

The Theological Foundations of Alexander Campbell's Educational Philosophy

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Alexander Campbell is widely recognized as an early-American advocate of educational reform, and many scholars have explored various aspects of his educational philosophy. Nearly everyone recognizes Campbell's theology as one of the many aspects of his educational philosophy, but this paper contends that his theological ideas were not merely another influence upon his philosophy of education but the predominate influence upon both his educational objectives and his philosophy of education.

Alexander Campbell (1788–1866) has been recognized as one of the founding leaders of the Stone-Campbell Movement, an indigenous American religious movement that emerged in the early nineteenth century. His efforts to reform the church included an insistence upon the value of education in both the church and in secular society. “Alexander Campbell’s interest in repositioning American education,” Thomas H. Olbricht suggests, “was subordinate only to his interest in restoring the ancient order.”¹

Many books and articles acknowledge Campbell’s concerns for education, both in the church and in the early American Republic, particularly in western Virginia (not yet a state when Campbell’s reformation began, but still a part of Virginia). Likewise, numerous individuals have written about his educational philosophy and various aspects of his educational proposals. The theological foundations upon which Campbell’s educational beliefs were developed, however, have often been underestimated and, thus, unrecognized as the leading factors influencing his advocacy for the advancement of education in both the church and culture in American society.

¹ Thomas H. Olbricht, “Alexander Campbell as an Educator,” in *Lectures in Honor of the Alexander Campbell Bicentennial, 1788–1988* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1988) 79.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the theological foundations for Campbell’s educational philosophy by identifying several of the theological issues that influenced his thought on this subject. This article will not attempt to provide a comprehensive explanation of Campbell’s educational philosophy or a summarization of his theological views, though both of these topics will receive some attention. Neither will it endeavor to examine Campbell’s educational initiatives (for instance, Bethany College, women’s education, Sunday schools), nor define his assessment of the educational concerns of his day. It will, however, argue that Campbell’s theology was more than just *another* influence on his philosophy of education. Rather, Campbell’s theology guided all of the other factors that influenced his educational philosophy, making it *the* predominate influence upon his educational objectives and the most common means of expressing his educational philosophy.

ORIGIN OF ALEXANDER CAMPBELL’S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Identifying the factors that influenced Campbell’s educational philosophy is difficult. Described below, however, is a compilation of some of the pivotal influences that shaped Campbell’s philosophy of education as expressed by those who have studied the life and writings of Campbell.²

Lockean Empiricism

While a student under his father’s tutelage, Campbell was exposed to the writings of John Locke. Not only did they make a “lasting impression upon him,” according to his biographer, Robert Richardson, but Campbell “thoroughly studied” Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* before he entered the University of Glasgow.³ Like Locke, Campbell insist-

² Each of the following sources attempts to identify the factors that influenced the formation of Campbell’s educational philosophy. While they all differ, there are a number of parallel items on each list: Arthur B. Edwards, “Alexander Campbell’s Philosophy of Education” (MA Thesis, East Tennessee State College; 1960) 17; John L. Morrison, *Alexander Campbell: Educating the Moral Person* (Published Privately, 1991) 103-142; D. Duane Cummins, “Educational Philosophy of Alexander Campbell,” *Discipliana* 59.1 (1999) 4-15; Perry E. Gresham, *Campbell and the Colleges* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1988) 22-27; John M. Imbler, *Beyond Buffalo: Alexander Campbell on Education for Ministry* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1992) 14-16. Also, Ryan E. Eidson, “More than Vocational Preparation: Alexander Campbell’s Method of Higher Education for Character Formation,” *Stone-Campbell Journal* 24.1 (2021) 13-23.

³ Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* (1868; repr., Indianapolis: Religious Book Services, 1897) 1:33.

ed that humans are not born with innate knowledge but develop ideas through sensation and reflection. This Lockean epistemology of tabula rasa rejects subjective or mystical knowledge in favor of a rational and logical approach to understanding. Campbell's frequent quotation of Locke and rigid adherence to Lockean empiricism demonstrates that he regarded himself as a student of Locke's Christian rationalism.

