3. [319] The Book of the law of the Gospel. 4. The Book of God's Remembrance. 5. The Book of Conscience. 6. The Book of Life.

V. Particulars under fifth head.--The subject of trial; the works of man.

INFERENCES:--1. The necessity of being well acquainted with the statute-book of Heaven, to know how the trial will go with us.

2. The necessity of being well acquainted with our own thoughts, words and actions.

3. A general application of the whole subject.

This discourse was also committed to memory, and was delivered a second time at Buffalo on the 26th. The subject of which it treats seems to have been a favorite one with him, and he often dwelt upon it during his subsequent public ministrations; hence, as it was among the earliest, so it was among the latest on which he spoke at the close of his protracted ministry.

On the second of September, he preached at the cross-roads, from Genesis v. 22: "And Enoch walked with God." Introduced by remarks on the life of Enoch.

METHOD.--I. What changes must previously take place as of indispensable necessity before the walk with God commences. II. Explain the nature and evidences of the walk with God. III. Draw some inferences.

I. Particulars under first head.--Man's natural state described--1. His understanding is darkened; 2. His judgment perverted; 3. His affections depraved; 4. His taste vitiated by sin; so that his desires, his views, his character, his pursuits, are quite opposite to what God requires and loves.

The change that takes place is then described.

II. Particulars under second head.--The walk with God described. A number of Scriptures cited where the phrase is [320] used. The walk with God consists in: (1.) The continual exercise of repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; (2.) In an habitual realizing regard to the presence of God; (3.) in a daily dependence on his word, promises, providence and grace; (4.) In a careful attendance upon all his ordinances; (5.) In a conscientious obedience to all his commandments, without regarding the praise or the censure of men; (6.) In submission to his providential appointments, and adorning his Gospel with a becoming conversation.

III. The advantages derived--God--1. Supplies his wants; 2. Interposes in his straits; 3. Meets him in his ordinances--is his guide, companion and friend, and at last receives him to abide with him for ever.

APPLICATION.--To commence this walk early and to maintain it closely.

This sermon was not committed to memory like the preceding ones; and though he occasionally afterward wrote out a sermon in full, he, from this time, abandoned the practice of committing them to memory, depending upon a few notes of the general heads or divisions of the subject. This is the common usage with extemporaneous speakers, as it leaves the mind in greater freedom, and imposes no restraints upon the imagination and the fancy. It was the custom of the eloquent Robert Hall, who used to say that he liked to have such a general outline of his subject, "as a channel for his thoughts to flow in." But even this assistance, Alexander Campbell, after some time, relinquished, relying altogether on his own recollections of the arrangement of his theme, upon which he had previously meditated, or upon the methodizing power of his own mind at the time of delivery.

As many members of the Christian Association lived near Buffalo Creek, it was, about this time, resolved to erect a house of worship there. They accordingly [321] selected a piece of ground on the farm of William Gilchrist, in the valley of Brush Run, about two miles above its junction with Buffalo Creek, as an eligible site for the building which was to be framed. On the farm immediately adjoining there was a saw-mill, and the sons of the proprietor, David Bryant, one of whom, Joseph, was a zealous member of the Association, at once engaged in sawing out the necessary lumber. Meantime, it was agreed to erect a temporary stand near the ground chosen, and Alexander was requested to deliver the first discourse, which he did, standing beneath the shade of a spreading tree. The text he chose for the occasion was, in view of subsequent events, singularly appropriate and prophetic. It was from Job viii. 7: "Though thy beginning was small, thy latter end should greatly increase." In his Introduction he illustrated the maxim from the works of nature, Providence and grace, showing how small the seeds of things, and how apparently insignificant the sources of mighty streams and the causes of the most important revolutions. His "Method" then was to treat, first, of what is meant by the beginning; secondly, of what is meant by the increase; thirdly, to consider how we ought to act that from small beginnings the end may greatly increase. Under the first head, the "beginning" was understood and explained of temporal, spiritual and church affairs; and under the second, the "increase" was illustrated in the augmentation of the same species, the spread of truth, etc. From the whole, rules were deduced for direction as to how we are to manage that, from small beginnings, the latter end may greatly increase. This discourse was delivered on September 16, 1810, and was often referred to in subsequent years by those who had heard it when the [322] rapid spread of the principles of the reformation furnished for the text a striking application.

