The Thunderous Silence of God

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by Joe Neil Clayton

An examination of the usefulness of the famous slogan devised by Thomas Campbell, in the dawn of the Restoration Movement, to the reviving of the cause of Christian unity, and the enlargement of its principles in His pamphlet entitled Declaration and Address.

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CHAPTER ONE

Slighting A Slogan

Any worthwhile cause or movement receives help, if its objectives can be reduced into a concise and provocative slogan or motto. Many revolutions have failed because the revolutionaries failed to capture the imagination of the masses with some sort of rallying cry. The religious revolution, which is known historically as the Restoration Movement, obtained its slogan as the result of the personal trials and scriptural inquiries of that great revolutionary, Thomas Campbell (1763-1854).

The Presbyterian Synod under which he labored had disciplined Campbell for supposed heresy, but he continued to seek audiences for his Bible centered ideas. In the community around Washington, Pennsylvania, Campbell had a small group of sympathetic friends before whom he was often invited to preach. On one such occasion (about the early part of 1809), he concluded a sermon on the quest for the means of Christian unity by saying, “Where the Bible speaks, we speak; Where the Bible is silent, we are silent.” (Robert Richardson, the biographer of Alexander Campbell, reports that Thomas Campbell said, “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak, and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.”)

I remember that when I was entering the early years of adulthood, I heard many gospel preachers repeat these words, and tell the dramatic story of their formation and the evolution of this Restoration motto. I remember also that the story created in me a sense of awe at the profound insights possessed by Thomas Campbell. Such a constructive contribution toward the cure of religious division was certainly, I thought, the creature of great genius. Little did I know, at that time, that the ideas of the slogan were not original with Campbell, but that he was merely a thinker who was willing to employ them with remorseless logic and force.
Many years before the birth of Thomas Campbell, William Chillingworth (1602-44), an English “divine and controversialist” (*Encyclopedia Brittanica, Vol. 6, page 512, 1954 Edition*), sounded the “keynote” of Protestantism by saying, “The Bible, I say, the Bible only, is the religion of the Protestants” (*From his great work “The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation”). Later in 1659, Edward Stillingfleet, another English Clergyman, came nearer to the motto composed by Campbell, when he said, “For the church to require more than Christ himself did, or make the condition of her communion (or, membership JNC) more than our Savior did for discipleship, is wholly unwarranted” (*Earl I. West, The Search for the Ancient Order, Vol. 1, p. 47*). Other examples of this line of thinking shall appear in the remnant of this investigation, but these suffice to show that Campbell’s expression was not entirely original in concept.

Since much of my “spiritual teething” involved hearing men test denominational and *digressive* doctrines by this rule, I began to see the unique usefulness of the principles in the motto for drawing a distinction between the church of Christ and denominational Protestantism. Early in my spiritual infancy, I determined to join the ranks of those who propagated this Restoration cause. Advancing into maturity, I imitated, in my childish way, the vigor and conviction which was displayed by my *heroes*, and did not seriously question the veracity of the motto. However, greater exposure to the fact that the Restoration Movement itself had been splintered scandalously by doctrinal and practical disputes made me examine more closely the *doctrinaire* ground on which I stood. Was the principle stated by Thomas Campbell a traditional philosophy (as some claim, today), or was it a paraphrase of Scriptural precept? I realized that any position held because of *human tradition* was untenable, if one outwardly opposed this type of tradition as a rule of faith and practice. I was forced, at last, to study the principle in the light of Scripture (this is far wiser than studying Scripture in the light of theoretical principle).
Others have undertaken this same task, and have professed that they have consequently rejected the slogan as unscriptural and a hindrance to unity. However, my studies have served to confirm to me the truth of the slogan. I would freely yield the point that it is possible that this result was from my earnest desire to see the age of ideal unity spoken by Christ in John 17:20-21, but let it be granted, sympathetically, that this desire was prompted by Scripture, and not by partisan pre-disposition. If the unity for which Christ prayed was not attainable through the Apostles’ “word”, it was a futile gesture for Christ to ask the Heavenly Sovereign for it. In vs. 17, the Lord prayed, “Sanctify (consecrate) them in the truth; thy word is truth.” This suggests that the oneness of those who heard the Apostles would be the fruit of apostolic consecration in the Word of God. There seems to be little room in this arrangement for human teaching or invention, but the religious world has been supplied human innovations that number in the thousands by those who were not content to simply hear the Word.

The divided condition of Protestantism at the time of Thomas Campbell’s work prompted him to seek a scriptural solution to the problem. He was, by no means, the only one concerned with the problem. Before he came to America, Campbell’s loose association with the “independent” movement in Scotland, which was dominated by the teaching of the Haldane brothers, and his own attempts to re-unite the warring segments of the Seceder Presbyterian Church in Ireland, acquainted him with the need for unity, and influenced the avenue he traveled in promoting it. He decided that creeds had contributed nothing to unity, but had in fact served to destroy it! Insistence upon human opinions, and the binding of humanly inspired practices, obviously prevented union. Therefore, thought Campbell, the solution must be found in a return to Bible authority. Recognizing the Bible as the infallible Word of God, and realizing that some authority must be applied to the problem of division that would heavily outweigh the human, he came to the conclusion that a systematic application of the precepts of the Bible had to offer the only possible solution.
The culmination of this trend of thought was the statement, “Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent”. He knew that man’s ambition to “play God” must be curbed by strong restraints. He also knew of no stronger restraint than the fear of the Lord, and respect for the supremacy of His authority. Nothing else can subdue the restless innovative spirit of man more forcefully than the realistic acceptance of God’s authority over him. Thus, Campbell moved under the impulse of these conclusions to voice the motto, and to define it, at the request of his friends, in a document entitled the “Declaration and Address”, which was published in Sept. 1809.

“Straining Against the Leash…”

I must now speak of the things which prompted me to revive once more a consideration of the applicability of the Restoration slogan at this time.

As I have said before, through prior study I have convinced myself that the ideas behind the slogan were not the invention of Thomas Campbell, or any other human being on the face of the earth. I am persuaded that the motto reflects the clear teaching of the scripture in regard to the principles by which the Word of God must be interpreted and applied. Nevertheless, there are those within the broad framework of the Restoration Movement who are, in a figure, “straining against the leash” of restriction which this scriptural principle has imposed upon them. They have strangely contradictory reasons for desiring the removal of the fence, too. As an example of this phenomenon, we cite the statements of two prominent figures in the Restoration Movement spectrum, and take a look at their position in relation to the cause they espouse.

