

# Thomas Campbell and the Westminster Confession of Faith

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*Although Thomas Campbell's roots in the Reformed tradition are widely acknowledged by Stone-Campbell historians, the influence of the Westminster Confession of Faith on Campbell's Declaration & Address is rarely discussed. This essay seeks to address that oversight by surveying the SCM historiography, revisiting Campbell's background to consider ties to the Reformed faith, and examining the language used in both documents in a comparative analysis.*

Histories of the Stone-Campbell Movement<sup>1</sup> have generally acknowledged Thomas Campbell's Reformed roots. Continuity between that heritage and his later thought can be demonstrated through examination of the language of the *Declaration and Address* (hereafter, *D&A*), written in 1809.

The claim of this essay is that most histories of the SCM have overlooked the direct influence of the Westminster Confession of Faith on the writing of the *D&A*, especially the Confession's influence on the hermeneutical principles Campbell articulates there.<sup>2</sup> This essay will argue that despite Campbell's break with Presbyterianism, this historic document demonstrates his continuing fidelity to elements of his Reformed heritage.

It will first survey SCM historiography, seeking evidence either to support or falsify the claim that historically, the SCM has overlooked the influence of the

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<sup>1</sup> The Stone-Campbell Movement (hereafter, SCM) is also known as the Restoration Movement.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting that, in one of the two biographies of Thomas Campbell penned in the twentieth century, eight pages are dedicated to describing the influence of John Locke's philosophy on the *Declaration and Address*, but not a word is said about the influence of the Westminster Confession, see Lester G. McAllister, *Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book* (St. Louis: Bethany, 1954) 125-132. However, beginning especially with the work of Michael Casey in the 1980s, historians have started taking stock of how Westminster hermeneutics influenced the Campbells. For Casey's contributions, see especially Michael W. Casey, "The Origins of the Hermeneutics of the Churches of Christ Part One: The Reformed Tradition" *Restoration Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (January 1, 1989) 75-91; Michael W. Casey, "The Historical Context—The Theological, Rhetorical, and Philosophical Background of Alexander Campbell

Westminster Confession of Faith on the wording of the *D&A*. Second, it will offer a brief biography of Campbell, focusing on his ties to Reformed faith and practice.

Third, it will draw a comparison between the language of the Westminster Confession of Faith, specifically Chapter 1, Paragraph VI, and the *D&A* to demonstrate dependence of the *D&A* on the Confession.

## HISTORIOGRAPHY

Examination of early histories of the SCM reveals that Campbell's Presbyterian education and ministry is not acknowledged as a source informing the words of the *D&A*.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, some later histories continue this pattern, as the following three histories from the second half of the twentieth century demonstrate.

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and the Stone-Campbell Movement," in *The Battle over Hermeneutics in the Stone-Campbell Movement, 1800–1870* (Lewiston: E. Mellen, 1998); Michael W. Casey, "The Theory of Logic and Inference in the *Declaration and Address*," in *The Quest for Christian Unity, Peace, and Purity in Thomas Campbell's Declaration and Address: Text and Studies* (ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Hans Rollmann; Lanham: Scarecrow, 2000) 223–242.

<sup>3</sup> The histories I surveyed that were published between 1836 and 1952 include: Alexander Campbell, "Disciples of Christ," in *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, or Dictionary of the Bible, Theology, Religious Biography, All Religions, Ecclesiastical History, and Missions; Containing Definitions of All Religious Terms; an Impartial Account of the Principal Christian Denominations* (ed. J. Newton Brown; Philadelphia: Joseph Steen & Co., 1836) 462–464; Robert Richardson, "Disciples of Christ," in *History of All the Religious Denominations in the United States, Second, Improved and Portrait Edition* (ed. John Winebrenner; Harrisburg, PA: John Winebrenner, 1849) 223–236; John F. Rowe, *History of Reformatory Movements, Resulting in a Restoration of the Apostolic Church, to Which is Appended a History of the Nineteen General Church Councils, Also a History of All Innovations, from the Third Century Down* (rev. and enl.; Cincinnati: John F. Rowe, 1890) 127–161; B. B. Tyler, *A History of the Disciples of Christ* (vol. 12 of *American Church History*, ed. Philip Schaff et al.; New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1894) 34–40, 44–59; B. B. Tyler, *Concerning the Disciples of Christ*, Bethany C. E. Reading Courses (Cleveland: Bethany C. E. Company, 1897) 23–24, 28–31; Charles Louis Loos, "Introductory Period," in *The Reformation of the Nineteenth Century* (ed. J. H. Garrison; St. Louis: Christian Publishing Co., 1901) 18–32, 39–42; John T. Brown, *Churches of Christ: A Historical, Biographical, and Pictorial History of Churches of Christ in the United States, Australasia, England and Canada* (Louisville, KY: John P. Morton, 1904) 396–398; Erret Gates, "The Early Relation and Separation of Baptists and Disciples," (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1904) 9–16; Hiram Van Kirk, *The Rise of the Current Reformation, Or: A Study in the History of Theology of the Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Co., 1907) 91; James H. Garrison, *The Story of a Century: A Brief Historical Sketch and Exposition of the Religious Movement Inaugurated by Thomas and Alexander Campbell. 1809–1909* (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Co., 1909) 27–28, 35–38, 45–52; William Thomas Moore, *A Comprehensive History of the Disciples of Christ: Being an Account of a Century's Effort to Restore Primitive Christianity in its Faith* (New York: Revell, 1909) 97–120; Milo True Morrill, *A History of the Christian Denomination in America: 1794–1911* (Dayton: The Christian Publishing Assoc., 1912) 129–130; Peter Ainslee, *The Message of the Disciples for the Union of the Church, Including Their Origin and History: Lectures Delivered before the Yale Divinity School* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1913) 86–87; J. J. Haley, *Makers and Molders of the Reformation Movement: A Study of Leading Men among the Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1914) 14–24; M.

In *The Disciples of Christ: A History* (1958), W. E. Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot give four introductory chapters of background history<sup>4</sup> and acknowledge Campbell's Presbyterian background<sup>5</sup> and his experiences with Anti-Burgher Presbyterianism in Pennsylvania.<sup>6</sup> Despite this, they make no mention of the influence these experiences may have had on the drafting of the *D&A*.<sup>7</sup>

Likewise, William Tucker and Lester McAllister in *Journey of Faith* (1975) offer an overview of the European influences on Campbell and his son Alexander,<sup>8</sup> including some detail of Thomas Campbell's Presbyterian education and ministry in Scotland as an Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian.<sup>9</sup> Yet while they briefly recount John Locke's influence on the philosophical background of the *D&A*, they never mention the influence of Campbell's Reformed heritage on the document.

And Leroy Garrett in his 1981 *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History* offers an overview of key philosophical and Scottish Independent Church influences on the thinking of the SCM founders.<sup>10</sup> But he neglects to discuss the ways in which Presbyterian theology impacted Campbell's writing of the *D&A*.

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M. Davis, *How the Disciples Began and Grew: A Short History of the Christian Church*, Phillips Bible Institute Series (Cincinnati: Standard, 1915) 34-35, 43-48, 53-63; Walter Wilson Jennings, "Origin and Early History of the Disciples of Christ: With Special Reference to the Period Between 1809 and 1835" (PhD thesis, University of Illinois, 1918) 76-87, 110-124; Winfred Ernest Garrison, *Religion Follows the Frontier: A History of the Disciples of Christ* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1931) 3-5, 71-105; Howard E. Short, "Disciples of Christ: A Chronological Check-List of Events, 1800-1950," unpublished paper, Harding College Graduate School of Religion, 1950, 2-3; Homer Hailey, *Attitudes and Consequences in the Restoration Movement* (2nd ed.; Rosemead, CA: Old Paths, 1952) 47-65.