On the following Lord's day (September 23d), four days previous to the college exhibition on which he commented in the Reporter (as related in the last chapter) under the pseudonym of Bonus Homo, he spoke twice in Washington--the first sermon being from Numbers xii. 10, and the second from Luke x. 41,

42. And again, on the first day of the following week (30th of September), he preached at Buffalo from Romans iii. 28. Of these discourses, according to custom, he preserved copious minutes, of which want of space here forbids the insertion, enough having been already given to show the careful training to which his mind was subjected in the preparation of sermons during the early period of his ministry. For the adoption of this strict and careful method he was much indebted to the instructions and careful criticisms of his father, who had been educated according to the strict rules of the Scotch Seceder clergy, and who could never be satisfied with a sermon unless it was composed and arranged according to rule. The rules, indeed, were very proper, being founded upon correct principles, both of logic and of rhetoric, which were already familiar to Alexander, and readily reduced to practice. It became, accordingly, almost an invariable custom with the father and the son, after having heard each other's discourses, to examine and test them upon their return home by the established rules. It was always a special point with Thomas Campbell to ascertain, first, whether or not the division of the subject had been such as to exhaust it; and, secondly, whether or not the views or doctrines delivered were truly those of the text, taken in its proper connection with what preceded and what [323] followed it. He would admit of no fanciful interpretations or far-fetched applications, but desired constantly that the discourse should be strictly confined within the range of the ideas presented in the passage. In regard to this point, he differed greatly from many of his fellow-ministers among the Seceders and other parties, who often wandered widely from the text, and made it rather a motto for some speculation of their own, than a Scripture theme to be discussed and enforced.

About this time an event occurred which had considerable influence in determining the progress of affairs. It had become for some time evident to Thomas Campbell that the reformatory movement of which, by unanimous consent, he still retained the entire direction, was not extending itself as he had hoped. The arguments and entreaties of the "Declaration and Address" seemed to have fallen upon dull ears. His overtures appeared to meet with but little response, and no effort was known to be making anywhere to form, as proposed, societies auxiliary to the Christian Association. On the other hand, the Association itself seemed to be insensibly assuming a somewhat different character from the one originally contemplated, and, under the regular ministrations of Alexander and himself, to be gradually taking the position of a distinct religious body. This was a matter which occasioned Thomas Campbell great uneasiness; though it was but a natural consequence of the antagonism which existed, of necessity, between the Society and all the religious parties, since its avowed object was to put an end to partyism. The idea that he should, after all, be the means of creating a new party was most abhorrent to the mind of Thomas Campbell; and as he began to realize more and more the probability of such a result, he felt the more [324] disposed to adopt any measures consistent with his principles by which it could be avoided. It was while he was contemplating the progress of affairs from this point of view, that he was very earnestly solicited, both by private members and by some of the ministers of the Presbyterian Church, to form an ecclesiastical union with them. This was urged upon him especially by Rev. Mr. Anderson, then pastor of the congregation at Upper Buffalo, who was warmly attached to Mr. Campbell personally, and who expressed his confidence that the Presbytery generally would willingly receive him and the members of the Christian Association upon the principles they advocated, as all of them professed their belief in the doctrines of the Westminster Confession. This, indeed, was true, with the exception that Thomas Campbell objected to the chapter conferring power upon the clergy; and that a few members doubted, and others denied, the validity of infant baptism, though they all seemed willing to make this a matter of forbearance. Influenced, accordingly, by these solicitations, and a strong desire to avoid even the appearance of forming a new party, Thomas Campbell finally concluded to propose at least the matter to the Presbyterian Synod which was soon to assemble at Washington.

His previous ill-treatment by the Secession Presbytery and Synod, and their refusal to tolerate the liberal views he advocated, had not discouraged him. In the exercise of that charity that "beareth all things," and "believeth all things," he also "hoped all things," trusting that his former ministerial associates would yet see their error; and, in the fullness of the convictions which rested upon his own mind as to the all-sufficiency of the Divine basis of union which he proposed, fondly thinking that the educated and intelligent ministers of [325] the Presbyterian Church might be induced to accept his overture, and co-operate with him in a work so desirable as that of uniting all in one common brotherhood. It could, at least, he thought, do no harm to propose the matter. As he had labored in the Old World to bring about a union between two of the branches of the Presbyterian Church, the Burghers and Anti-Burghers, he felt that now, from the higher religious stand-point to which he had attained, it would be a privilege to plead, before one of the high courts of the ecclesiastical body which in America was the representative of the mother Kirk of Scotland, the cause of a universal Christian union. In so doing, he would, at all events, deliver his own soul; relieve himself from responsibility, and prove whether the sympathy shown him by his Presbyterian friends, really proceeded from their appreciation of the justness of his cause, or merely from their sectarian hostility and rivalry in relation to the Seceders. It should be stated here, however, that Alexander, who held somewhat different views from those of his father in regard to the spirit of Presbyterianism, neither approved the measure nor anticipated any favorable results; but, under existing circumstances, he did not think it proper to make any direct opposition to his father's wishes.