Scottish Common Sense Realism

While a student at the University of Glasgow, the philosophy of Scottish Common Sense Realism impacted the ideas of Campbell. Thomas Reid, a minister and professor at Glasgow, advanced the ideas of Scottish Common Sense Realism as a counterbalance to the radical empiricism of David Hume. In his *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, Reid tried "to justify the ordinary man in believing in what his five senses tell him about the world."⁴ Armed with the ideas of Reid, Campbell believed that people could understand both their world and the Word of God with little more than the basic principles of common sense.

American Patriotism

Upon immigrating to the United States in 1808, Campbell not only assimilated into the new nation, fulfilling the requirements to become a naturalized citizen in December 1815,⁵ but he also envisioned his new country as a place unspoiled by the monarchies and church-state relationships of Europe. As such, he believed his new homeland to be a unique place in which the unfolding plans of God could occur without the encumbrances of centuries of European traditions and practices.⁶ "The fourth of July, 1776," he contends in an Independence Day address, "was a memorable day, a day to be remembered as was the Jewish Passover—a day to be regarded with grateful acknowledgments by every American citizen, by every philanthropist in all the nations of the world."⁷ Moreover, he

⁴ Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: The Story of the American Restoration Movement* (rev. ed.; Joplin, MO: College Press, 1994) 30.

⁵ Eva Jean Wrather, *Alexander Campbell: Adventurer in Freedom: A Literary Biography* (ed. D. Duane Cummins; Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 2005) 1:201, 3:280; Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1:465.

⁶ See Richard J. Chero, "Citizen Campbell: Alexander Campbell and Early American Politics," *Stone-Campbell Journal* 24.1 (2021) 3-12.

⁷ Alexander Campbell, "An Oration in Honor of the Fourth of July, 1830," *Millennial Harbinger* (1830) 374.

describes the United States as “the greatest nation and the happiest community on the earth” in his Baccalaureate Address to Bethany College’s class of 1847.⁸

All of these components are readily recognized as comprising Alexander Campbell’s philosophy of education. However, what is often overlooked or disconnected from these discussions is the role of theology. Everyone agrees that theology was a very influential factor in forming Campbell’s philosophy of education and that he frequently utilized theology as a means of communicating or expressing his educational views.

However, many of the “non-theological” factors that influenced Campbell’s educational philosophy actually parallel his theological convictions. As such, they are not separate but collaborative factors. For example, his rejection of strict Calvinism is harmonious with his affirmation of Locke; his postmillennial eschatology not only influenced the Stone-Campbell Movement but was also part of his patriotism toward the new Republic to which he belonged. Likewise, his use of Scottish Common Sense Realism lent itself to what has been described as Campbell’s naïve anti-sectarian hermeneutic toward the Bible. But which came first—Campbell’s theology or the other influential factors? Whether the theology led to the philosophical influence (for instance, rejection of Calvinism enabled Campbell to embrace Locke’s *tabula rasa*) or vice versa, the fact remains that theology is consistently related to all the factors influencing his educational philosophy, whether it was an initial consideration or a latent one. Regardless, his personal convictions lent themselves to the educational views and agenda he articulated, and they were theologically informed to say the least.

SOME ASPECTS OF CAMPBELL’S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Constructing a definitive listing of the characteristic traits of Campbell’s educational philosophy is well beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, providing a compilation of some aspects of Campbell’s philosophy of education that are generally agreed-upon will illustrate its theological aspects.⁹

Universal Education

For Campbell, Christianity and education were inextricably related. “The cause of education is so intimately connected with the cause of

⁸ Alexander Campbell, “Baccalaureate Address,” *Millennial Harbinger* (1847) 421.

⁹ See footnote 2 and also Olbricht, “Alexander Campbell as an Educator,” 79-100.