<sup>4</sup> Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ: A History* (rev. ed.; St. Louis: Bethany, 1958) 21-92.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 124-127.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 129-141.

<sup>7</sup> This trend is continued in other more recent histories: Marvin W. Hastings, *Saga of a Movement: Story of the Restoration Movement* (Manchester, TN: Christian Schoolmaster Publications, 1981), who gives less than one page to Thomas Campbell; Mark G. Toulouse, *Joined in Discipleship: The Shaping of Contemporary Disciples Identity*, (rev. and exp.; St. Louis: Chalice, 1997) 26-30; Gary Holloway and Douglas A. Foster, *Renewing God's People: A Concise History of Churches of Christ* (Abilene: ACU Press, 2001) 41-47. Other recent histories have a different purpose in mind, to bring to the foreground forgotten or overlooked elements of SCM history. Such histories do not follow the typical chronology of important events in SCM history, and as such, are not chiefly biographical. See, for example, C. Leonard Allen, *Distant Voices: Discovering a Forgotten Past for a Changing Church* (Abilene: ACU Press, 1993); Richard T. Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> William E. Tucker and Lester G. McAllister, *Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (St. Louis: Bethany, 1975) 89-103.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-102.

<sup>10</sup> Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches* (Joplin: College Press, 1981) 24-57.

Further, although Garrett acknowledges Campbell “still considered himself a Presbyterian minister”<sup>11</sup> at the time he wrote the *D&A* and that his responses at his heresy trial “indicated that he was still a Calvinist in theology, which continued to be the case for the rest of his life,”<sup>12</sup> he refrains from exploring the implications of Campbell’s Presbyterian heritage for the content of the *D&A*.

There are, however, a few places in the SCM historiography where its historians do recognize the lingering influence of Campbell’s Reformed heritage.

In his 1904 dissertation, Errett Gates claims the early members of the Christian Association of Washington, PA, “all professed adherence, for the most part, to the Westminster Confession, with the exception of Thomas Campbell, who took exception to the chapter conferring power upon the clergy.”<sup>13</sup> What remains unclear, though, is how this adherence affected the *D&A* wording.

Although Gates comes close to naming sources for the *D&A* when he states “[i]t was forged out of the experiences and charged with the spirit of Thomas Campbell,” he does not specifically name what those experiences were.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Moore acknowledges “it may be stated that the Campbells were both moderate Calvinists, and remained so till their death, but they utterly refused to recognize either Calvinism or Arminianism in their plea for Christian union.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>13</sup> Errett Gates, “The Early Relation and Separation of Baptists and Disciples,” 15. Gates does not cite his source for this claim. See also the comment by Jennings, *Origin and Early History*, 114 (probably following Gates, whom he cites in his bibliography) that Thomas Campbell “dissented from little in the Westminster Confession, except the chapter which gave the clergy a position and authority which he considered unauthorized and which had been frequently abused.” See also the much later history by Max Ward Randall, *The Great Awakenings and the Restoration Movement: A Study of the 1790–1860 History of the Awakenings and their Impact on the Formation and Early Development and Growth of the Christian Churches-Churches of Christ* (Joplin: College Press, 1983) 107, who states, “[t]here was little in the Westminster Confession that [Campbell] objected to,” except for the clause mentioned by Gates. See also Rowe, *History of Reformatory Movements*, 142, 155. I suspect that the original source is Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.232: “There was scarcely anything in the Westminster Confession of Faith from which he himself felt inclined to dissent, except it was the chapter which gave to the clergy a position and an authority which he thought unauthorized, and which, as he had found by experience, could be readily abused.”

<sup>14</sup> Errett Gates, *The Disciples of Christ, The Story of the Churches* (New York: Baker & Taylor, 1905) 45. The “experiences” Gates alludes to are the portions of Campbell’s biography that Gates had already narrated: Campbell’s education (9-10), his ministry experiences in Ireland (10-16), the long heritage of division in Campbell’s Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian Church (17-32), and Campbell’s experiences among the Seceder Presbyterians in Pennsylvania (33-43).

<sup>15</sup> Moore, *A Comprehensive History of the Disciples of Christ*, 90. Later, Moore, 122, will claim that “he [Thomas Campbell] regarded his religious views, in the main, as substantially in agreement with the Westminster Confession of Faith.” Moreover, Moore’s analysis of the *D&A* led him to conclude that Campbell “also acknowledged that he opposed creeds and confessions when they contained anything not expressly contained in the Book; that he believed there are some things in the Westminster Confession of Faith not expressly revealed in the Book” (124).

Even more strongly, Garrison, in his *Religion Follows the Frontier*, claims that “[w]ith the theology which he learned at the seminary Thomas Campbell never came into a serious conflict, and he remained to the end a reasonably sound Calvinist.”<sup>16</sup> More recent histories have also demonstrated a willingness to articulate some level of conceptual continuity between Campbell’s Reformed heritage and the *D&A*.<sup>17</sup>

James DeForest Murch is one of the few historians who has commented on Campbell’s positive assessment of the Westminster Confession in the Appendix of the *D&A*.<sup>18</sup> And the history by C. Leonard Allen and Richard T. Hughes, *Discovering Our Roots*, has as its theme continuity with other Christian movements of the past, but the authors make no explicit connection between the *D&A* and the Westminster Confession.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Garrison, *Religion Follows the Frontier*, 72. See also Garrison’s dissertation, “The Sources of Alexander Campbell’s Theology,” (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1900; Published St. Louis: Christian Publishing Co., 1900), where he states that “the Covenant Theology thoroughly permeated the theological thought of Scotland in the eighteenth century and found most noteworthy expression in the position of the Seceders. It was in the air that he breathed. Thomas Campbell was educated in the theological seminary of the Seceders and his son was well read in the theological literature of the time. To suppose that he was not acquainted with this phase of thought, would be to suppose that he was ignorant of something which was the common property of the denomination with which he was connected. Undoubtedly Mr. Campbell knew the Covenant Theology as interpreted by the Seceders,” 151.

<sup>17</sup> James B. North, *Union in Truth: An Interpretive History of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati: Standard, 1994) 86, states, concerning the drafting of the D&A: “Campbell did not write this document off the cuff. It is obvious that these thoughts had been fermenting in his mind for some time,” although he does not specify connections between “these thoughts” and the text of the *D&A*. Furthermore, Henry E. Webb, *In Search of Christian Unity: A History of the Restoration Movement* (rev. ed.; Abilene: ACU Press, 2003) 78, has noted that the section in the *D&A* where Campbell addresses the need for church discipline (7/10-21) reflects that “Churches in the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition have always regarded church discipline as one of the marks of the true church. With almost prophetic insight, Campbell sensed the fact that a divided church could not be a disciplined church.” Later, North lists four “presuppositions of the *Declaration and Address*,” however, he does not include in these presuppositions any reference to Reformed thinking, 90-91. Richard M. Tristano, *The Origins of the Restoration Movement: An Intellectual History*, (Atlanta: Glenmary Research Center, 1988) 73, notes “[t]he very first thing one notices about the *Address* is that, not surprisingly, it reflects Thomas Campbell’s Protestant background,” but does not specify which element(s) of Campbell’s Reformed background.

<sup>18</sup> James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati: Standard, 1962) 48, referencing *D&A*, 24/42-25/8, 42/29-35 (references to the *D&A* text are shown as page/line).