It was on the second day of October that the Synod met at Washington, and the Rev. Samuel Ralston, who had been Moderator at the previous meeting, opened the session with a sermon. The Synod was termed the "Synod of Pittsburgh," and was composed of the Presbyteries of Erie, Hartford, Lancaster, Redstone, Ohio, etc.¹ The following account of the [326] proceedings in the case is taken from the published minutes in the records of the Synod, as approved by the General Assembly, Eliphalet Nott being Moderator, May 21, 1811. On the third day of the meeting, October 4, 1810, afternoon session, the following entry appears:

"Synod met pursuant to adjournment. Mr. Thomas Campbell, formerly a minister of the Associate Synod, now representing himself as in some relation to a Society called the 'Christian Association of Washington,' applied to the Synod to be taken into Christian and ministerial communion.

"After hearing Mr. Campbell at length, and his answers to various questions proposed to him, the Synod unanimously resolved, that however specious the plan of the Christian Association and however seducing its professions, as experience of the effects of similar projects in other parts has evinced their baleful tendency and destructive operations on the whole interests of religion by promoting divisions instead of union, by degrading the ministerial character, by providing free admission to any errors in doctrine, and to any corruptions in discipline, whilst a nominal approbation of the Scriptures as the only standard of truth may be professed, the Synod are constrained to disapprove the plan and its native effects.

"And further, for the above and many other important reasons, it was resolved, that Mr. Campbell's request to be received into ministerial and Christian communion cannot be granted.

"Mr. Campbell requested to have a copy of the Synod's decision in his case. The Synod agreed to grant his request. and the clerk was ordered to furnish him with a copy. * * [327] "Session of Friday, October 5, at 3 o'clock P. M. Synod met agreeably to adjournment, etc.

"Mr. Thomas Campbell appeared in Synod and asked an explanation of what those 'important reasons' are, mentioned in a former minute respecting him, for which the Synod cannot receive him into Christian and ministerial communion. On motion, resolved that Mr. Campbell shall be furnished with an answer to his request before the rising of the Synod. The Synod agreed to return the following answer to Mr. Campbell's inquiry, viz.: It was not for any immorality in practice, but, in addition to the reasons before assigned, for expressing his belief that there are some opinions taught in our Confession of Faith which are not founded in the Bible, and avoiding to designate them; for declaring that the administration of baptism to infants is not authorized by scriptural precept or example, and is a matter of indifference, yet administering that ordinance while holding such an opinion; for encouraging or countenancing his son to preach the gospel without any regular authority; for opposing creeds and confessions as injurious to the interests of religion; and, also, because it is not consistent with the regulations of the Presbyterian Church that Synod should form a connection with any ministers, churches or associations; that the Synod deemed it improper to grant his request.

"On reading the above to Mr. Campbell, he denied having said that infant baptism was a matter of indifference, and declared that he admitted many truths drawn by fair induction from the Word of God; acknowledged that he opposed creeds and confessions when they contained anything not expressly contained in the Bible; that he believes there are some things in our Confession of Faith not expressly revealed in the Bible. He also declared that he felt himself quite relieved from the apprehension which he at first had with respect to his moral character."

There are several points in regard to this somewhat curious affair that deserve notice. Thomas Campbell [328] appears to have made the application as, impliedly at least, the representative of the Christian Association, and it seems to have been so understood by the Synod, from what is said in their reply, that "it is not consistent with the regulations of the Presbyterian Church that Synod should make a connection with any ministers, churches, or associations." It appears also that Mr. Campbell laid before the Synod a full and candid statement of the plan and purposes of the Society, as these, in their reply, constitute the principal ground of objection; and that there was no indication given of a disposition, on the part of the Society, to abandon these purposes, the proposition being in effect that the Presbyterian body would afford shelter and give its countenance and support to the proposed reformation. In his address before the Synod, Mr. Campbell was careful to define clearly the position which the Society occupied, and to state that it was not a Church, but simply a society organized for the promotion of Christian unity. He humbly and earnestly proposed to the Synod to be obedient to it in all things that the gospel and law of Christ inculcated, only desiring to be permitted to advocate that sacred unity which Christ and his apostles expressly enjoined; or, in other words, that the Synod would consent to "Christian union upon Christian principles." It was not, then, an offer on the part of Thomas Campbell or those connected with him, to unite with the Synod on Presbyterian principles. It was not an offer to join the Presbyterian party as such. Had they been willing to do this, and to become Presbyterians in a denominational sense, they would have been most gladly welcomed. But the Society had no idea of thus losing its identity or relinquishing its aims. On the contrary, it desired to continue its labors [329] under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church, with which its members proposed to have, in the mean time, ministerial and Christian communion.