Christianity,” he writes, “that we cannot easily imagine how anyone can be deeply interested in the latter without feeling a greater interest in the former.”¹⁰ Because of this intimate relationship, Campbell argues that a basic education must be viewed as an essential right for all people. “In the sacred and benevolent cause of education,” he insists, “we are not allowed to have any castes or parties—we are neither aristocrats nor democrats—we do not stand up for the rich or for the poor but for the people, the whole people, and nothing but the people. Such is my theory.”¹¹ As such, Campbell tied the “sacred” cause of universal education to an effort to advance the gospel message. “Without education,” Campbell claimed, “. . . no man can be a Christian.”¹²

Moral Development

In nearly every writing in which Campbell delved into the topic of education, he mentioned (often to great extent) his belief that education is a moralizing force in society. In 1856, when addressing a Literary Association in Cincinnati, Ohio, Campbell opened his remarks by saying, “There is not, in all the expanded area of human thought, any theme more important or more prolific of good or evil to man, temporal, spiritual or eternal, than is the theme of human education.”¹³ Campbell acknowledges that intellect may be offered without proper moral instruction, but declared it a “curse to each and every community.”¹⁴ “Moral culture,” Campbell exclaims in his 1856 address, “is the great end of all human education.” Moreover, he goes on to say, this pursuit of moral virtue “is the polar star of our whole theory.”¹⁵ “Moral excellence,” he explains previously in his 1845 baccalaureate address at Bethany College, “is the only true demonstration of a well-educated man, a gentleman, and a Christian.”¹⁶ Thus, the concept of moral development, which he defines as a distinctly Christian morality, was a pivotal aspect of Campbell’s philosophy of education.

¹⁰ Alexander Campbell, “Educational Institutions,” *Millennial Harbinger* (1846) 428.

¹¹ Alexander Campbell, “An Address,” *Millennial Harbinger* (1841) 448.

¹² Alexander Campbell, “An Address on Education,” *Millennial Harbinger* (1856) 638.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 635.

¹⁴ Campbell, “An Address,” 445.

¹⁵ Campbell, “An Address on Education,” 648.

¹⁶ Alexander Campbell, “A Baccalaureate Address,” *Millennial Harbinger* (1845) 328.

Non-Sectarian Reading of Scripture

The Bible, Campbell believed, must “be a standing and a daily text-book in every primary school, academy and college in Christendom.”¹⁷ Even amid the sectarian rivalries of the denominational world, he argued, “all coalesce in recommending the Bible as a universal school-book from the first lesson in the reading class to the last recitation in the college course.”¹⁸ In 1840, when he established Bethany College, Campbell put his educational philosophy into practice. “Bethany College,” he explains, “is the only College known to us in the civilized world, founded upon the Bible. It is not a theological school, founded upon human theology, nor a school of divinity, founded upon the Bible; but a literary and scientific institution, founded upon the Bible as the basis of all true science and learning.”¹⁹

In their book, *Making Higher Education Christian*, Kenneth Carpenter and Joel Shipps concur with Campbell’s assessment, stating, “Only rarely did a course in the English Bible appear in the official curriculum.” “President Alexander Campbell’s Bethany College (of West Virginia) was the exception; it opened in 1840 as the only literary college in America to maintain a Department of Sacred History and Biblical Literature as an integral part of the curriculum.”²⁰

As part of Campbell’s oft-repeated plea for use of the Bible in the classroom, he insists on a simple, non-theological, and non-sectarian reading of the Scriptures.²¹ The Bible, he contends, must be presented as “a book of *facts*, not of *theories*.” Only then, he further explains, could it “be studied, believed, obeyed and enjoyed, without one speculative oracle, on the part of teacher or pupil.”²² While this position may sound naïve and untenable to twenty-first-century readers, a similar view toward the Bible, though not as clearly articulated, was advanced by Horace Mann (1796–1859), the father of modern public education in America.²³ “The Bible and

¹⁷ Campbell, “An Address on Education,” 636-637.

¹⁸ Campbell, “An Address,” 445.