James DeForest Murch, a noted church historian and editor who is identified with the branch of the Restoration Movement that now uses the instrument of music in worship, is a prominent spokesman in behalf of the “free church” principle. He holds that congregations of Christians are autonomous, and he has fought both the abuses and the organizational principle of the “Convention,” like the one held regularly by the Disciples of Christ Church. Yet, he has also spoken out against the validity of the slogan of
Thomas Campbell. Dr. Murch has said, in regard to the nature of the controversy over the use of the instrument of music in worship:

_Who is to decide what can be done in the area of silences? . . because all of us do things in the area of the silences of the Scripture. And it is because we cannot agree as to what may be done in the silences, that we’re divided. And this is because of a human “shibboleth”, enunciated by one of the grandest men that God ever made (Thomas Campbell, JNC), but nevertheless a human “shibboleth”. (Speech before the student body and faculty of Pacific Christian College, Long Beach, California, Feb. 8, 1967)_

Dr. Murch defines the motto of Thomas Campbell as having a human origin. He says that it used as a “shibboleth” to test friend or foe in a factious way (This is an allusion to Judges 12:1-6). When he says that he doubts that anyone can “decide what can be done in the area of silences,” he forgets that the slogan requires silence in men, where the Bible is silent! It is not a question of what _may be done!_ His implication that all segments of the Restoration Movement do things in violation of the principle of the slogan I will deny, for those with whom I am associated seek an authoritative “thus saith the Lord” for all that they do, whether from divine command, apostolic example, or necessary inference. We constantly subject our practices to this test. So, if it could be successfully pointed out by Dr. Murch, or any of his associates, that we do things for which we have no divine authority, we would be willing to give them up in deference to what we consider to be the scriptural principles of the slogan!

Nevertheless, Dr. Murch believes that this Restoration Motto, or misapplication of it, has generated most of our strife in the Movement, and should be ignored as a human invention. However, he is feverishly working in his field to cause as many churches as possible to dissolve legal connection with the Disciples of Christ, and their Convention. One hand disparages division, and the other works to implement a division!
Another prominent editor and orator who deplores the existence of the Campbellian Motto is Carl Ketcherside. He also deplores the divisions that have splintered the Restoration Movement, and offers his own solution to the problem. He would not disassociate himself from the Disciples because of their organizational excesses, as Dr. Murch has done, nor would he likely disassociate himself from anyone in Christendom who could satisfy him that he was a sincere immersed believer. His “cause celebre” is the promotion of fellowship among all factions of the Restoration Movement on the principle of “agreeing to disagree”. He himself is identified with the “non-instrumental” branch of the Restoration Movement, but he takes the position that each faction’s peculiar ideas are most often matters of indifference. He also takes a position similar to that taken by Murch on the validity of the Motto. He says:

...The authority of Jesus is absolute, but no human theory of it based upon deductions from the scripture need be so. There is every evidence that both schools of thought (on the question of instrumental music) realize that they cannot practically apply their rules in an absolute degree. Those who postulate the exclusiveness of silence are constantly called upon to explain and justify the things which they have adopted without specific mention or authorization. Those who accept the theory of permissiveness of silence are ever seeking to lay down laws of restraint to control their membership... (Mission Messenger, Vol. 28, No. 7, July, 1966, p. 121)

We learn from this statement that the writer does not accept either of the positions taken by the protagonists in the instrumental music question. He says that they are “human theories”, or philosophies of interpretation without divine precedent, and should therefore be discarded. Like Dr. Murch, he thinks that those who do not use the instrument of music in the worship are inconsistent. He believes that they practice “things they have adopted without specific mention (in the Scripture) or authorization.”
But, he ignores the fact that a certain class of practices can be adopted and authorized without specific mention! More on this later.

Carl Ketcherside correctly interprets the dilemma created by the “theory of the permissiveness of silence.” Once the use of instrumental music in the worship is rationalized by this theory, consistency demands that other practices, equally unprecedented in the Scripture, are permissible. If a man argues for the acceptance of an organ in worship on the basis of the “permissiveness of silence,” how could he successfully resist the introduction of votive candles, incense, liturgical traditions, and the distinctive clothing of the “clergy?” Thus, it is true that the more conservative thinkers among the Disciples are hard pressed to justify any restraints they desire to impose on the Disciples churches. Meanwhile, liberal thinkers among the Disciples have already drifted into having more liturgical services, having altars in their buildings, and the wearing of clerical garments.

Murch and Ketcherside, then, hold similar attitudes toward the Motto of the Restoration Movement, but are led to take divergent courses in consequence of those attitudes. One has taken a rigid stand against the Disciples of Christ who agitate for unscriptural systems of organization, but the other is willing to overlook the peculiar views of all partisans in the various species of Restoration Movement churches!

A Re-examination of the Slogan

Because of the disparaging criticism offered by these men, and others, regarding the validity of the principles of the slogan, and because of the prominent part played by the slogan in all of the controversies of the Restoration Movement, a complete re-examination of its usefulness is justified. If it is not scripturally valid to apply it to the settlement of our controversies, we ought to forget it; but if it is applicable, it ought to be asserted and applied to the issues that have divided us. By this means, we might become united again, and might be able to demonstrate the ideal for which Christ prayed.
CHAPTER TWO

“Removing...the rubbish of ages”

It is readily admitted by all parties that a slogan, by its very brevity, cannot anticipate all of the controversies that might be raised concerning it. It does not answer all questions, and it does not really settle all disputes. A slogan, or a motto, is but a condensation of a larger idea. This was recognized by those with whom Thomas Campbell was associated, and they asked him to compose a treatise which would express more fully the views he contracted into the slogan.

His little pamphlet called the Declaration and Address was the product of this suggestion, and it is one of the most remarkable documents of religious history. Its ideas are still fresh and rational, evidently developed out of thorough analysis of the problem of religious division. Like any document written by men, it is subject to the mutilation of human interpreters. The Bible has suffered the same mutilation from those who consider it to be a purely human document, but those who respect the Bible as “God-breathed” approach it fearfully, careful only to find its meaning and not manipulate its words to support partisan views. Could we not look at the Declaration and Address with enough respect for the original thoughts of Mr. Campbell, so that we do not distort his words to fit our own ideas? This is not to be considered the same as seeking respect for the Bible. We do not consider the Declaration and Address to be “inspired.” We merely urge respect for the meaning of language, careful interpretation of which can bring us nearest to the thought of the author.