This seemed to them desirable on several accounts. For, as the Society was not a Church, having distinctly disavowed this character in the "Declaration and Address," most of its members, in attendance on the public ministrations of Thomas Campbell and his son Alexander, were deprived of various privileges which belonged to the church relation. Thomas Campbell himself belonged to no sect, having

left the Seceders, though in doing so, he by no means considered himself as renouncing his ministerial character or rights. Most of those who had been in connection with the parties around, felt that this connection was virtually dissolved by their long absence from their places in the congregations; and there were some members of the Society who had never been united religiously with any party. It was hence evident that the Society must obtain admission into some regularly organized religious body, or be itself compelled to change its attitude and resolve itself into an independent Church--an alternative which Thomas Campbell particularly desired to avoid. It was this very dread of the ultimate formation of a new religious body, that caused him to overlook the absurdity of expecting that any sect would receive him and the Society he represented, on the terms proposed. For a party to have admitted into its bosom those who were avowedly bent on the destruction of partyism, would of course have been perfectly suicidal. It would have been only to repeat in another form, and with a full knowledge of the object in view, the story of the wooden horse of Troy, and to have the gates of its well-walled ecclesiastical city thrown open to its [330] enemies. It cannot reasonably be denied, therefore, that the Presbyterian Synod, in rejecting the application, manifested very much of the wisdom of the serpent.

From the Christian stand-point, however, its course displayed a marvelous lack, not only of the qualities of the dove, but of the wisdom that cometh from on high. In reality, the application of Thomas Campbell was a high compliment to the supposed liberality and the assumed purposes of the Presbyterian organization, and the candid and kind manner in which the proposition was made, as well as the excellent character of the applicant, ought to have secured, in the reply at least, some few words of courteous recognition. But the terms of the reply, in the first instance, were curt, harsh, and in one place so ambiguous that Mr. Campbell was compelled, from a sense of duty to himself, to appear again before the Synod, to ask for an explanation of the phrase "many other important reasons," by which the Synod attempted to justify its action--an expression so indefinite as obviously to allow, if not to invite, the very worst construction. And in their explanation, the Rev. Synod, in searching for these "important reasons," finds one of them in the frivolous pretext that Alexander had been allowed to exercise his gift of public speaking, as it says, "without any regular authority," or before ordination--a liberty taken by both Knox and Calvin, and one often accorded to theological students. It condescends, also, in other alleged reasons, to misrepresent Mr. Campbell's views, and to give its sanction and authority to unfounded rumors, as if they had been admitted matters of fact. In all this, however, it was sectarianism that spoke, in the exercise of that self-sufficient, narrow and despotic spirit which seems inherent in all legislative religious bodies. [331]

On the other hand, on the principles professed by the Synod, it does not appear how they could legitimately reject the application. The Confession of Faith of the Synod declared the Bible to be the only rule of faith and practice, and yet when a respectable body of religious persons apply for admission, they are ruled out, because they will have no other rule than the Bible! They are rejected for adhering to the "only rule" admitted to be infallible, and for presuming to doubt the infallibility of the Westminster Confession!--Rejected, not for any violation of the "only rule," but because they cannot admit that a human creed or confession is in reality the "only rule!" How completely this verified the remark made by Mr. Campbell in his "Declaration and Address," "That a book adopted by any party as its standard for all matters of doctrine, worship, discipline and government, must be considered as the Bible of that party!" And how evident it is that, in the sectarian world, there are just as many different Bibles as there are different and authoritative explanations of the Bible, called creeds and confessions! In the case of Thomas Campbell it was the "Confession," and not the Bible, that was made the standard by which one of the best of men was denied religious fellowship. No principles, however true; no individual, however pious, could be admitted, if the safety of the party would be thereby endangered. The sect, with all its machinery, must,

at all hazards, be preserved. It could permit no change, it could endure no reformation, but must remain a sect to the end of time!