¹⁹ Alexander Campbell, “Bethany College,” *Millennial Harbinger* (1850) 291.

²⁰ Kenneth Carpenter and Joel Shipps, *Making Higher Education Christian: The History and Mission of Evangelical Colleges in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 87-88.

²¹ See James Riley Estep, Jr., “The Bible in the Classroom: Campbell’s View of Public Education,” *ResQ* 40.4 (1998) 261-272.

²² Campbell, “An Address on Education,” 640.

²³ Estep, “The Bible in the Classroom,” 267-269.

the schoolmaster,” according to Campbell, “are God’s two great instrumentalities to enlighten, to civilize, and to aggrandize man.”²⁴

Holistic Approach to Education

To Campbell, education should not be relegated to a specified academic setting, nor should it be categorized to a certain age range. The process of education, as he viewed it, must take on a holistic approach that includes both formal and informal settings and is a lifelong process that begins at infancy. Campbell proposes that there are four “schools which are essential to the development of man.” These schools are “the Family, the Elementary, the College, and the Church.”²⁵ Moreover, he states, education “must commence with the commencement of our being, and be continued till our full physical and moral development.”²⁶

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

If one were to photocopy all the documents from Campbell’s *Millennial Harbinger* regarding education, it would form a stack about three-fourths of an inch high. However, the fullest expression of Campbell’s educational ideals (both philosophical and practical) are found in two addresses: (1) “Address on Education” delivered to a literary association in Cincinnati, Ohio, in October 1856; which was of a more theoretical nature, that is, what kind of schools are needed given our philosophical convictions regarding humanity, nature, and other matters; and (2) “On Common Schools,” delivered in Clarksburg, Virginia, in 1841; which was of a more practical nature, that is, why the common school, or public education, was essential for the advancement and security of the United States. The latter was far less theologically developed. Much of the following theological discussion is based on the former, Campbell’s “Address on Education,” which was the more philosophical of the two.

God and Education

Believing that “God is revealed to man by what he has done and what he has said,”²⁷ Campbell consistently insists that the Bible, God’s revelation to humanity, must be an essential component of all education and not mere-

²⁴ Campbell, “An Address on Education,” 642.

²⁵ Alexander Campbell, “Schools and Education No. 1,” *Millennial Harbinger* (1839) 234.

²⁶ Campbell, “An Address on Education,” 647.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 648.

ly within the framework of theological schools. “We desire,” he wrote in 1849, “a much more intimate, critical, and thorough knowledge of the Bible, the whole Bible as the Book of God—the Book of Life and of human destiny, than is usually, or indeed can be, obtained in what are called Theological Schools.”²⁸ Not only did Campbell see the Bible as the source for understanding God, but since all moral and benevolent knowledge ultimately comes from God, he would contend that it is the root source for all education.

As Campbell describes his goal for establishing Bethany College, he writes, “All science, all literature, all nature, all art, all attainments shall be made tributary to the Bible and man’s ultimate temporal and eternal destiny.”²⁹ Moreover, Campbell views God as the basis of all theology, which is revealed in Scripture, though Campbell avoided the term “theology” which he viewed as a term that generally focused on human speculation about God. Campbell goes on to describe God as Trinitarian in nature, though he seldom uses that term, and links the trichotomous character of humanity to God’s nature. Moreover, Campbell espouses God as the sovereign Creator, author of Scripture, Savior, and the Christ as incarnated Divinity.

Humanity and Education

Within the opening paragraphs of his “Address on Education,” as published in the *Millennial Harbinger*, Campbell ties education to his understanding of humanity and humanity’s need for education:

The first question, then, necessarily is, *What is man?* He is neither an angel nor an animal. He has a body, a soul and a spirit. He has a trinity of natures in one personality. While Jehovah has a trinity of personalities in one nature, man has a trinity of natures in one personality. . . . Hence the institution of a remedial system, to elevate, dignify and beatify man, was introduced by the Creator himself, and consummated by the incarnation of the Divinity in our humanity. This is the proper stand-point whence to survey the special providence and the special grace vouchsafed to man as he now is, in his lapsed and ruined condition.³⁰

Campbell’s affirmation of a Lockean notion of humanity, coupled with his rejection of the Reformed tradition’s view of humanity,³¹ reverberates throughout his further references to human nature. Not only does he see

²⁸ Alexander Campbell, “A New Institution,” *Millennial Harbinger*, 448.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Campbell, “An Address on Education,” 636.