Scholarship or Scandal

When considered in the light of the scandal of religious division and traditionalism prevalent at the beginning of the 19th century, the Declaration and Address has a majestic blend of toleration and indignation. There are tears for the tragic condition of Christian-
ity, and there is exultation at having discovered a possible salve for the wounds. It deserves the earnest examination of the reader.

The avowed purpose of the author is found in the statement:

>To prepare the way for a permanent scriptural unity amongst Christians by - clearing the way before them by removing the stumbling blocks - the rubbish of ages, which has been thrown upon it, and fencing it on each side, that advancing toward the desired object, they may not miss the way through mistake, or inadvertency, - is at least, the sincere intention of the above propositions... (Declaration and Address, Centennial edition, 1909, pp. 18-19)

Thomas Campbell recognized that the divisions of Protestantism were created by the “rubbish” of human creeds, opinions and traditions. In one place, he said, “Our differences at most are about the things in which the kingdom of God does not consist, that is, about matters of private opinion or human intervention” (Ibid., p. 10). Most of his indignation was reserved for the “abuse” of creeds, where their formulas were made the terms of “communion,” or membership in the Denomination. Nearly all of the “Appendix” section of the document deals with this problem.

However, the document comprehends much more than just the abuse of human creeds. We are made to understand by reading Campbell’s words that he resists human opinion and inventions in all phases of church practice, including the field of worship, and that of government. He says:

...a uniform agreement...would be infinitely preferable to our contention and divisions: nay, that such a uniformity is the very thing that the Lord requires, if the New Testament be a perfect model - a sufficient formula for the worship, discipline and the government of the Christian church. (Declaration and Address, p. 35. By his use of the term “Christian Church,” Campbell
evidently means the New Testament church, because that term had not come to be 
used by any denomination at the time of his writing.)

In this statement, we note that Campbell asserts that uniformity, even in “worship, 
discipline, and government” is required by the Lord, if the New Testament is received as 
a “perfect model,” a “sufficient formula.” This is the key to his attempt to unite all be-
lievers. He himself thoroughly accepted the Bible, especially the New Testament, to be 
practical and sufficient to guide all men to uniform practice and doctrine. He was imi-
tated in this confidence by his son, Alexander Campbell, who said:

_The New Testament contains the constitution, laws, ordinances, and 
discipline of the Christian church, if such belongs to it at all. Hence the 
propriety of proposing this volume as the bond of union among the 
churches. But what avails a promise to be governed by this book, unless 
this promise be faithfully fulfilled? Why promise to submit to the consti-
tution, laws, institutions, and rules of discipline found in the volume, and 
afterwards require submission to institutions and usages wholly human?_

_(Millennial Harbinger, Vol. 3, No. 5, p. 193)_

This attitude characterized all of the leaders of the Restoration Movement in the 
early years, but the heirs of this original concept have detracted from this noble pursuit, 
calling it “naive.” On such detractor has said:

_The (Restoration) “movement” was a quest for Christian unity, origi-
nally and somewhat naively presupposing that in the New Testa-ment 
could be found the exact details, blue-prints and specifications of a clearly 
discernible church organization and church doctrine. (A. T. DeGroot, Disci-
ple Thought: A History, p. 209)_

The author of this quotation, A. T. DeGroot, is currently associated with those who 
have urged a “restructure” of the Disciples of Christ “Denomination” to make it com-
patible to the organic structures of such established Denominations as the Metho-dist
Church and the Episcopal Church. He does this in the hope of eventual union with these churches. He evidently does not believe that the New Testament has authority to direct men into a knowledge of church government, or, he has assumed that the description of the organic structure of the New Testament church is inadequate. He further assumes that human intervention must be used to supply what God, in His ignorance or neglect, failed to give us. He desires to speak where the Bible is silent, illustrating his antagonism to the Restoration principles outlined in the *Declaration and Address*.

The proposals of the *Declaration and Address* were specifically designed to save the church from the assumptions and presumptions of men like A. T. DeGroot. When their opinions supply a practice which is not mentioned in Scripture, there must immediately be a division of sentiment, if not a division in fact, between them and those who refuse to trespass on the silence of the Scripture. Therefore, to heal such wounds, and to prevent further ones, Thomas Campbell offered a scholarly system of interpretation which conforms to Scripture precedents, in the place of the confusion instigated by human opinion.

**The Slogan Takes A Fuller Form**

The “Declaration” section of the *Declaration and Address* was written to outline the goals of the “Christian Association of Washington,” an organization conceived to follow the “purpose of promoting simple evangelical Christianity, free from all mixture of human opinions and inventions of men” (*Declaration and Address*, p. 4) It did not occur to the members of this association, at the time, that the very organization of which they were members had no scriptural precedent for its existence, nor did they anticipate the number of adjustments they would be compelled to make in order to satisfy the principles of the document they caused to be circulated. It must be remembered, however, that they were groping their way out of denominational darkness, and such groping often takes much time due to false turns. In fairness to them, it should be said that the “association” dissolved itself into a church after a very short period of time.
The “Address” section of the Declaration and Address offers its readers a road map toward unity in the form of an appeal to consider thirteen propositions. These propositions are described as “merely designed for opening the way, that we may come fairly and firmly to original ground upon clear and certain premises; and take up things just as the Apostles left them – that thus disentangled from the accruing embarrassments of intervening ages, we may stand with evidence upon the same ground on which the church stood in the beginning. . .” (Declaration and Address, p. 16)

The “Appendix” section of this document, the last, seems to be offered as an attempt to lubricate the minds of sectarian readers for the acceptance of propositions that doubtless would have an abrasive effect on their partisan feelings. Campbell says, “To prevent mistakes we beg leave to subjoin the following explanations” (Declaration and Address, p. 24). The Appendix is wordy and repetitive, into which Campbell poured all the fervor of his concern for the divided condition of Christendom. He can be seen as a beggar before the unjust judge, importuning him for redress of his grievance.