<sup>19</sup> C. Leonard Allen and Richard T. Hughes, *Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ* (Abilene: ACU Press, 1988), see p. 82, where they state: “[i]t is clear, then, that Campbell merged the restoration philosophy he had inherited from the Reformed and Puritan traditions with the Enlightenment approach he had inherited from the Age of Reason. This bonding of Puritan and Enlightenment thought would cause serious problems for Churches of Christ in the years to come.”

Other works recognize the broader Reformed influence on the SCM thought.<sup>20</sup> A few recent studies of Thomas Campbell, most notably that of L. Thomas Smith, have begun to explore the Reformed influence on the *D&A*:

[e]ven though he rejected most of the institutional aspects of [his Reformed] heritage, and some of its doctrine, important beliefs and practices were not only retained but were sources for the *Declaration and Address*. His premise that Christian Scripture provides the authority for faith and practice, advocacy of the usefulness of creeds as teaching tools, and appeal to the New Testament Church (Primitivism) are but three examples of the impact of the Reformed tradition.<sup>21</sup>

Smith later states “[s]ources for the *Declaration and Address* include Lockean epistemology and ecumenicity filtered through the Scottish Common Sense philosophy, *Reformed theology and practice*, and millennial aspirations he hoped would be fulfilled in America.”<sup>22</sup> Further, Paul Blowers observes:

much of [Campbell’s] language of scriptural authority and inferential reasoning from Scripture bears the influence of his Presbyterian heritage, and especially the Westminster Assembly of the seventeenth century. His respect for the Reformed theological heritage, especially the Westminster Confession and Catechism, comes out in the Appendix [of the *D&A*], where he concedes the helpfulness of these sources for postbaptismal instruction in the church, if not as tests of communion.<sup>23</sup>

The present essay will demonstrate that Campbell in fact rejected the Confession’s approval of inferential reasoning. As Michael Casey has demonstrated,

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example: Garrison, “The Sources of Alexander Campbell’s Theology”; Hiram Van Kirk, “A History of the Theology of the Disciples of Christ,” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1907); Michael W. Casey, “The Origins of the Hermeneutics of Churches of Christ. Part One: The Reformed Tradition,” 75-91; Thomas H. Olbricht, “Continental Reformation Backgrounds for the Declaration and Address,” in *The Quest for Christian Unity, Peace, and Purity in Thomas Campbell’s Declaration and Address* (ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Hans Rollmann; Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2000) 157-171 (hereafter, *The Quest for Christian Unity*); Holloway and Foster, *Renewing God’s People*; John Mark Hicks, “Stone-Campbell Hermeneutics II—Campbell’s Reformed Hermeneutic,” available online at <http://johnmarkhicks.com/2008/05/28/stone-campbell-hermeneutics-ii-campbells-reformed-hermeneutic/>; John Mark Hicks, “Stone-Campbell Hermeneutics IV—Regulative Principle and Churches of Christ,” available online at <http://johnmarkhicks.com/2008/05/30/stone-campbell-hermeneutics-iv-regulative-principle-and-churches-of-christ/>. I am grateful to James Gorman for directing me to these last two sources.

<sup>21</sup> L. Thomas Smith, “Thomas Campbell’s Midlife Crisis: A Biographical and Historiographical Synthesis,” *Stone-Campbell Journal* 14 (Spring, 2011) 7.

<sup>22</sup> Smith, “Thomas Campbell’s Midlife Crisis,” 12, emphasis mine.

<sup>23</sup> Paul M. Blowers, “Striving toward a Common Mind in Jesus Christ: Thomas Campbell’s *Declaration and Address* and the Historic Principle of the Consensus Fidelium,” *Stone-Campbell Journal* 14.1 (Spring 2011) 36-37. See also Blower’s comments on pages 45 and 48, where he reiterates Campbell’s “respect” for elements of Reformed theology.

inference entered into Stone-Campbell hermeneutical practice later in the nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup>

W. T. Moore's assessment indicates acknowledgement—at least as early as 1909—that Campbell did indeed bring into the new movement something of his past:

A certain line of development runs to its limit, and then it must be reinforced with new elements from without before it can continue in the line of progress. On the other side of these “breaks” we are accustomed to regard the new development as having really no connection with what went before it. But really what went before it was necessary in order that something better might follow. Thomas Campbell's education among the Seceders was no doubt a providential preparation for the greater work which he had to do.<sup>25</sup>

In other words, according to Moore, Campbell's experiences in Scotland, Ireland, and among the Presbyterians in Pennsylvania were necessary for his development, in order that he might progress from “what went before” to the “something better” that followed. To Campbell's “what went before” this essay now turns.

## BIOGRAPHY OF THOMAS CAMPBELL

Thomas Campbell was born in County Down, Ireland, on February 1, 1763.<sup>26</sup> As a youth, he was drawn to faith. However, he rejected “[t]he cold formality of the Episcopal ritual, and the apparent want of vital piety in the Church to which his father belonged.” This “led him to prefer the society of the more rigid and devotional Covenanters and Seceders,” that is, the Scottish Presbyterian Church in Ireland.<sup>27</sup>

Campbell underwent a dramatic salvation experience and soon thereafter began feeling a call to ministry.<sup>28</sup> While serving as a school teacher in 1783 at age 20, he began attending the University of Glasgow under the sponsorship of John

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<sup>24</sup> Michael W. Casey, *The Battle over Hermeneutics in the Stone-Campbell Movement, 1800-1870*.

<sup>25</sup> Moore, *A Comprehensive History of the Disciples of Christ*, 103. Italics mine.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell: Embracing a View of the Origin, Progress and Principles of the Religious Reformation Which He Advocated* (Cincinnati: R. W. Carroll, 1872) 1.21. See also Alexander Campbell, *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell: Together with a Brief Memoir of Mrs. Jane Campbell* (Cincinnati: H. S. Bosworth, 1861) 7-8. For primary sources by Thomas Campbell himself, I am grateful for the bibliography provided by Ernest C. Stefanik, “Thomas Campbell: A Bibliography of Primary Sources,” in *The Quest for Christian Unity*, 465-476.

<sup>27</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.22.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.23.

Kinley, “an elder in the Antiburgher Secession Church.”<sup>29</sup> By 1786, Campbell finished his Glasgow education, having studied Locke and Reid.<sup>30</sup> After Glasgow, he returned to teaching in Ireland.

Beginning in 1787 or 1788, when he had been licensed to preach as a probationer by the Associate Synod of Ireland,<sup>31</sup> he “apparently began to preach in local Antiburgher congregations who were without a regular minister.”<sup>32</sup>

In 1792 (although this chronology is disputed),<sup>33</sup> Campbell entered “the theological school established by that branch of the Secession, the Anti-Burghers, to which he belonged. . . . Mr. Archibald Bruce was at this time the Doctor of Divinity, and the school was at Whitburn”<sup>34</sup> in Scotland, where Bruce was pastor. He finished

<sup>29</sup> Michael Casey, “The Origins of the Hermeneutics of Churches of Christ, Part One: The Reformed Tradition,” 75. See also Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.25, although Richardson does not mention Kinley’s role as a church elder. Casey’s source for this information appears to be Alfred Russell Scott, “Thomas Campbell’s Ministry at Ahorey,” *Restoration Quarterly* 29.4 (1987) 230.

<sup>30</sup> Lester G. McAllister, “Campbell, Thomas (1763–1854),” in *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (ed. Douglas A. Foster et. al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012) 139; Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.25. Smith challenges the assertion that Campbell graduated, “[o]ne suspects that he did not formally matriculate (which was not required for the ministry course of study) and was not awarded a degree,” Smith, “Thomas Campbell’s Midlife Crisis,” 5. According to David Stewart, the claim that Campbell was educated at Glasgow University “is doubtful,” but Stewart offers no evidence for this claim. David Stewart, *The Seceders in Ireland, with Annals of their Congregations* (Belfast: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1950) 233.