³¹ See Samuel G. Peterson, Jr., “All Things New: Images of Man in Early Nineteenth Century America,” *Encounter* 35:1 (1974) 6-7.

humankind as the greatest creation of the entire created order, but Campbell also notes something he refers to as a “common humanity.”³² As a trichotomy—body, soul, and spirit, or “a trinity of natures”—as opposed to the dichotomous view that is so prevalent today, Campbell describes humanity as “a microcosm, a miniature embodiment of universal nature, or of the Divine creation.”³³ Hence, the potential of humanity was regarded as virtually unbounded and actually achievable through education. Thus, Campbell would further write,

A perfect system of schools and education, both in theory and practice, is still a desideratum. While we are progressing towards that attainment, evident it is the world has not yet seen such a system in actual operation. Man is not yet fully developed, because he is not perfectly educated; and he is not perfectly educated, because there exists no institution in which such an education can be obtained.³⁴

In perhaps his last writing on the subject of education, Campbell echoes these sentiments, turning to an agricultural metaphor, “Cultivation is, in fact, education. Hence, we speak of cultivated men and cultivated fruits and flowers. Education is neither more nor less than development, in harmony with the subject of it. Its goal or perfection is the perfect and complete development of the subject of it.”³⁵

Revelation and Education

While Campbell believed many sources of knowledge and instruction contribute to the education of humankind,³⁶ he was convinced that the ultimate source of the most pertinent aspects of all knowledge is divine revelation. The revelatory component of God’s educational plan for humanity, he insists, consists of both the special revelation of Scripture and the general revelation of creation.³⁷ “We have but two libraries from which God teaches

³² Campbell, “An Address on Education,” 635.

³³ *Ibid.*, 636.

³⁴ Campbell, “Schools and Education No. 1,” 233.

³⁵ Alexander Campbell, “What Is Education, in Its Full Import?” *Millennial Harbinger* (1862) 109.

³⁶ In his address to the 1845 graduates of Bethany College, Campbell said that he had “been repeatedly asked to give a list of books essential to a student’s library—both in literature, science, and religion.” He went on to provide a listing of numerous volumes that he deemed significant. See Campbell, “A Baccalaureate Address,” 320-323.

³⁷ Occasionally Campbell, “An Address on Education,” 647, described general revelation as “two other Bibles,” identifying the earth as “the text-book of geology” and the heavens as “the text-book of astronomy.”

man,” Campbell writes in 1850. “One of these, called *Nature*, is vast as the universe; the other, called the *Bible*, is composed of *seventy-two* volumes.”³⁸ The textbooks of both the “material nature” and the “spiritual nature” were described as “equally infallible and Divine” by Campbell, and both appear to have a significant role in his educational philosophy. Nevertheless, Campbell seems to delineate a distinction here between his ideas of education and those of Christian faith and practice, which he deems to be governed by the generally accepted—at least among Protestant Christians—sixty-six books of Scripture.

Campbell’s declaration that the divine revelation of Scripture is composed of “seventy-two volumes” appears to be a reference to the Roman Catholic Bible and its inclusion of the books of the Apocrypha. In his 1829 debate with Robert Owen, Campbell explains that “The Apocrypha—at least some books of it—contains a true history; but it does not claim to be a Divine Revelation.”³⁹ This assertion was upheld in his 1837 debate with Roman Catholic Bishop John B. Purcell when he explicitly rejects the Apocrypha as Scripture.⁴⁰ The key, perhaps, to understanding what seems to be an obvious contradiction by Campbell, is recognizing the nuances of difference in his thought on education and Christian faith and practice.