Propositions and Explanations

Returning to the Declaration section, we note that Campbell speaks of the desire to exclude human opinions and inventions from a place in the church, by saying:

. . . rejecting human opinions and the inventions of men as of any authority, or as having any place in the church of God, we might forever cease from farther contentions about such things; returning to, and holding fast by the original standard; taking the divine word alone for our rule. . . (Declaration and Address, p. 4)

The reader of this statement comes easily to the conclusion that Campbell desired to purge the church from practices which had attained a place there. He contends that only by removing such practices from there attained place permanently, can we cease from contention about them. He desires to be understood that he is not only speaking of terms of membership, but also of the activity of worship, for he says:
(The Christian Association of Washington will support) only such (ministers) as reduce to practice that simple original form of Christianity, expressly exhibited upon the sacred page; without attempting to inculcate anything of human authority, or private opinion, or inventions of men, as having any place in the constitution, faith, or worship, of the Christian church – or, any thing, as matter of Christian faith, or duty, for which there can not be expressly produced a thus saith the Lord either in express terms, or by approved precedent. (Declaration and Address, p. 4)

We would prove ourselves dishonest, if we were to suggest that Thomas Campbell was not concerned about applying his revolutionary principles to practices of worship, for here is his statement that no minister will be considered compatible to the published views of the “Association” who promotes anything in the “faith or worship” that is not supported by a “thus saith the Lord.” In the latter history of the Restoration Movement, however, there have been those who have suggested that Campbell did not intend to put an interpretive “fence” about the field of worship, and have re-introduced the use of instruments of music into the worship of the church. In a later chapter, we will let Campbell correct the mis-apprehension of his words by others, but we are satisfied at this point to raise the assertion that the practices of worship in the church were comprehended in the propositions set forth in the Declaration and Address. When Campbell comes to that portion of his “Address” in which he submits the propositions for consideration, we note that some of them deal with the particular ideas of the slogan “Where the Bible speaks, we speak: where the Bible is silent, we are silent.” The first part of this slogan is covered in proposition Three:

That in order to this (unity of the churches), nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith; nor required of them as terms of communion; but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them, in the
word of God. Nor ought any things 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 expressed terms, or by approved precedent. (Declaration and Address, p. 16)

Proposition Four calls attention to the vital truth that the New Testament has sole authority in this age. Then, Campbell offers Propositions Five and Thirteen to explain his view as to the treatment of the “silence” of the Scripture. In Proposition Five, he says:

That with respect to the commands and ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, where the scriptures are silent, 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; nor can anything more be required of Christians in such cases, but only that they so observe these commands and ordinances, as will evidently answer the declared and obvious end of the institution. Much less has any human authority power to impose new commands or ordinances upon the church, which our Lord Jesus Christ has not enjoined. Nothing ought to be received in the faith or worship of the church; or made a term of communion amongst Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament. (Declaration and Address, pp. 16-17)

Here, again, is a distinct reference to the field of worship. The author of the Declaration and Address feels that this principle applies to a broader spectrum of religious practice than just the terms of redemption. He denies the right of any ecclesiastical power to supply a law or ordinance to impose the practice of anything that God seems to have left unsaid. On the other hand, he says that Christians ought not to “receive” anything in the “faith or worship of the church” that cannot be demonstrated to be “as old as the
New Testament.” Certainly, the human traditional “rubbish of the ages, which as been thrown upon” the church in the centuries since the Apostles would all be swept away by this awesome stroke of cleansing. The New Testament, itself, would be the only historical document we could trust to supply the pattern of any practice, because most of the items of “rubbish” which now appear in the churches cannot be traced for origin back further than the second or third centuries of this age!

We call attention, also, to the statement that nothing could be required of Christian practices in the realm of the “silence” of the Scripture, other than that which “will evidently answer the declared and obvious end” of the commands whose “time and manner of performance” is lacking. We cannot, for instance, supply things that alter the intent of the command, or that replace the practice commanded. Jesus objected strongly, when men “made void the word of God by tradition” (Mark 7:1-13).

Campbell strengthens the force of this principle by dealing with it another way in Proposition Thirteen;

That if any circumstantial (thing) indispensably necessary to the observance of divine ordinance be not found upon the page of express revelation, such, and such only, as are absolutely necessary for this purpose, should be adopted, under the title of human expedients, without any pretense to a more sacred origin - so that any subsequent alteration or difference in the observance of these things might produce no contention nor division in the church. (Declaration and Address, p. 18)

Now, the things which are “absolutely necessary” to the “observance of the divine ordinance,” Campbell asserts, are the only things that can be adopted as expedients which run no risk of causing “contention nor division in the church.” As an application of this rule, we recognize that no information exists in the New Testament supporting expressly the erection of a church building. Nevertheless, the New Testament commands that Christians assemble, both by precept and by approved example (He-
brews 10:25, Acts 20:7). How, then, do we ascertain that it is lawful to build a church building? We do this by observing that it is “absolutely necessary” to an assembly that it have a place to assemble, and that there must be a rightful acquisition of this place. Therefore, if one church acquires a rented hall, while another builds a structure on its own property, there can be no division, because both have acted strictly within the limits of Proposition Thirteen. Here are “human expedients” which do not surpass or supplant the command to assemble. The expedients we choose in religion, in order to prevent schism and dissension, must have the recognized quality of being “absolutely necessary” to the command to which they are attached. There can be no hope of reasonable uniformity, until there is agreement even on this rule.

Unity Should Be Public

If unity exists at all, it must show on the surface. Campbell recognizes this in the Declaration and Address. He says, in answer to the objection that all differences of opinion could not be satisfied:

*Let such (objectors) but duly consider what properly belongs to the unity of the church, and we are persuaded, this objection will vanish. Does not the visible scriptural unity of the Christian church consist in the unity of her public profession and practice . . . and not in the unity of the private opinion and practice of every individual?* (Declaration and Address, p. 30)

Thus, we see that Campbell strikes at those who would visibly divide the church by the introduction of things into its public profession and practice upon which reasonable agreement cannot be reached. Only when two persons agree to be bound by the same rule of practice can the public display of that practice be consistent in every place. This “sameness” will produce uniformity, and this is the very thing called for in the Declaration and Address.
We have overtured . . . that all speak, profess, and practice, the very same things, that are exhibited upon the sacred page of the New Testament Scripture, as spoken and done by the Divine appointment and approbation; and that this can be extended to every possible instance of uniformity, without addition or diminution; without introducing any thing of private opinion, or doubtful disputation, into the public profession or practice of the church. (Declaration and Address, p. 50)

No reader of this statement could fail to see that Campbell was not opening the door to permit the public practice of things that issued from private opinion. He was, in fact, slamming the door in the face of those who would attempt to encumber the church with practices of a “public” nature based on opinion. He earnestly desired to see a day when all congregations of Christians could point to uniformity of practice as a testimony of their unity.

Latent Latitudinarianism?