<sup>31</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.27. Richardson informs us that in the process of being licensed, Campbell had “submitted to the usual examination and trials for license before the Presbytery in Ireland,” 1.27. Presumably these examinations and trials included testing his knowledge of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, “Thomas Campbell’s Midlife Crisis,” 6.

<sup>33</sup> Smith challenges the usual chronology of Campbell’s education, suggesting instead that “it makes better sense in the overall chronology to separate [the two educational experiences] and place Glasgow in 1783–1786 and Whitburn in 1792–1796,” Smith, “Thomas Campbell’s Midlife Crisis,” 5. The commencement of Campbell’s seminary training in 1792 is verified by an appendix in Stewart, *The Seceders in Ireland*, “Students of Theology,” 435–438, where is listed “1792—Thomas Campbell, Ahorey (1797–1808). Emigrated,” 437. The introduction to the appendix reads, “The dates indicate the sessions in which they entered the study of theology, and the places mentioned are those where they subsequently exercised their ministry,” 435. Notice that Stewart has the date of Campbell’s emigration to the United States wrong, it should read 1807, not 1808, and that Campbell began his ministry in Ahorey in 1798, not 1797 (perhaps Stewart has transposed the last digit of both years). This later dating of Campbell’s education at Whitburn is followed by Richard Phillips, “Thomas Campbell: A Reappraisal Based on Backgrounds,” 75–102, see especially n. 12, p. 77. See also Keith Huey, “Thomas Campbell, ‘New Light,’ and the *Declaration and Address*,” in *Restoring the First-Century Church in the Twenty-First Century: Essays on the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement in Honor of Don Haymes* (ed. Warren Lewis and Hans Rollman; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005) 135.

<sup>34</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.25–26. Whitburn is in Scotland. The course of study was comprised of eight-week sessions, held once annually, for a term of five years.



in 1796. During these years at university and seminary, Campbell “received a thorough education in Presbyterian theology.”<sup>35</sup> Smith contends his education included study of “the Confession of Faith.”<sup>36</sup>

Campbell was ordained either in 1797 or 1798.<sup>37</sup> He continued to teach and to serve as an occasional preacher until 1798, when he received a call to pastor a church at Ahorey, near Rich Hill in County Armagh. There, Campbell pastored and taught school to support his growing family.<sup>38</sup> Seceder ministers were expected to catechize their families. One of the questions visiting Seceder Elders were to ask parish ministers was “Did you catechise your family last Saturday-night, observing to do it every Saturday night?”<sup>39</sup> Huey notes Campbell “used the *Westminster Confession* as part of his rather intense household instruction.”<sup>40</sup>

Several historic factors contribute to the evolution of Campbell’s thinking. First, it is important to remember his context is Ulster, that he was of Scottish descent, and that his faith was Scots Presbyterian. Ireland at the end of the eighteenth century was

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<sup>35</sup> Casey, “The Origins of the Hermeneutics of Churches of Christ, Part One: The Reformed Tradition,” 76. Tom Olbricht states that Campbell “had no doubt studied the Reformation in his theological education at the University of Glasgow and the Anti-Burgher Seminary at Whitburn,” Thomas H. Olbricht, “Continental Reformation Backgrounds for the Declaration and Address,” 157. Here I disagree with Richard Phillips, who wants to make Campbell’s Anglican heritage a key factor in shaping this thought and theology. Phillips states, following an unconvincing argument, that, “[w]hile [Thomas Campbell] became a Seceder Presbyterian outwardly, he never fully fits the Seceder mold,” Richard Phillips, “Thomas Campbell: A Reappraisal Based on Backgrounds,” *ResQ* 49 (2007) 101.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, “Thomas Campbell’s Midlife Crisis,” 6. See also Rowe, 127; William R. Baker, “‘Formally Binding’? Scriptural Authority and Private Opinion in Thomas Campbell’s *Declaration and Address* and in the Apostle Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians,” *Stone-Campbell Journal* 14 (Spring, 2011) 53-66, esp. 56.

<sup>37</sup> McAllister, “Campbell, Thomas (1763–1854),” 139; Scott, “Thomas Campbell’s Ministry at Ahorey,” 231; Smith, “Thomas Campbell’s Midlife Crisis,” 6. Stewart, *The Seceders in Ireland*, confirms that “the date of his ordination remains indefinite,” 233.

<sup>38</sup> Campbell, *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell*, 9-10; Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 28-31. See also Scott, “Thomas Campbell’s Ministry at Ahorey,” 230-231. See also Stewart’s history of the church at Ahorey, *The Seceders in Ireland*, 233-234.

<sup>39</sup> Stewart, *The Seceders in Ireland*, 423. A similar question was asked (422) “at the Meeting of Privy Censures”: “Are you careful to spend Sabbath evenings in religious exercises and in family instruction?”

<sup>40</sup> Huey, “Thomas Campbell, ‘New Light,’ and the *Declaration and Address*,” 135. Huey offers a reflection from Alexander Campbell on the effect this had on the younger Campbell’s thinking; I offer a longer quote here than Huey included in his article: “I have much feeling on this subject, because I have experienced the bitterness of the popular catechetical course. I was compelled to memorize almost the whole New Testament, and many passages in the Old; but along with it I had to memorize and digest the Assembly’s Catechism . . . The good effects of memorizing the New Testament were neutralized by the trash which the ‘Westminster Divines’ had obliged me to interlard with it. . . . I was alienated from the life of God by the very means which men had contrived to reconcile me to it.” Alexander Campbell, “Education—No. 2,” *Millennial Harbinger* 1.6 (7 June 1830) 251-255, quote on p. 251.

filled with social and sectarian unrest, fueled in part by the years of revolution in France. Campbell's appointment as pastor at Ahorey occurred the same year as the United Irishman Rebellion of 1798, which saw Ireland engulfed in battles, martial law, and two invasions of French soldiers in support of those Irish who sought Independence from England.

These events took place mostly in the two Ulster counties of Antrim and Down, immediately north and east of county Armagh, where Campbell lived and ministered, and in County Wexford on the southeast coast of Ireland.

Second, when Campbell joined the Anti-Burgher Seceder Church, he joined a church with a long history of fragmentation. The Seceders, led by Ebenezer Erskine, had seceded from the Church of Scotland in 1733<sup>41</sup> to form the Associate Presbytery.<sup>42</sup>

They experienced further division into Burgher and Anti-Burgher factions “in 1747 over the rightness of church members taking the Burgess oath.”<sup>43</sup> Campbell was ordained in the Anti-Burgher wing of the Seceders, whose congregations belonged to the General Associate Synod, which, by the time of Thomas's ordination, had three provincial synods in Scotland and one in Ireland.<sup>44</sup>

Campbell served as the Moderator of the Associate (Anti-Burgher) Synod in 1805.<sup>45</sup> The Synod split once more, in 1806, into the “Old Lights” and the “New Lights,” “over the Westminster Confession's teaching regarding the role of the civil magistrate in religion.”<sup>46</sup> In 1804, prior to the 1806 split, Campbell had appealed to the Synod of Ireland for unity between the Anti-Burgher and Burgher parties of the Seceder Churches in Ireland. Scottish immigrants to Ireland had carried this

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<sup>41</sup> Stewart claims the official secession occurred in 1746 (following the first meeting of the Associate Synod, at Stirling, in March 1745) 51. The year 1733 marks Erskine's protest and suspension, and formation of the Associate Presbytery. Erskine and his allies were formally deposed by the Synod in 1740, K. R. Ross, “Secessions,” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology* (ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron, et. al.; Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1993) 764-765; Stewart, *The Seceders in Ireland*, 49-50. See the recap of this Irish history in Charles F. Brazell, “Reluctant Restorationist: Thomas Campbell's Trial and Its Role in His Legacy,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Arlington, 2007) 23-114.