For Campbell, the commonly espoused Protestant canon of Scripture, which he describes as “the prince of school books,”⁴¹ is the pinnacle component of his educational philosophy for both the academy and the church. Yet, the revelation of nature, when viewed in the light of Scripture, both upholds the claims of Scripture. That is, it enables humans to see the handiwork of God in nature, but only *after* God has revealed himself⁴² and serves as an instrument God has established for human education and advancement.

Using typical Lockean terminology,⁴³ Campbell explains that there are “no innate ideas of things beyond the region of sense.” So from general

³⁸ Alexander Campbell, “Schools and Colleges, No. 1,” 124. Surprisingly, Campbell refers to “seventy-two volumes” in the Bible. This is the traditional number of books in the Roman Catholic Bible.

³⁹ Alexander Campbell and Robert Owen, *The Evidences of Christianity: A Debate* (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Company, 1906) 353.

⁴⁰ See Alexander Campbell and John B. Purcell, *A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion* (Nashville: McQuiddy, 1914) 226, 323, 326.

⁴¹ Campbell, “An Address on Education,” 639.

⁴² See Richard J. Chero, *Debating for God: Alexander Campbell’s Challenge to Skepticism in Antebellum America* (Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 2008) 38–39.

⁴³ John Ralph Scudder, Jr., “A History of Disciple Theories of Religious Education,” *The College of the Bible Quarterly* 40.2 (1963) 21.

revelation one can never “conclude what is right or wrong . . . with respect to himself and others, in reference to the measure of his destiny.”⁴⁴ As such, he writes, “Nature . . . without the Bible, is not a revelation of God to man. Without the Holy Spirit, nature is dumb.”⁴⁵ However, he still saw general revelation as one of the “two libraries from which God teaches man.” Like nature, which is incapable of teaching humans about the faith and practice of the Christian religion, Campbell appears to accept the books of the Apocrypha as having a divinely revealed *educational* value that, when viewed in light of the generally accepted sixty-six books of Scripture, both upholds Scripture (through their historical narrative and literary style) and is used by God to advance human education.

Salvation and Education

Perhaps one of Campbell's most provocative and controversial comments about education was in relation to salvation. More specifically, that education was essential for it!

No irreligious man is, therefore, a well-educated man. . . . When we affirm the conviction that every well-educated person must be a genuine Christian, we would not be understood as holding or expressing the idea that a Christian is the mere fruit of a good literacy, moral, or religious education. *Still, without education, in some measure, no man can be a Christian.* He must understand in some degree the Oracles of God. . . . *Education is, therefore, essential to the salvation of any man* in whose hand God, in his moral government or overruling providence, has placed a Bible. . . . Therefore, a certain amount of education is absolutely necessary to give to every man the means of possessing and enjoying the life that now is, or that future and everlasting life to come [emphasis added].⁴⁶

The cognitive dimension of our salvation, he argues, is facilitated by our education. Thus, the ability to read and reason is contingent on literacy instruction and an acquaintance with reason and logic. Perhaps Campbell was engaging in hyperbole, or just playing-to-the-crowd, but it certainly does elevate the purpose and impact of education in the Christian life.

Church/Eschatology and Education

Postmillennialism, not just patriotism, was “the constant in Campbell's thought.”⁴⁷ Scudder commented,

⁴⁴ Campbell, “Schools and Colleges, No. 1,” 125.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Campbell, “An Address on Education,” 638.

⁴⁷ Richard T. Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 45.