Campbell was fearful of being misunderstood regarding his rejection of creeds and catechisms. Such things were designed to guarantee a uniformity of belief and practice within the sect subscribing to them. Since Campbell rejected those devices which were intended to produce uniformity, he was afraid of being charged with “latitudinarianism.” Webster defines a “latitudinarian” as “a churchman who favors freedom and difference of opinion respecting government, worship, and doctrine, within the church.” He therefore states that those who would charge him with this fault misrepresent him:

`... let none impeach us with the latitudinarian expedient of substituting a vague indefinite approbation of the Holy Scriptures, as an alternative for the present practice of making the approbation of human standards a term of communion; as it is undeniably evident that nothing can be farther from our intention. Were we to judge of what we humbly pro-

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pose and urge as indispensably necessary for the reformation and unity of
the church, we should rather apprehend, that there was reason to fear a
charge of a very different nature; namely, that we aimed at too much
strictness, both as to the description of character which we say ought
only be admitted, and also as to the use and application of the rule. (Dec-
laration and Address, p. 51)

Thus, Campbell denies the existence of a reason for the charge of “latitudi-
narianism,” but says he himself might judge that there was reason to fear a charge of
“too much strictness.” Judging of his own motives, he expects to be accused of narrow-
ness rather than permissiveness.

True “latitudinarianism,” Campbell asserts, is found in the existence of a wide
variety of practices which served to distinguish the sects, and which were imposed by
the authority of creeds and disciplines peculiar to those sects:

Thus have we briefly endeavored to show our brethren, what evidently
appears to us to be the heinous nature and dreadful consequences of that
truly latitudinarian principle and practice, which is the bitter root of al-
most all our divisions, namely, the imposing of our private opinions upon
each other, as articles of faith or duty; introducing them into the public
profession and practice of the church, and acting upon them, as if they
were the express law of Christ, by judging and rejecting our brethren that
differ with us in those things; or at least, by so retaining them in our pub-
ic profession and practice, that our brethren cannot join with us, or we
with them, without becoming actually partakers of those things, which
they, or we, cannot, in conscience approve; and which the word of God no
where expressly enjoins upon us. (Declaration and Address, p. 35)

In the very next sentences after this statement, Campbell makes it very
clear to the reader that he includes things dealing with the “worship, discipline and
government” of the church. Even though the later introduction of musical instruments and other human innovations was not done by creed, or canon, their imposition on the local church level had the same divisive effect. Even if those who introduced them denied that they were trying to make them a test of fellowship, they “so retained them,” so that their brethren who could not “in conscience approve,” could not “join” or “partake” of them. They were forced, by the circumstances, to disassociate themselves from the practice, and the only way to do this was to withdraw from the local congregation. In 1881, years after the Instrument of Music had done its divisive work, one the most tolerant of men, J.W. McGarvey, confirmed the contention of Campbell, when he said:

It is universally admitted by those competent to judge that there is not the slightest indication in the New Testament of divine authority for the use of the instrumental music in Christian worship. . . . As to the introduction of an unscriptural test of fellowship, it is enough to say that we do not refuse fellowship with those who use the organ; we only refuse to partake with them in that practice and choose to worship when we can where it is not in our way. To deny us this privilege would be an attempt to force us into fellowship with a practice confessedly unauthorized in the Scriptures, than which there could be nothing more unscriptural or more intolerant. (J. W. McGarvey, “What Shall We Do About the Organ,” pp. 4, 10)

The churches of the Restoration Movement were thus divided in a manner typical of all former religious divisions. Campbell’s rule was designed to prevent such a sad and repetitious tragedy, but it was ignored. He further defined the cause of the division in this way:

Should it still be urged, that this (rule) would open a wide door to latitudinarianism, seeing all that profess Christianity (also) profess to receive the holy scriptures; and yet differ so widely in their religious sentiments. We say, let them profess what they will, their difference in religious pro-
fession and practice originates in their departure from what is expressly revealed and enjoined; and not in their strict and faithful conformity to it . . . (Declaration and Address, p. 36)

Later, Alexander Campbell echoed this sentiment in a statement to support his contention that only the immersed can be received for membership in the church. He said:

_He makes no schism who does no more than the Lord commands, and all know that Christian immersion is a divine institution. It is he who makes a new institution, such as the sprinkling of an infant, and contends for it, that makes the schism. It was not he that obeyed the first commandment, but he that made the golden calf, who made confusion in Israel._ (Christian Baptist, Vol. 6, p. 528)

CHAPTER THREE

A Limit to Toleration

Some of the “interpreters” of Thomas Campbell’s document have professed to see in it the broadest sort of base for toleration of innovations. On this basis, they often rebuke those who oppose them. However, the language of the author, when properly regarded, defies such an interpretation. It is to be admitted that in the Declaration and Address Campbell displayed his own tolerant spirit by calling the clergymen of the sects “brethren,” even “dear brethren.” However, in the pursuit of an infallible and acceptable formula for uniting these warring “brethren,” he reveals the limit of toleration that is reasonable.

When Campbell says in Proposition Five that “nothing ought to be received in the faith or worship of the church . . . that is not as old as the New Testament,” one of his mistaken interpreters insists;
This section is somewhat awkwardly constructed and may seem, at first sight, to be an attempt to limit the power of the Holy Spirit in the interest of narrow legalism. The purpose of the author, however, is not one of constraint but of freedom. He is trying to emphasize the fact that where there is no express word of authority in the New Testament for church forms or ordinances, the individual Christian is left free to observe them as he may deem proper. (Kershner, Frederick D., Christian Union Overture, 1923, p. 86)

This misapprehension of Campbell’s true design seems to date from the years immediately following the Civil War, when defense of the American Christian Missionary Society became a must, in order to prevent its complete collapse. W.K. Pendleton and Isaac Errett adopted the view of the “permissiveness of silence” to save the Society, and kindred undertakings.

The slogan, supported by the Declaration and Address, did not open up the way to the observance of human “church forms.” Rather, it resisted the proclivity of men to adopt such. When opinion became law or compelling tradition, the situation called for the application of the rule. Campbell says:

But according to the principle adopted, we can neither take offence at our brother for his private opinions, if he be content to hold them as such; nor yet offend him with ours, if he do not usurp the place of a lawgiver; and even suppose he should, in this case we judge him, not for his opinions, but for his presumption. (Declaration and Address, p. 27)

Here we see that private opinion has no power to be divisive, so long as the holder thereof is “content” to keep it private. When he becomes, in his own eyes, capable of being a lawgiver, an imposes his private judgment on another person in the form of a public practice, then he should be “judged” for his “presumption” in usurping such a power. Later, in the same context, Campbell says:
... that nothing be inculcated . . . without, at the same time, interfering
directly or indirectly, with the private judgment of any individual, which
does not expressly contradict the express letter of the law, or add to the
number of its institutions. (Declaration and Address, pp. 27-28)

We presume that we are reading this statement correctly, when we say that we
understand Campbell to be saying that each man can feel free from “interference” with
his private judgment, so long as that judgment, when expressed, does not contradict the
“letter of the law,” or “add” a practice to the explicit “number of its institutions.” If we
take Campbell to mean what he says, we conclude that he believes that if any man’s
private judgment which becomes public, and serves to introduce or promote a practice
not revealed in scripture, he deserves the censure of all. This, certainly, is not “freedom”
to practice, but a restraint against allowing a practice that is not revealed in Scripture to
invade the church, causing division.