Before closing this notice of the proceedings of the Synod, it may be well to remark that, as the article of Bonus Homo, exposing the improprieties which had been permitted at the commencement of Washington [332] College, appeared in the Reporter on the very day of the assembling of the Synod, it might be supposed that the action of the Synod was, in part, due to feelings of irritation. If, however, such feelings could be at all supposed to influence so respectable a body of divines, it does not appear that the authorship of Bonus Homo was, at that time, sufficiently known to give such a direction to them as to occasion the rejection of Mr. Campbell's application. It is true, that in reversing what was the Divine rule under the Jewish institution, of visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, the Synod made Alexander's preaching, for the three months previous, one of their "important reasons" for rejecting his father's application, and in so doing might appear to have some special reason for mentioning and singling out the youth as a particular mark for censure. Still, as its action admits of satisfactory explanation upon the well-known principles that govern religious parties, it is not necessary to suppose the existence of influences merely temporary and personal.

As for Thomas Campbell, he had now gained additional insight into the mysteries of sectarianism, and could better appreciate the sagacity with which his son had anticipated the results of his application. Finding that all his overtures for Christian union were rejected, and all his efforts to induce the religious parties to accept the Bible as the only basis of union had proved abortive, he now felt himself like a waif dropped upon the surface of religious society, unsought and unclaimed. He did not, however, on this account, lose for a moment his equanimity or his confidence in the principles which he advocated; and, as according to the ancient law, all unclaimed waifs belonged to the king, he felt that he truly belonged to the King of kings, and that, [333] however his principles or his efforts might be disregarded by men, his labors were in perfect harmony with the revealed will of that glorious Being whom he delighted to serve, and that they could not fail to be, therefore, acceptable in His sight. He cherished no unkind feelings in relation to the action of the Synod in his case, and did not think it expedient to take any public notice of the allegations in the Synod's reply. He was so much opposed to religious controversy, and so much in hope that his plea for Christian union would be accepted by the religious parties without debate, that he had, in the "Declaration and Address," entirely precluded himself and the Association from engaging in any oral discussion upon the subject, merely proposing to answer, in writing, any respectful written communications.

There was one member, however, of the Society who had joined it after the adoption of the "Declaration and Address," who took a different view both of the propriety and the necessity of religious controversy, and who was not disposed to allow the aspersions and misrepresentations of the Synod of Pittsburg to pass without a suitable exposure. Alexander Campbell, though but a youth, and as yet a novice in the field of polemics, was not of a spirit tamely to submit to the proceedings of the Synod in relation to his father and the Christian Association, and he resolved to avail himself of the first favorable opportunity to review them publicly. He felt that this duty rested upon him, his father being inhibited by his published Declaration, and no other member of the Society seeming disposed to take upon him this office. Thus the youthful champion was left to meet, by himself, the formidable array of reverend clergymen and doctors of divinity that [334] composed the Synod of Pittsburg, as the son of Manoah was left by the Israelites to encounter alone the hosts of the Philistine.

As the semi-annual meeting of the Christian Association happened to be near at hand, he concluded to avail himself of it, as affording the most suitable public opportunity for his purpose. In this the Association acquiesced, as the course of the Synod had given rise to various misapprehensions, and it was deemed desirable to bring the nature and objects of the Society more prominently before the people. The following advertisement was accordingly inserted in the Reporter on the 22d and 29th of October, 1810, a few days after the meeting of the Synod:

"The Christian Association of Washington holds its semi-annual meeting at Washington on Thursday, the first of November next, at 11 o'clock. There will be delivered upon that occasion by Alexander Campbell, V. D. S.,² an appropriate discourse illustrative of the principles and design of the Association, and for the purpose of obviating certain mistakes and objections which ignorance or willful opposition has attached to the humble and well-meant attempts of the Society to promote a thorough scriptural reformation, as testified in their address to the friends and lovers of peace and truth throughout all the Churches." * * * *

At the time appointed, Alexander addressed a large assemblage from Isaiah lvii. 14, and lxii. 10. As this [335] discourse reveals the views which he at this time held in relation to some important points, as well as the objects then proposed, an abstract of it is here given. He introduced his subject thus:

As the benighted traveler at midnight's dreary hour is consoled with the hope of day's return; as the husbandman, when frigid winter's icy hands congeal the plains, is cheered by the hope of spring; as the septennial captive rejoices in the expectation of the hour of freedom, so the Bible-illuminated Christian, in the dismal season of Zion's tribulation, exults in the firm persuasion that the promise of her deliverance will be fulfilled, and that the happy hour will speedily arrive when God will favor her, make her 'a praise in the midst of the earth,' and shall cause her 'righteousness to go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth.' Aided by the light of Divine revelation, and encouraged by the faithfulness of God, we are enabled to expect, and with joy anticipate, a happy season, when the 'heathen' shall be given to King Jesus 'for his inheritance,' and 'the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession;' when 'the Gentiles shall see Zion's righteousness, and all kings her glory.' Even in this misty day, when the love of many waxeth cold; when vile corruptions have stained the professed Church of God; when animosities and angry controversy, discord and division have tarnished the sacred name of Christian; when the ecclesiastical hireling lifts up his voice in the sanctuary, saying, 'What will you give me?' when many shepherds have fleeced their flocks and then scattered them on the mountains,--even in this portentous day, we are warranted to expect that the Lord will soon revive his work, and are encouraged, by the kind prophecy of God, to hope that the day, is not far hence when the stumbling-block shall be removed out of the way of the people; when the Canaanite shall not be found within Jerusalem's hallowed walls; when buyers and sellers shall be scourged out of the temple, and when angry discord shall no more alienate the sons of God." [336]

Continuing his introductory remarks, he spoke, first, of the gracious design of prophecy, and its influence upon the mind; secondly, of the design of the prediction under consideration; and, thirdly, of the things to which these predictions chiefly referred. In the fourth place, he showed that the state of the Jews and the providence of God toward them corresponded remarkably with the present state of the Church and the providence of God toward it; that, in both cases, there was to be a great revival--that the same prophecy which announced the glorious end, declared also that previously there should be fit persons raised up to maintain the Lord's cause--the cause of Zion. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace, day nor night." Isaiah lxii. 6. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." In this

connection, after showing how much had been done since the French Revolution to arouse the people to a true sense of civil and religious liberty, and to spread the Gospel over the world, he continues as follows:

"But time forbids us to enumerate the many noble exertions that have been made, and are at this day making, for the conversion of the heathen. Rapid progress is making in the translation of the Scriptures into every language under heaven, so that they shall soon be read in every language and in every tongue. In the mean time, the work is in its infancy. It is well, however, that it is begun, be it within or without the Church. Reformation is also begun within the Church, and the labors of those who have been engaged in this work have not been in vain. Many within these last sixteen years, both by writing and preaching, have been engaged in the arduous work; many are crying day and night, and are determined to 'give [337] God no rest till he make Zion a praise in the midst of the earth.' Not long since, an humble attempt has been made here, where, indeed, the enemy, the demon of divisions and delusions, raging and tearing like an impetuous flood, seemed to carry all before it. Even here has the Lord's banner been displayed in behalf of truth, in an humble and unanswerable expostulation upon the evils of division, accompanied by an irrefutable detection of their evil causes, and an overture for union in truth amongst all the friends and lovers of truth throughout the churches. (See Address, p. 19.) The reception this attempt has experienced has evinced its origin. It has met the approbation of no party as such. Had it flared otherwise, it would have evinced itself not catholic, original and pure, for no party can, with any show of decency, pretend to these properties and yet refuse to be measured by the pure, original and catholic standard of the Holy Scriptures. They will only submit to be tried by their own standards: that is, in other words, by their own opinions, as if the word had no certain, fixed or express meaning of its own, but just what they are pleased to give it."

After dwelling on these and several other introductory points, he went on to discuss the subject, first "considering the duties inculcated in the figures presented in the text; secondly, showing that the performance of these duties had been; attempted under the auspices of the 'Christian Association;' and, in the third place, endeavoring to obviate some feigned and plausible objections that ignorance or willful opposition had made." He then makes a proper division of the text, and goes on to elucidate the different heads.

1. "Go through, go through the gates," is shown "to be spoken in reference to the situation of the persons addressed, who were in the midst of Babylon. It is necessary that they should remove hence ere they could come to Zion. Hence separation from Babylon is the first duty inculcated in the natural order of the text. Refer to 2 Cor. vi. 17; Rev. xviii." 4. He then showed "what was meant by Babylon in the New Testament sense and the indispensable necessity of removing [338] from it, 1. For our own sakes, in compliance with God's commands; and, 2. For the sake of others, in the work of reformation."

2. Under the second division, "Prepare the way, * * * take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people, * * * cast up the highway, gather out the stones," he went on to observe that "various figures are employed to illustrate the preparation of the way here intended, and that various things have always been necessary in preparing the way for a general, permanent reformation. Previous to the establishment of the Christian religion, a messenger was sent to say, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God; every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places smooth."

3. He then applied the expressions "cast up the highway," etc., as now "equivalent to 'disencumber the Scriptures from the traditions of men, and exhibit them in a simple and perspicuous manner,' as they are

the only authorized highway from Babylon to Zion, or from this world to heaven. Of it Isaiah (xxxv. 8, 9) says, 'And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.'