<sup>42</sup> Ross, “Secessions,” 764-765; Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.53-54.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 765; see also Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.54–55. The burgess oath required community leader (burghers) to swear allegiance to the religion of the realm (Great Britain). For Anti-burghers, refusal to take the burgess oath was a matter of conscience: to take the oath amounted to compulsion by temporal authorities in religious matters.

<sup>44</sup> Campbell, *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell*, 19. The Irish synod was formed, with the permission of the Scottish General Associate Synod, in 1788. See Scott, “Thomas Campbell's Ministry at Ahorey,” 233.

<sup>45</sup> Stewart, *The Seceders in Ireland*, 431.

<sup>46</sup> Ross, “Secessions,” 765; see also Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.55-56.

division with them from Scotland, a division that had no political justification in Ireland.<sup>47</sup>

Campbell's address to the Synod demonstrates how deeply schism in the body of Christ affected the committee (including himself), which had been assigned responsibility to investigate "a plan of union between the two bodies of Seceders in this kingdom."<sup>48</sup> While Campbell's address explicitly acknowledges the grounds for the Burgher-Anti-Burgher split in the Seceder Church, he suggests three possible grounds for unification: doctrinal grounds, biblical grounds, and the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Thus, it seems clear that by 1804, Campbell was actively searching for means to assure a foundation for unity in the church. While the role of his 1804 "Address" in the 1818–1820 unions is uncertain, it is likely Campbell learned something important from this failed attempt.<sup>49</sup> He was resolved to find a means of achieving unity among Christians, and he was open to the possibility that both the Bible and the Westminster Confession had roles to play in forging unity. This suggests the depth to which the Confession shaped Campbell's thought.

A third historic factor affecting Campbell's thinking, and especially his ecclesiology, was the founding of the ecumenical Ulster Evangelical Society. The Society was formed in October 1798 in the town of Armagh near Ahorey<sup>50</sup> by ministers from

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<sup>47</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.57, states that a year after Thomas Campbell's appeal to the Synod of Ireland, at a meeting at Lurgan, "there seemed to be a unanimous desire, on both sides, for a coalescence, based particularly on the ground that *as the Burgher oath was never required in Ireland*, there was therefore nothing in the state of things existing there to warrant any division," italics mine. See also Phillips, "Thomas Campbell: A Reappraisal Based on Backgrounds," 93.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Campbell, "Address of Thomas Campbell to the Synod of Ireland" (Belfast, 1804), in *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell: Together with a Brief Memoir of Mrs. Jane Campbell* (Cincinnati: H. S. Bosworth, 1861) 210. See also Stewart, *The Seceders in Ireland*, 101. The text is also reproduced in Brazell, "Reluctant Restorationist," 222-223.

<sup>49</sup> Despite the further division in the Anti-Burgher Church in 1806, in 1818 the Irish New Light Burghers and the New Light Anti-Burghers did unite to form the United Secession Church, followed in 1820 by a union of the Scottish Burghers and Antiburghers which "formed 'The United Associate Synod,'" Stewart, *The Seceders in Ireland*, 383; see also the frontispiece "Diagram of Irish Presbyterian History," in *The Seceders in Ireland*. Stone-Campbell historians have tended to conflate these two mergers.

<sup>50</sup> Scott, "Thomas Campbell's Ministry at Ahorey," 231. See also Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.73; James L. Gorman, "European Roots of Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address*: The Evangelical Society of Ulster," *ResQ* 51.3 (2009) 133-136; Hiram J. Lester, "An Irish Precursor for Thomas Campbell's Declaration and Address," *Encounter* 50.3 (Summer 1989) 254-259; See also James Seaton Reid, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, Vol. III, A New Edition with Additional Notes by W. D. Killen (Belfast: William Mullen, 1867) 415-417. Although Reid does not mention Thomas Campbell by name, his fellow minister at Armagh, George Hamilton is mentioned. Campbell is, however, mentioned twice by name in the publication of George Hamilton's sermon "The Great Necessity of Itinerant Preaching: A Sermon Deliver'd in the new Meeting-house in Armagh, at the formation of the Evangelical Society of Ulster on Wednesday, 10th of Oct. 1798" (Armagh: T. Stevenson,

four denominations led by Burgher Seceders. Campbell was one of thirteen founding members of this Society—the only Anti-Burgher to participate—which caused no little concern among his Anti-Burgher colleagues. Pressure from his synod resulted in his maintaining an association with the Society but only as a “subscriber.”<sup>51</sup>

Participation in this ecumenical society suggests Campbell was by 1798 interested in unifying Christians on a much broader scale than simply healing the rift in the Seceder Church. It also suggests he was growing increasingly uncertain about the narrow vision of faith offered by the Anti-Burgher Seceder wing of the Scottish Presbyterian Church.

The fourth historic factor affecting Campbell’s thinking was his introduction to the Scots Independent churches through the fellowship he enjoyed with an Independent congregation in Rich Hill. W. E. Garrison states Campbell would “occasionally attend services when his own schedule permitted and where he met with such visiting ministers as the celebrated evangelist, Rowland Hill,”<sup>52</sup> and James A. Haldane.

Significant for his thinking was the Independents’ high regard for Scripture, their congregational church polity, and their primitivism.<sup>53</sup>

How did these factors affect Campbell? Robert Richardson, who was a student of Campbell’s in Pittsburgh as a boy, observed: “In his intercourse with religious society he manifested the utmost kindness and charity for those who differed from him in their views, often bewailing the unhappy divisions that existed, and striving

1798) ix, x. I am grateful to James Gorman for this source. See also the entry “George Hamilton (1794–1803),” in Thomas Witherow, *Historical and Literary Memorials of Presbyterianism in Ireland (1731–1800)*, Second Series (London and Belfast: William Mullan and Son, 1880) 310–312 (Campbell is listed on both pages 311 and 312). For the lasting influence of the Ulster Evangelical Society on Campbell’s thought, see James L. Gorman, *Among the Early Evangelicals: The Transatlantic Origins of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Abilene: ACU Press, 2017).

<sup>51</sup> Scott, “Thomas Campbell’s Ministry at Ahorey,” 232; Phillips, “Thomas Campbell: A Reappraisal Based on Backgrounds,” 90–93. For the Presbyterian reaction, see Stewart, *The Seceders in Ireland*, 104–106, 233.

<sup>52</sup> Garrison, *Religion Follows the Frontier* 72–73. Garrison’s source here (uncited) is Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1:59–61, 69–70.

<sup>53</sup> See Garrison, *Religion Follows the Frontier*, 37, where he quotes from James A. Haldane’s *A View of the Social Worship and Ordinances Observed by the First Christians, Drawn from the Sacred Scriptures Alone: Being an Attempt to Enforce Their Divine Obligation and to Represent the Guilt and Evil Consequences of Neglecting Them* (Edinburgh: J. Ritchie, 1805): “All Christians are bound to observe the universal and approved practices of the first churches recorded in Scripture.” This is the title of Haldane’s Chapter 3, page 36 (page not cited by Garrison). See also the comments regarding the importance of Campbell’s acquaintance with the Independents in David Edwin Harrell, *Quest for a Christian America, 1800–1865: A Social History of the Disciples of Christ, Vol. I, Religion and American Culture* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1966, repr. 2003) 6.

to promote, as far as practicable, Christian union and peace.”<sup>54</sup> The result of these experiences was Campbell’s determination to find a sure basis for Christian unity.