Those who have insisted that the broadest possible fellowship should be prac-
ticed by the present factions of the Restoration Movement, and have argued for an inter-
pretation of the Declaration and Address which supports this view, have violated the
principles found in it. Campbell shows that there is a limit to toleration, and this occurs,
in reference to time, at the introduction of any practice which cannot be supported by a
“thus saith the Lord.” He says, “ . . . we are told, ‘the commandment is exceeding
broad:’ and we intend to go just as far as it will suffer us, but not one hair's breadth far-
ther . . .” (Declaration and Address, p. 31)

“... as good as dead”

If the church is protected from such invasions of its public practice, Campbell
sees the time when the desire to impose them may vanish also. The church would obvi-
ously be so benefited by its rejection of innovations, it would laud its own decision to
banish them.
We declare ourselves ready to relinquish, whatever we have hitherto received as a matter of faith or practice, not expressly taught and enjoined in the word of God; so that we, and our brethren, might, by this mutual condescension, return together to the original constitutional unity of the Christian church; and dwell together in peace and charity. By this proposed relinquishment, we are to be understood, in the first instance, of our manner of holding those things, and not simply of the things themselves: for no man can relinquish his opinions or practices, till once convinced that they are wrong; and this he may not immediately, even supposing they were so. One thing however, he may do, when not bound by an express command, he need not impose them upon others, by any wise requiring their approbation; and when this is done, the things, to them, are as good as dead; yea, as good as buried too; being thus removed out of the way. (Declaration and Address, p. 28)

Thus, any practice “relinquished” because it is not supported by explicit authority eventually becomes a “dead” issue. It is only the innovation that is retained and “inculcated” (a favorite term of Campbell’s that means to be “taught and impressed by frequent repetitions or admonitions”), which results in contention and division.

Campbell was perfectly aware that someone might say to him, “Physician, heal thyself!” Consequently, he was willing to show his recognition of the difficulty of the reformation, as applied to his own case:

Who then, would not be the first among us, to give up with human inventions in the worship of God; and to cease from imposing his private opinions upon his brethren; that our breaches might thus be healed? Who would not willingly conform to the original pattern laid down in the New Testament, for this happy purpose? Our dear brethren, of all denominations, will please to consider, that we have our educational prejudices
and particular customs to struggle with as they, But this we do sincerely declare, that there is nothing we have hitherto received as a matter of faith or practice, which is not expressly taught and enjoined in the word of God, either in express terms, or approved precedent, that we would not heartily relinquish, so the we might return to the original constitutional unity of the Christian church... (Declaration and Address, pp. 10-11)

Essentials versus Non–essentials

As time passed, and certain men in the Restoration movement found it unpleasant to “kick against the goads” of Campbell’s restrictions, some sought refuge in the tactic of making a distinction between things essential and non-essential, or things important and things indifferent. They all agreed that the scheme of redemption, as revealed in the New Testament, was one of the important items. This, along with the fundamental doctrines of the Godhead, of inspiration, and of supernaturalism were deemed “essential.” They began, however, to speak of “drawing the line” to exclude practices of worship, and methods of doing church work from the application of Campbell’s rule. After the division over the introduction of instruments of music in the worship, and congregational support of missionary societies was virtually complete, J.H. Garrison looked back over the years, and said:

We all know of the sharp and often bitter controversy that raged among us for a quarter of a century on the right of the churches to use instrumental music in the worship, or to co-operate, through missionary societies, in the work of evangelizing the world. The echo of this controversy, specially as it relates to mission work, has scarcely died away yet. There are still among us many as true and tried brethren as ever enlisted in any cause, who by the false application of a right principle, are kept aloof from all our organized efforts to carry out Christ’s commission.
“We have no account in the Scriptures,” say they, “of any missionary society, with its President, Secretary, and Board, and therefore they are unnecessary and unauthorized innovations, being in violation of the motto of Thomas Campbell, ‘Where the Scriptures speak, we speak, and where the Scriptures are silent we are silent.’ In vain has it been urged upon them that the duty of preaching the gospel to “all nations” . . . is clearly taught, and that since there are many methods of doing this work we are at liberty to choose any one which experience has taught to be most successful, provided it violates no principle of the gospel. The “silence” of the Scriptures about these societies is sufficient reason for their standing aloof from their brethren in the great co-operative evangelistic movements of the age -- the chief glory of the modern church! . . .

. . . Instead of drawing the line, clear and sharp, between the things essential and the things indifferent, between matters of faith and matters of opinion and method, as did the original leaders, for the most part, in this movement, and as do our real leaders today, the victims of a perverted motto fail to make any such distinction and apply to the methods of church work and worship, a principle applicable only in the realm of faith, of fundamental truth and organic law. (J. H. Garrison, The Old Faith Restated, Christian Publishing Co., St. Louis, 1891. pp. 436-437.)

Accept my apologies for such a lengthy quotation, but please note some things Mr. Garrison says. He calls those who hold themselves aloof from cooperation in the missionary societies, and who refuse to use instruments of music in the worship, “victims of a perverted motto.” However the shoe fits better on the other foot. We believe that his statement shows that he has perverted the meaning of the motto, and that his sort of perversion is responsible for dividing the church over these things. In the first paragraph of the quotation, he talks about the “right” of churches to use instruments of
music and cooperae though missionary societies. We have shown from Campbell’s Declaration and Address that the premise of the motto is the prevention of anyone from claiming the “right” to practice things for which there is no scriptural precedent, even in the field of worship and that of government. In order for instruments of music and missionary societies to be introduced into the practice of the church, men professed to see a difference between things essential and non-essential. Methods of cooperation, and kinds of music were then arbitrarily classified in the area of things that were unimportant. Campbell anticipates such as argument in the Declaration and Address, however, and shows his own attitude toward it!