"There have been other ways found out by men, but none of them were broad enough to hold every traveler to Zion. They were by-roads appropriated to their owners, but not like the king's high-road, that suffered every man who was a lawful, well-behaved subject to pass unmolested."

4. He then shows that "the persons who should be instrumental in making this reformation are commanded to repair this established road and direct the people to it; to stand and cry (Jer. vi. 16): 'Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways [339] and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls.' It is only by walking in this way that rest can be obtained; and what is this way? Do not the Scriptures of truth furnish the only established law or way for Christians, whether in an individual or church capacity, to wink to heaven in? To the law: and to the testimony. Psalm cxix. 105: 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.' It is sufficient for every purpose: and for every work. 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17: 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' It is also said, Psalm xix. 7, 8, 9: 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.' In harmony with these teachings, the apostle commands Christians and the preachers of the gospel to hold fast the 'form of sound words, which,' says he, 'ye have heard of me.' The sects have all, in a good degree at least, held first the substance, but none of them the form, and yet Paul commands Timothy to hold fast the form, and also 'to commit those things to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also;' and he declares that 'if any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing,' etc. All the sects have been strenuously contending for their own confessions, but none of them for the faith once delivered to the saints in the form in which it was delivered.

"5. The next figure of expression made use of for instructing us in the necessary preparation of the way is, 'take up the stumbling-block from the way of my people.' This stumbling-block and the stones that were to be gathered out [340] of the way are understood to denote whatever causes God's people to stumble on their way Zionward; whatever prevents them from conforming to the Word of God in all things; whatever prevents them from enjoying: all the privileges of the dispensation under which we live. These hinderances are then shown to be human opinions and inventions of men, and the way in which they thus hinder is explained."

In explaining the figure, "lift up a standard for the people," it is shown, "1. That the standard is the testimony of Jesus Christ, which is the spirit of prophecy. 2. That other testimonies have in vain been lifted up for this purpose. That standards had been lifted up which narrowed the gates of Zion, so that only a few of it certain height and breadth could have admission, and there were none of them but would reject those whom God has not rejected, and deny admission to those whom God had admitted. All are defective. The apostle Paul, the angel Gabriel in human form, could not be admitted on the principles of these standards.

The standard, as infallible, is made to open admission into the door of the Church as well as into the gates of heaven."

Under the second general head, he endeavored to show "that their Society had attempted to perform the duties referred to, 1. By endeavoring to remove the stumbling-block of making the private opinions of men a term of communion. 2. By gathering out of the way the stumbling-stones of human invention. 3. By pointing to the good old way, and maintaining that it is perfect, infallible, and sufficient. 4. By lifting up as our standard and maintaining that the New Testament is as perfect a constitution for the worship, discipline and government of the New Testament Church, and as perfect a rule for the particular duties of its members, as the old Testament was for its members. We have decided, therefore, to lift it up as a standard for the Church, to open the gates of admission into the Church as wide as the gates of heaven."

He now, under the third head, goes on to obviate objections: the first one of these noticed is, "that the principle [341] and plan adopted have a tendency to increase divisions, and to terminate in a new party." This objection he obviates, "1. By reference to the express declarations, in the appendix to the Address, on this particular point. 2. By noticing the effects of the labors of the Prince of Peace, and showing that as it was in his case, so it is in ours. If our overture offend any of the brethren, the blame cannot be attached to us. 3. By referring to the proceedings of the Society heretofore, as bearing testimony to the sincerity of its professions, as all concerned well knew. He then further proceeds to show that if the various parties refuse to give up their anti-Christian practices, usurpations and administrations, separation from them becomes indispensably necessary. 'It is in their power,' he says, 'to verify their own predictions by forcing us into a party. But even then we do not become a new party, but only in the same sense that the primitive Christians became a new party--a sect everywhere spoken against.' He insists that they could be regarded as a party only on the ground that taking the New Testament for their constitution, or making it the only rule, or opening the door of communion as wide as the gate of heaven, could be regarded as party principles; that the primitive Church was precisely such a party, and that if such a party does not now exist, we should be happy to be such a party--such as would receive the whole household of faith upon original, catholic and pure principles. If, however, he adds, our brethren still persist to criminally impeach us with partyism and schism, we must impute it to their willful opposition.'