Largely for health reasons,<sup>55</sup> Campbell decided in 1807 to travel to the United States, leaving his family behind in the care of nineteen-year-old Alexander.<sup>56</sup> There in May 1807, he received a license to preach from the Seceder Synod in Philadelphia.<sup>57</sup>

Five months later, however, the Chartiers Presbytery of Washington County, Pennsylvania, brought charges against Campbell for offering communion to remote frontier Presbyterians who did not belong to the Anti-Burgher Seceders and for his insistence that the Bible alone is the authority in matters of faith.<sup>58</sup> He was censured by the Presbytery, but the censure was overturned by the Synod, who again granted him permission to preach.

However, Campbell’s opponents continued their suit, leading to a judicial committee review that found Campbell guilty. He was suspended, censured, and reinstated but with no preaching appointment. In a written reply, Campbell rejected the Synod’s judgment and resigned.<sup>59</sup> As a sign of his character, he returned the money advanced to him by the Synod as salary.<sup>60</sup> On September 13, 1808, he was finished with the Seceders.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.40. See also Gorman, “European Roots of Thomas Campbell’s *Declaration and Address*,” 137.

<sup>55</sup> Campbell, *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell*, 10; McAllister, “Campbell, Thomas (1763–1854),” 140; Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.78-79. This is apparently the same year that Thomas’s father, Archibald Campbell, died. See Frederick D. Kershner, *The Christian Union Overture: An Interpretation of the Declaration and Address of Thomas Campbell* (St. Louis: Bethany, 1923; e-book edition, Stone-Campbell e-prints, May 2013) 15.

<sup>56</sup> Charles Brazell provides a list of “Passengers Arriving at Port of Philadelphia May 15, 1807, on the Brutus,” as Appendix C to his dissertation, Brazell, “Reluctant Restorationist,” 227-229.

<sup>57</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.85-86, records that Campbell posted a letter to his family praising God for His gracious providential care. The letter is dated May 27, 1807.

<sup>58</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.223-229. See also C. Leonard Allen, and Richard T. Hughes, *Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ* (Abilene: ACU Press, 1988) 80. See also William Herbert Hanna, *Thomas Campbell: Seceder and Christian Union Advocate* (1935, repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007) 31-100, who provides a detailed analysis of Campbell’s conflicts with the Chartiers Presbytery and the Associate Synod of North America, including transcription of relevant portions of the minutes of these bodies.

<sup>59</sup> Campbell’s final address to the Synod is reproduced in Campbell, *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell*, 17-18; see also Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.230-231; Brazell, “Reluctant Restorationist,” 224-226. The dates for the trial, appeal, and judicial review are not clear from Alexander Campbell’s nor Robert Richardson’s narrative. What is clear is that by the time the rest of the Campbell family arrived in Pennsylvania on October 5, 1809, Thomas had a draft of the *D&A* ready to go to the printer, Campbell, *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell*, 10.

<sup>60</sup> Tristano, *The Origin of the Restoration Movement*, 69, notes that this was recorded in the May 23, 1809, Synod minutes. Hanna, *Thomas Campbell: Seceder and Christian Union Advocate*, 95, offers a transcription of the minutes.

<sup>61</sup> Campbell, *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell*, 16-17, 19; Jay Smith, “The Declaration and

THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION  
AND THE DECLARATION AND ADDRESS

Campbell responded to separating from Presbyterianism by drafting articles to establish an ecumenical association: The *Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington*.<sup>62</sup> This document is widely acknowledged as a key, perhaps *the* key, founding document of what would become the SCM.

Michael Casey has noted that although the founders of the SCM began their faith journeys in Presbyterian churches, “almost no scholarly attention is given to the impact of Presbyterian or Reformed theology on the Campbell’s theology.”<sup>63</sup> He later notes the “many parallels between [the Campbell’s] beliefs and the Westminster Confession—too many, in fact, to be accidental.”<sup>64</sup>

The present essay now turns to the Westminster Confession of Faith to determine whether it may have influenced the D&A. As noted above, Campbell began serving as a minister in the Church of Scotland in 1787 or 1788, when he was first licensed to preach as a probationer by the Associate Synod of Ireland.

Thus, he had had about twenty years of ministry experience in the Presbyterian church by the time he resigned in September 1808. And during his years at university and seminary, Campbell had “received a thorough education in Presbyterian theology.”<sup>65</sup>

He would have taught the Westminster Confession and the Catechisms to confirmands in his congregation. Further, in 1804, Campbell had made an address to the Synod of Ireland, advocating union of the Anti-Burgher and Burgher parties of the Seceder Presbyterian Church, where he stated,

That seeing both denominations of Seceders in Ireland are of one sentiment in the grand abstract or covenanted system of doctrine, worship, discipline, and

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Address,” *ResQ* 5.3 (1961) 113. See also the letter by Elder James Foster recounting some of these events, reprinted in Campbell, *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell*, 19–20 as a footnote. We should, however, note that Thomas made one more attempt at union with the Presbyterians: he applied to have the Christian Association of Washington join the (Presbyterian) Synod of Pittsburgh in October 1810 without success, Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.324–334.

<sup>62</sup> I use the restored first edition text of the *Declaration and Address*, “The Text of the *Declaration and Address*,” in *The Quest for Christian Unity*, 3–58. An enormous amount of text critical work was done to restore the original first edition of the Declaration and Address. See the following essays, all in *The Quest for Christian Unity*: “Preface,” xiii–xx; Ernest C. Stefanik, “A Collation of the Declaration and Address: Textual Variants in the First and Second Editions,” 59–128; Christopher R. Hutson, “Scripture Index to the Declaration and Address,” 129–147. The pagination in the restored first edition is the same as in the original.

<sup>63</sup> Casey, “The Origins of the Hermeneutics of Churches of Christ, Part One,” 75.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

government contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, Presbyterian Form of Church Government, and Directory for Worship . . .<sup>66</sup>

This petition shows Campbell had an intimate knowledge of the Westminster Confession and Catechism. His positive assessment of the Confession also suggests that Kershner is mistaken in asserting Campbell’s vision of unity entailed “logic which sweeps away the Westminster confession and the Thirty-nine Articles.”<sup>67</sup>

Table 1 below offers a comparison of Chapter 1, Paragraph 6 of the Westminster Confession (1788 revision<sup>68</sup>) and the *D&A*. The complete text of Paragraph 6 is reproduced in the left-hand column; expressions from the *D&A* displaying verbal or conceptual continuity are reproduced in the right.

Table 1: Language Similarities in the Westminster Confession and *Declaration and Address*

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH, Chapter 1, Paragraph VI	<i>Declaration and Address</i> (page/line)
The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture,	<i>expressly revealed</i> and enjoined in the word of God (4/7-18) expressly exhibited upon the sacred page (4/41-42) expressly produced a thus saith the Lord either in express terms or <i>by approved precedent</i> <sup>69</sup> (4/46-47) expressly exhibited in the New Testament (10/22)

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Campbell, “Address of Thomas Campbell to the Synod of Ireland,” 213. In the Appendix to the *D&A*, Campbell states, “we are by no means to be understood as at all wishing to deprive our fellow-christians [*sic*] of any necessary and possible assistance to understand the scriptures: or to come to a distinct and particular knowledge of every truth they contain;—for which purpose the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, may, with many other excellent performances, prove eminently useful,” (42/29-35).

<sup>67</sup> Kershner, *The Christian Union Overture*, 28.