With you all we desire to unite in the bonds of an entire Christian unity – Christ alone being the head, the centre, his word the rule – an explicit belief of, and manifest conformity to it, in all things – the terms. More than this, you will not require of us; and less we cannot require of you; nor, indeed, can we reasonably suppose, any would desire it; for what good purpose would it serve? We dare neither assume, nor purpose, the trite indefinite distinction between essentials, and non-essentials, in matter of revealed truth and duty; firmly persuaded, that, whatever may be their comparative importance, simply considered, the high obligation of the Divine Authority revealing, or enjoining them, renders the belief, or performance of them, absolutely essential to us, in so far as we know them. (Declaration and Address, p. 11)

To Campbell, then, “the terms” of Christian unity had to be based on “explicit belief of” and “manifest (or, obvious) conformity” to Christ’s word. He would not even “dare” to make a “distinction” between things as to their importance or essentiality, accepting the fact of their revelation by God as the obvious evidence of being “absolutely essential.” This is an attitude that should be held by all who see the potential dissension that could be caused by a system that permits the introduction of innovations, instead
of preventing them. “Simply considered,” as Campbell did, the Christian does not make a real distinction between sins, thereby counting lying to be as consequential as murder. In fact, they are classed together, in scripture, as sins that condemn the soul to hell! At the same time, the Christian should respect the things revealed or enjoined by God as acceptable practices, accounting them to be of importance purely because of their authorship by God! In this light, we would make no judgment as to the relative importance of the conduct of worship as compared to the terms of salvation, or other “fundamental” doctrines.

In rebuttal to this, J.H. Garrison argues that the “explicit” revelation regarding “mission work” ends with the command to preach the gospel to “all nations.” Beyond this, he says, we are free to choose from any number of options, from any source whatever, such as the “one which experience has taught to be the most successful.” His only qualification is, “provided it violates no principle of the gospel.” However, the fact is that the New Testament (which we assume is comprehended in Garrison’s term “gospel”) further reveals, in command and example, the institution God designed for implementing His commission, the local church. The direct support of evangelists by local churches is noted in 2 Corinthians 11:8, and in Philippians 4:15-17. Direct work by a local congregation is noted in the example of 1 Thessalonians 1:8. The only alternative source from which such work is done is shown to be the individual Christian, as in 3 John 1, 5-8 and Philippians 2:12-16. The limit of revelation about this matter, then, is not just the Great Commission of Christ, but is found also in explicit teaching concerning the organization responsible for implementing it!

Besides this, there is reason to doubt that the controversial Missionary Society was the most successful method, in view of the evident failure of the Society to accomplish its avowed purpose. Within the ranks of those who tacitly support it, there is a growing disillusionment with the Society. R.M. Bell, former President of Johnson Bible College, of Knoxville, Tennessee (a college supported by “independent” Christian Churches
that use instruments of music in worship), expressed strong opposition to the practicality of the Society to promote “missions.” While commenting on the knowledge that the Disciples of Christ reported a 100 million dollar income in one year while gaining practically nothing in total membership, Mr. Bell asks:

What has happened? What vile hand has put on the brakes and slowed the growth of the church to the point where the Disciples of Christ are not even evangelizing their own children. . ?

. . . The first cause was a movement to increase the efficiency of the church. Near the middle of the last century, some very honest brethren got the idea that the church needed some kind of agency to do its missionary work. To facilitate evangelism they organized a missionary society. This society did not accomplish all that was hoped for, so they organized another and another.

This was the first restructuring operation that was performed upon the Restoration Movement. It was called “progress” and its advocates were called “progressives.” The brethren that opposed this type of restructure were called “Antis,” and were said to be anti-missionary, because they objected to turning the missionary program of the church over to an outside organization. They contended that the church, set up by the apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was God’s missionary society and that none other was needed.

The time came when the supporters of the societies (I was one of them) – were forced to admit that we were not getting the job done. The “anti” missionary group, which refused to be restructured, was running circles around us. . . (From the periodical, Blue and White, published by Johnson Bible College.)
In the next paragraphs, Bell describes the founding of the United Christian Missionary Society, with its stated purpose “that the world may the more fully come to know Christ, the Son of God.” Though commending the high motives of the UCMS, he says, further...

The performance, however, has fallen short of the promise. The UCMS has failed so completely to live up to its billing in everything but raising money, that another big dose of restructure is called for.

It seems to me that this would be a good time to admit our mistakes, confess our sins, and go back to the Christian’s guide book – the New Testament – for instruction. But this would be to admit that the Carpenter from Galilee, his fishermen apostles, and the Holy Spirit knew more about the proper organization of the church than we know... (Ibid.)

Here are the words of a man who, at one time, probably swallowed the “line,” and was “hooked” on the contention that the field of church organization was to be classified as an indifferent or unimportant matter. But, having tried the human method, which had divided the brotherhood, he realized that the human invention cannot outperform the revealed institution. He called for an abandonment of the “human” for the “scriptural,” and so did Campbell. We hope that others of Mr. Bell’s persuasion may some day see this point in reference to the field of worship, and seek to restore the authority of the New Testament in this field, also.

Nadab and Abihu on Essentials

In the early verses of the tenth chapter of Leviticus there is an important narrative. When Nadab and Abihu, the priestly sons of Aaron, began to carry out the functions of the their priesthood, the scripture says they “took each of them his censer, and put fire thereon, and offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them.” Incense and its uses had been authorized in the worship connected with the tabernacle, but, obviously, Nadab and Abihu had introduced a practice which had not been
authorized. They were “speaking” where the scripture was “silent.” The punishment of a just God fits the crime, and they were “devoured” by “fire from before Jehovah.”

If there had been present on that occasion some men who divide the word of that same God into categories of “essential” and “non-essential,” they would certainly have complained of the injustice of God. They could not have imagined that God would have pronounced such a heavy sentence upon such a light offense.

The punishment, however, made its impression upon Aaron, his remaining sons, and Moses. Moses says, “This is it that Jehovah spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh to me, and before all the people I will be glorified.” It would certainly have been natural for Aaron to have been thoroughly dismayed by the loss of his sons, but Moses warned him, “let not the hair of your heads go loose, neither rend your clothes; that ye die not, and that He be not wroth with all the congregation: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which Jehovah hath kindled.” Aaron and his other sons did not leave the service of the Tabernacle, but continued with the rituals of that day, faltering only once. Were these men coldly indifferent to the loss they sustained in the death of sons, brothers, and nephews? They might be accused of such by moderns who play loose with the will of God, but the significance of this event is that men cannot afford to be judges of the relative importance of any of God’s commands.