"The second objection is, that it tends to degrade the ministerial character. This, like the former, is an impeachment thrown in the very face of express declarations. See Address, resolution fifth, which says, 'That this Society, formed for the sole purpose of promoting simple, evangelical Christianity, shall, to the utmost of its power, countenance and support such ministers, and such only, as exhibit a manifest conformity to the original standard in conversation and doctrine, in zeal and diligence; only such as reduce to practice that simple [343] original form of Christianity expressly exhibited upon the sacred page, without attempting to inculcate anything of human authority, of private opinion or inventions of men, as having any place in the constitution, faith or worship of the Christian Church, or anything as matter of Christian faith or duty, for which there cannot be expressly produced a Thus saith the Lord, either in express terms or by approved precedent.' Does such a proposal as this, tend to degrade the ministerial character? If so, we know not how to exalt the ministerial character. What! Will the acknowledgment of only such ministers as are scripturally qualified degrade the ministerial character? What! Will the admission of such doctrines only as are expressly revealed open a door to errors and corruptions? Then surely the blame must lie on the Scriptures and not on us. That our principles would reduce hirelings, drones, idle shepherds, dumb dogs, blind guides and unfaithful watchmen to contempt, we allow.

"It is also true, that if nothing be admitted but what is expressly found in the Bible, many things that are deemed precious and important must be excluded. But none will dare to say that what is expressly revealed will be error. Therefore, unless our accusers produce relevant proof to condemn our conduct as inconsistent with our principles, we must consider them ignorant of these principles and malicious. But such proof we humbly presume they cannot exhibit, and we are determined, through grace, they never shall.

"The third objection is, that our plan tends to open a door to corruption in discipline. This charge is confidently exhibited in opposition to our own declaration. Prop. 7, 8, 12. The sum of all of which is, that as there is but one class which, according to the Word, can be called Christians, so none else ought to be received or retained in the Church's communion; but, if we have mistaken their character, we would be obliged to our brethren to correct our mistake, and if not, we should humbly presume that the real intention of discipline would be secured. Or do they object that we condemn or acquit by the express letter of the law? [343] We leave them to the law, or rather to the Author of it, and remind them that the controversy is not with us, but with the law, and that whosoever judgeth the law is not a doer of the law, but a judge.

"The fourth objection is, that we make a nominal approbation of the Bible a satisfactory test of truth, and that all the before-mentioned evils are attributable to this laxity of discipline. Who told them these were our intentions? Surely, we have declared the very contrary. See appendix to 'Declaration and Address.' Why, then, do our brethren impute such things to us in the open face of our express declaration to the very contrary, as they have evidently done in every item of their false impeachments? Is such conduct consistent with truth, justice or charity? Yet all these things have the Synod of Pittsburg laid to our charge. In so doing they must have judged our hearts, our secret intentions, and not our public profession nor our practice; for as to these we defy them and all men to make good a single objection.

"Having briefly answered these, we proceed to answer a few other popular objections, or rather popular clamors, excited against us by designing men, such as the following:

"V. That your principles exclude infant baptism.

"1. We dare not inculcate infant baptism in the name of the Lord as indispensably incumbent upon Christians, because the Lord has nowhere expressly enjoined it. If anything can be produced on this head, we should be glad to see it. Until this be done, we think it highly anti-scriptural to make it a term of communion, for to do this is to make it a term of salvation. It is as much as to say, 'Except you baptize your children you cannot be saved!'

"2. They virtually say when they make it a term of communion, 'You are excluded from the Church below, consequently from the Church above.' They have no revealed right to heaven above, so that unless our brethren can show us that, though excluded from the Church below, they still have a right to expect admission into heaven, we must conclude they make it a term of salvation, as much at least as [344] the Judaizing teachers did their beloved circumcision, in the room of which our brethren say baptism is come. While we oppose the procedure as the apostle did circumcision, we are as far from condemning the practice in existing circumstances, when not held in this important point of view, as the apostle was, in his own time, from condemning the procedure of the Jewish brethren in regard to circumcision, and would comply with the conscientious scruples of our brethren as far as the Apostle Paul did when he circumcised Timotheus with his own hand.

"3. Which we declare that neither pædobaptism nor anti-pædobaptism availeth anything, we would consider ourselves as unjustly impeached by the objection under consideration as the apostle considered himself (Acts xxi. 21) in regard to Jewish observances, and with him would be at some pains to convince our brethren that 'those things whereof they were informed were nothing.'

"4. Upon the whole we conclude that it should be a matter of forbearance, as it is evident circumcision was in the primitive Church, by no means considering it a matter of indifference. It can never be a light thing to mistake the will of God. We look at baptism now in nearly the same point of view in which the primitive Church looked at circumcision, and consider the cases, if not altogether yet nearly parallel; so far s

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