<sup>68</sup> All quotations from the Confession are taken from *The Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, Together with The Larger Catechism and the Shorter Catechism* (rev. ed.; Richmond: John Knox, 1961). According to Lee Irons, the only textual changes made to the original 1647 text of the Westminster Confession occurred in Chs. XX, XXIII, and XXX, Lee Irons, “The 1788 Revision of the Westminster Standards,” available online at [www.upper-register.com](http://www.upper-register.com). 2007, accessed October 15, 2015. These changes, therefore do not affect the wording of Chapter I. See also the text of *Reformed Confessions Harmonized: With an Annotated Bibliography of Reformed Doctrinal Works* (ed. Joel R. Beeke and Sinclair B. Ferguson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).

<sup>69</sup> Tom Olbricht has traced the roots of the dual idea of “express terms” and “approved precedent” to the writings of Zwingli but confesses “I have not been able to discover the explicit roots of this hermeneutic,” and that he has “not as yet found, ... a statement in which Zwingli brought the two together as a clear hermeneutic principle.” Olbricht, “Hermeneutics and the Declaration and Address, in *The Quest for Christian Unity*, 246. He later states that the Stone-Campbell Movement “tripartite” hermeneutic formula of commands, examples, and necessary inferences, “is found in American Puritan, Baptist, and other circles,” *ibid.*, 247.

<p>or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture:<sup>70</sup></p>	<p>expressly taught and enjoined in the word of God, either in express terms, or approved precedent (10/48-49)</p> <p>but what is expressly taught, and enjoined upon them, in the word of God (16/25-26)</p> <p>Nor ought any thing be admitted as of divine obligation, in their church constitution and managements, but what is expressly enjoined by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles upon the New Testament church; either in express terms, or by approved precedent (16/26-30)</p> <p>That division among Christians is . . . anti-scriptural, . . . a direct violation of his express command (17/47, 18/1-3)</p> <p>he expressly revealed will of God (18/8-9)</p> <p>in all things according to the scriptures (18/20)</p> <p>expressly revealed and enjoined in the word of God (18/25)</p> <p>after the example of the primitive church, exhibited in the New Testament (18/27-28)</p> <p>by the express letter of the law (21/17)</p> <p>the declared intention, the express command of its Divine Author (22/44-45)</p> <p>That although <i>inferences and deductions</i> from scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God’s holy word; yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of christians [<i>sic</i>] farther than they perceive the connection (17/6-9)<sup>71</sup></p> <p>no such deductions can be made terms of communion (17/11-12)</p> <p>Hence it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the church’s [<i>sic</i>] confession. (17/13-15)</p> <p>That although doctrinal exhibitions of the great system of divine truths . . . be highly expedient; and the more full and explicit they be for these purposes, the better; yet, as these must be in great measure the effect of human reasoning, and of course must contain many inferential truths, they ought not to be made terms of christian [<i>sic</i>] communion (17/17-22)</p> <p>to remove human opinions and the inventions of men out of the way; by carefully separating this chaff, from the pure wheat of primary and authentic revelation (13/11-13)</p> <p>An assumed authority for making the approbation of human opinions, and human inventions, a term</p>
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<sup>70</sup> Casey suggests that these “good and necessary consequences” are “the same construct” as “the method of syllogistic reasoning.” See Michael W. Casey, “The Theory of Logic and Inference in the Declaration and Address,” 233.

<sup>71</sup> On the connection between Campbell’s view of inference and that of John Locke, see Casey, “The Theory of Logic and Inference in the *Declaration and Address*,” 229-230. Locke and Campbell both distrusted doctrines based on inference (deduction).



<p>unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.</p> <p>Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word; and that there are some <i>circumstances</i> concerning <i>the worship of God, and government of the church</i>, which are to be ordered <i>by the light of nature and Christian prudence</i>, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed.</p>	<p>of communion, by introducing them into the constitution, faith, or worship of the church (18/10-12)</p> <p>Without any additions whatsoever of human opinions or inventions of men (18/28-29)</p> <p>in matters of private opinion, of human inference, that are no where expressly revealed or enjoined in the word o. [<i>sic</i>] God (20/46-48)<sup>72</sup></p> <p>Ye believe that the great fundamental law of unity and love ought not to be violated to make way for exalting human opinions to an equality with express revelation, by making them articles of faith and terms of communion—so do we (21/18-21)</p> <p><i>where the scriptures are silent</i>, as to the express time or manner of performance, if any such there be; no human authority has power to interfere, in order to supply the supposed deficiency, by making laws for the church (16/43-46)</p> <p>Much less has any human authority to impose new commands or ordinances upon the church, which our Lord Jesus Christ has not enjoined. Nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the church; or be made a term of communion amongst christians, [<i>sic</i>] that is not as old as the New Testament (16/49-17/5)</p> <p>Proposition 13. “Lastly. That if any <i>circumstantial</i>s indispensably necessary to <i>the observance of divine ordinances</i> be not found on the page of express revelation, such, and such only, as are absolutely necessary for this purpose, should be adopted, <i>under the title of human expedients</i>, without any pretense to a more sacred origin.” 18/30-34</p>
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The similarities of language between these two documents, especially regarding hermeneutical method, is too strong to be coincidental. A few comments are warranted.

The main areas where Campbell draws from the Westminster Confession in the *D&A* have to do with hermeneutical method.<sup>73</sup> In fact, each element of the Stone-Campbell Movement hermeneutic is found in germinal form in the *D&A*.

<sup>72</sup> It is in this passage that we discern Campbell’s equation of human “opinion” with “inference.”

<sup>73</sup> Mark Weedman acknowledges the importance of hermeneutics in the *Declaration and Address*, “Although the *Declaration and Address* does articulate a number of hermeneutical principles, it is a unity text first, and its hermeneutical principles are intended to be the means of attaining the greater end of Christian unity,” Mark Weedman, “Assessing the *Declaration and Address*: Hermeneutics vs. Unity in Stone-Campbell Movement Theology,” *Stone-Campbell Journal* 14 (Spring 2011) 22.

It would not be pressing the point to state that Campbell’s doctrine of Scripture—the foundation of his unity plea in the *D&A*—is thoroughly Reformed.<sup>74</sup> Five areas may be noted.

The first is the phrase, “expressly revealed/enjoined.”<sup>75</sup> Given the number of times Campbell uses the word “expressly,” it is apparent that his intent is to found Christian unity on the Scriptures alone.

Here is the Reformation value of *sola scriptura* but not stated so concisely.<sup>76</sup> The history of strife between Protestant Christians since the beginning of the Reformation had convicted Campbell of the dangers of human opinion. According to Olbricht, for Campbell, “[e]verything without explicit Scripture warrant is opinion.”<sup>77</sup>

Second is “approved precedent.” This phrase is Campbell’s way of appealing to clear biblical example. Note that a definition of “approved” is lacking, which will lead to grief over interpretive differences in the SCM.<sup>78</sup>

Third is “good and necessary consequence . . . deduced from scripture.” The main place where Campbell differed from the Confession was over the role of inference, which he equated with human opinion.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>74</sup> See Carl F. Flynn, “God, Christ, and Soteriology in the *Declaration and Address*,” in *The Quest for Christian Unity*, 323-339, especially p. 328, where he states that in the *D&A* Campbell “holds to the authority of the Word of God in a way strikingly similar to that expressed in the Westminster Confession.” Moreover, Flynn states, “In form, the Scriptures are considered to be the final authority for both TC and the Confession. In addition, the motive of both the Confession and the *D&A* for holding to the express authority of Scripture is the same. . . . Thus we see a possible theological trajectory stretching from the views that triumphed in the Westminster Assembly to the work of TC,” 327-328. Flynn’s essay does valuable service for those attempting to connect Campbell’s theology to that of the Westminster Confession.