During his early ministry Campbell looked to reformation of the church as the means of bringing in the millennium. But in the 1840s and 1850s his strategy became more social in that he came to believe that American democracy was an important step in the direction of the millennium. For American democracy to reach the millennium, however, it had to accept the leadership of Christ. Campbell looked to public education to place American democracy under the reign of Christ.⁴⁸

How prevalent was this in Campbell’s thought? In the “Prospectus,” on the first page of the first volume of his new periodical, the *Millennial Harbinger*, he wrote:

This work shall be devoted to the destruction of sectarianism, infidelity and antichristian doctrine and practice. It shall have for its object the development and introduction of that political and religious order of society called MILLENNIUM, which will be consummation of that ultimate amelioration of society proposed in the Christian Scriptures. Subservient to this comprehensive object, the following subjects will be attended to:

1. The incompatibility of any sectarian establishment now, known on earth, with the genius of the glorious age to come.
2. The inadequacy of all the present systems of education, literary and moral, to develop the powers of the human mind, and to prepare man for rational and social happiness.⁴⁹

While he lists other “subjects,” these two would be among the most frequently “attended to” by Campbell. For him, an educational agenda is a prerequisite to the advent of the millennium.

The whole philosophy of the highest civilization ever exhibited on earth, or, indeed, conceivable in our horizon, is summarily comprehended in two precepts, one which, according to the greatest philosopher that ever appeared amongst men, depend the whole law and the prophets. These two precepts are but two manifestations or applications of one principle. Love to God and love to man, on the part of man, if the gravitating principle conservative of a rational and moral universe.⁵⁰

More specifically,

Till the King of kings comes, we Christians ought to be good republicans, under the conviction that human government seldom grows better, and that the popular doctrine of our country is true—that political authority generally make a man worse, and public favors almost invariably corrupt the heart. Rapid rota-

⁴⁸ Scudder, “Disciple Theories,” 21-22.

⁴⁹ Alexander Campbell, “Prospectus,” *Millennial Harbinger* (1830) 1.

⁵⁰ Campbell, “An Address on Education,” 642.

tion in office is the practical influence of the republican theory [emphasis added].⁵¹

Both of Campbell's principal speeches on education are driven by three rhetorical questions, "*What am I? Whence came I? and Whither do I go?*"⁵² or "What is man? Where is he? and What is he destined for?"⁵³ Education (centered on Scripture) is repeatedly affirmed as the means of "development" of human beings, human civilization, and cultures.

OBSERVATIONS ON ALEXANDER CAMPBELL'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

While theology was not the only factor in forming Campbell's educational philosophy, it seems to have been one of the more influential; and definitely was one of the more expressed rationalizations for his educational philosophy. For Campbell, education's ultimate aim was focused on humanity—not a student-centered philosophy, but one focused on transformation of the individual, and ultimately society. Realism and theology have been an evangelical educational synthesis since Thomas Aquinas, and Campbell seems to follow in this vein of integrating realism and theology. He integrated educational theory and theology, definitely reflecting a "because we believe . . . we should educate" approach and giving a model for contemporary Christian educators' theorizing about education in a Christian context.

He does demonstrate awareness of the education theorists of his era, many of whom addressed the notion of character development through education. Campbell is certainly not ignorant of the prevailing educational thinking. For instance, he frequently referred favorably to Bacon, Locke, and Newton in *Millennial Harbinger*. While Campbell does demonstrate knowledge of literature beyond the Scriptures, especially ancient history and science, and values it in religious education, he still affirmed Scripture as the watershed of knowledge. Although one need not affirm all the elements of Campbell's educational philosophy, such as the perfectibility of humanity, one can still appreciate his endeavor to form a distinctive Christian approach to education of people generally.

⁵¹ Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System* (Gospel Advocate, 1974) 122-123.

⁵² Campbell, "An Address on Education," 635.

⁵³ Alexander Campbell, "On Common Schools," in *Popular Lectures and Addresses* (Nashville: Harbinger Book Club, 1861) 254.

CONCLUSION

Although Alexander Campbell’s approach to education would be unlikely to find application within modern America’s state-sponsored educational system, it does provide a model for Christian educators in both the church and within Christian schools and educational systems. Within this concept of education, Campbell calls for an awareness of contemporary educational thought (theory and philosophy) integrated into a theological framework, with a focus on maturing Christian students, individually and collectively, to their fullest potential.⁵⁰