<sup>75</sup> See the comment by Baker, “Formally Binding?” 60 “The word ‘express,’ no doubt is the most critical hermeneutical principle of the *Declaration and Address*.”

<sup>76</sup> See Blowers and Richardson, who recognized the Protestant Scripture principle in the *D&A*, “Campbell recommends, in good Reformed fashion, the interpretation of Scripture with Scripture: ‘to understand one part of it by the assistance of another’” Paul M. Blowers and William J. Richardson, “Declaration and Address,” in *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, 263-266, quote on p. 265. See also Olbricht, “Continental Reformation Backgrounds for the Declaration and Address,” 170, who states “The Campbells were indebted to the magisterial Reformers for both the doctrine of *sola scriptura* and the ways of interpreting it.”

<sup>77</sup> Olbricht, “Hermeneutics and the *Declaration and Address*,” 250. This emphasis on “express” statements of scripture will morph into the “commands” element of the Churches of Christ hermeneutic (commands-examples-inferences).

<sup>78</sup> This will become the “example” element of the “commands-examples-inference” hermeneutic.

<sup>79</sup> See Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address*, 10/35-50, and especially 20/41-49, where he states, “what reasonable prospect can we have of being delivered from those sad calamities, which have so long afflicted the church of God; while a party spirit, instead of bewailing, is every where [*sic*] justifying, the bitter principle of these pernicious evils; by insisting upon the right of rejecting those, however unexceptionable in other respects, who cannot see with *them in matters of private opinion, of human inference*, that are no where [*sic*] expressly revealed or enjoined in the word o. [*sic*] God.” Italics mine.

Where “[Campbell] denied inference and deductions from Scripture were authoritative,”<sup>80</sup> the Westminster Divines encouraged use of inference in biblical interpretation. According to Casey,

God, in contrast to people, is completely self-consistent, so any deduction correctly drawn from the Scriptures (assumed to be wholly God’s word) will correspond exactly to God’s will. The Westminster Divines did not see this method [inference] as supplementing Scripture but as a means to help make the meaning of scripture clearer. . . .

Deductions could be drawn from . . . apostolic examples to determine modern church practices by Christians enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Westminster Divines believed their conclusions would “correspond to the word of God, originally given, but not fully recorded.” Regenerate reason could draw out everything implicit in Scripture.<sup>81</sup>

Campbell disagreed with the Westminster Divines. Having lived through the bitter sectarian strife in Ulster, the wrangling between Presbyterian sects both in Ireland and America, and failed attempts to unite the two Seceder parties in Ireland, he had concluded that inferences were largely the source of such division and conflict.

What is more, Bacon’s inductive method offered a viable alternative to deductive inference for Campbell who,

with his Glasgow education and his affirmation of the British Empiricist tradition, broke with the Reformed tradition and Westminster theology over the role of inferences and deductions. By accepting the priority of inductive logic and the express statements of Scripture (along with approved examples) he believed he had found the key to solving the intractable divisions of Christianity that he found in both Ireland and America.<sup>82</sup>

Fourth, Campbell makes the Reformed regulative principle a central pillar in his hermeneutic. He discards the weak statement in the Confession which addresses biblical silence and replaces it with a much stronger pair of statements.<sup>83</sup>

For Campbell, this approach to biblical silence is the corollary of requiring express statements of Scripture or a “thus says the Lord” to establish any element

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<sup>80</sup> Casey, “The Theory of Logic and Inference in the *Declaration and Address*,” 224. See especially Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address*, 20/41-49. See Baker, “Formally Binding?” 53-66.

<sup>81</sup> Casey, “The Theory of Logic and Inference in the *Declaration and Address*,” 226-227, quoting from Jack B. Rogers, *Scriptures in the Westminster Confession: A Problem of Historical Interpretation for American Presbyterianism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1967) 345.

<sup>82</sup> Casey, “The Theory of Logic and Inference in the *Declaration and Address*,” 234.

<sup>83</sup> See John Mark Hicks, “Stone-Campbell Hermeneutics II—Campbell’s Reformed Hermeneutic;” John Mark Hicks, “Stone-Campbell Hermeneutics IV—Regulative Principle and Churches of Christ.” Application of the regulative principle in Stone-Campbell hermeneutics remains a matter of debate, as it does also in Reformed circles.

of “the faith or worship of the church.” What he does not expressly state in the *D&A* is his more famous motto that enshrined the regulative principle in the Stone-Campbell hermeneutic: “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.”<sup>84</sup>

Where the Bible is silent, Campbell insists on express teachings from the Bible and, in particular, the New Testament, for any beliefs considered binding in the church.<sup>85</sup> Campbell intended his doctrine of Scripture to foster Christian unity. For Campbell, hermeneutic method must serve a greater end: the pursuit of unity among Christians and the end of doctrinal wrangling and division.<sup>86</sup>

Fifth, and finally, Campbell concedes that where occasions exist in which “express revelation” leaves the church uncertain as to how to carry out the obligations of divine ordinances, humanly-devised “expedients” may be instituted. However, such expedients must be “indispensably . . . absolutely necessary” to carry out the ordinances, and they must not be granted the same authority as biblically sanctioned actions.

## CONCLUSION

Thomas Campbell’s experiences in the Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian Church in Scotland, Ireland, and the United States shaped his character and led to his quest for Christian unity. And although he withdrew from the Presbyterian Associate Synod in the United States, and from the Chartiers Presbytery in Pennsylvania, the claim that this withdrawal meant his complete rejection of all things Reformed or Presbyterian is incorrect.

After his withdrawal, as Campbell pondered the question, “What do I do now?” He recognized an opportunity to seek true and lasting union among Christians of diverse confessional allegiance.

The result was the gathering of believers from a variety of confessional backgrounds under the aegis of Campbell’s *D&A*. The text of this historic document indicates that he drew upon his education and his years of ministry experience.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1.236, 239, 352.

<sup>85</sup> Adoption of the Reformed regulative principle by the SCM, and the resulting means of treating biblical silence would prove to be a significant source of strife and division within the movement.

<sup>86</sup> The “Declaration” and “Address” both make repeated reference to Campbell’s anguish over Christian division. See “Declaration,” 5/25-30,33-35; “Address,” pages 6-7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 20, 21, 22, 23.

<sup>87</sup> As Smith observes, “Thomas Campbell . . . consciously embraced Reformed theology and practice at an early age, was thoroughly catechized and educated in its thought, and identified himself as a ‘Calvinist’ throughout his life. . . . Even though he rejected most of the institutional aspects of that heritage and some of its doctrine, important beliefs and practices were not only retained but were sources for the *Declaration and Address*,” Smith, “Thomas Campbell’s Midlife Crisis,” 7.

From his years of teaching catechumens, including his own children, Campbell drew upon the familiar language of the Westminster Confession of Faith. His long use of these words had likely etched them into his memory.

Since Campbell proposed biblical primitivism as the primary means for achieving Christian unity, it is not surprising that the words of the Confession, Chapter 1 “Of the Holy Scripture,” and specifically of Paragraph 6, which addresses the understanding and interpretation of Scripture, would find purchase in the expression of his vision for unity. It seems likely that Campbell’s use of this language from the Westminster Confession was natural, unconscious, even instinctive.

Campbell’s heirs must consider this document in terms of continuity with his Reformed heritage, even after he no longer identified with Presbyterianism. Without a doubt, the *Declaration and Address* addresses agonizing issues from his years as a Presbyterian. And at the same time, those years of strife, division, ecumenism, and failed attempts at forging accord shaped Campbell into a man who could write such an eloquent plea for Christian unity.<sup>50</sup>