One of the troublesome problems of the 16th Century Reformation in Germany and Switzerland was over this matter of distinguishing between essentials and non-essentials. The Swiss Reformation was very iconoclastic, and Ulrich Zwingli often led the way. Martin Luther’s monastic heritage influenced him to continue many practices of the Roman Church. When these two concepts clashed, it was natural that these principle reformers should debate the importance of the things on which they differed. Luther looked at the difference between himself and Zwingli, and judged them to be “indif-ferent matters. . . The ancient ritual, the mysterious darkness of the cathedral, the
flicker of the altar lights, were closely bound up with the faith of the German reformer. Zwingli wished his own faith to be naked, divested of all the ornaments of the past. This is the eternal quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns transposed onto a religious plane.” (Rilliet, Jean, *Zwingli, Third Man of the Reformation*, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1959)

Thomas Campbell concluded that Luther’s was the very attitude which had introduced the innovations that divided Christendom. He would have no part of it, and was willing to face the consequences of his own conclusions about the matter. To imitate the attitude of Campbell would be comparable to the imitation of Moses, or Zwingli. Moses realized, after the destruction of Nadab and Abihu, why God demanded sanctification in those who approached his service. We are reminded, again, that Christ prayed for His disciples, saying, “Sanctify them in the truth, thy word is truth” (John 17:17). The Psalmist says, “Jehovah reigneth: let the peoples tremble . . .” (Psalm 99:1). Is it too much, then, for God to expect sanctification, and an attitude of humble obedience to his every command, today?

It is interesting to note that those who insist on binding rules in the realm of God’s silence react defensively, when faced with the obvious lesson of Nadab and Abihu. One homiletical commentator on this passage says;

*Human authority (is) to be obeyed where God has not spoken. There must be regulations of some kind of Divine worship, and these it is the office of the Church to supply, ordaining, abolishing, and changing, as it seems good from time to time. “Every particular or national church hath authority to ordain . . ceremonies or rites of the church;” and also “to change and abolish” them when “ordained by man’s authority, so that all things be done to edifying” (Art. XXXIV.). When once ordained, they have binding force over the conscience until abolished by the same authority.* (Meyrick, F., *Pulpit Commentary*, Erdmans, Vol 2, p. 151.)
The sentiments of this quotation are the very ones against which Thomas Campbell struggled. And, it made no difference to him if the practices were bound by ecclesiastical authority, or by individual “inculcation.” All such practices had the inevitable trait of causing division by their very existence. Unity, therefore, could not be attained until the circumstances which had permitted divisive innovations to be introduced were corrected, as well as removing the practice of the innovations.
CHAPTER FOUR

Delusion or Dishonesty?

In previous chapters, we have shown how the slogan of Campbell has been robbed of its influence though the various opinions that have been expressed. It has been treated as a purely human idea, and discounted as divisive. It has been misconstrued as to its intent, and thus interpreted to mean just the opposite of what Campbell intended, with the opposite result, also. (Isaac Errett, famous publisher of the Christian Standard, is reported to have contended that the “slogan” should read, “Where the Bible speaks, we must be silent, and where the Bible is silent, we may speak”.) And, lastly, at the close of Chapter Three, we noted how some have attempted to circumvent the force of the slogan by drawing distinctions between “essentials and non-essentials.”

We have not considered, however, what is most probably the most elusive temporization of all. This is the attitude which reveals that the interpreter of the rule is embracing a double standard by applying the rule inconsistently. In respect to the Restoration slogan, such an attitude is sometimes the offspring of the attitude which professes to see a distinction between non-essentials and essentials. However, this is not always the case. Sometimes, it is a simple case of self-delusion. We are tempted, when we see someone holding to a double standard, to say that he is dishonest, but it is thought to be more charitable to say he is deluded.

Whether deluded, or dishonest, it is most difficult to persuade a man who holds a double standard to confess his inconsistency.

It is a source of genuine amazement, for some, to behold the practitioner of the double standard. Roy Cogdill, the prominent evangelist and debater, has written:
More than a hundred years ago all through this land there was the disposition to cling to the “old paths” in theory but not in practice. Brethren became dissatisfied with divine arrangement yet professed to be believers in divine truth. They preached then, “We will speak where the Bible speaks and we will be silent where the Bible is silent.” This was more than a slogan, it is a Bible principle. “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.” (1 Peter 4:11) These brethren then professed to continue to “speak as the Oracles of God,” indeed they still do make that profession, but they were not willing to “minister (serve) as of the strength which God supplieth.” They demonstrated that to “speak where the Bible speaks and being silent where the Bible is silent” was to them just a slogan and not a divine principle at all. They went about organizing whatever they wished in the way of human institutions and societies to accomplish the work that God had designated as the work of the church. . .It is amazing to hear these brethren who “went out from us because they were not of us”. . .still talking about “speaking where the Bible speaks and being silent where the Bible is silent.” (Cogdill, Roy E., article entitled “Do we believe in one body?”, printed in the bulletin of the Spring and Delta church of Christ, Long Beach, Calif., October 22, 1967.)

Others share the amazement of this writer at the mental gymnastics that are characteristic of the “double standard” men. And there are some who practice these inconsistencies in all segments of the Restoration Movement. Moses E. Lard is an example of inconsistent reasoning on the subject of the silence of the scripture. On the issue of using
musical instruments in the worship, he took a strong stand in opposition. Commending an article by Dr. H. Christopher in his Quarterly, Lard said:

The question of instrumental music in the churches of Christ involves a great and sacred principle. But for this the subject is not worthy of one thought at the hands of the child of God. That principle is the right of men to introduce innovations into the prescribed worship of God. This right we utterly deny. The advocates of instrumental music affirm it. This makes the issue. As sure as the Bible is a divine book, we are right and they are wrong. (Lard’s Quarterly, Vol. 4, October, 1867, p. 368)

However, in the same volume of the Quarterly, Lard contended for the right of brethren to use Missionary Societies:

I am no great advocate for missionary societies; especially I am neither the advocate nor the apologist for any particular one. But what I do advocate and maintain, with strong, healthy will, is the right of the brethren to have and use these societies if they see fit. This extent unconditionally hath my advocacy, no more. If societies are efficient and do right, I am their friend; If not, my wish is their end. Not only do I maintain the right of the brethren to use these societies, if they choose, but I am willing and anxious to see them exercise this right till a full test has been made of missionary societies. This done, if from any cause it should be become apparent that the societies should be brought to an end, then will I be ready for the work. As these societies are not enjoined in the New Testament, no one will seek to force them on the brotherhood. I, at least, will not. (Lard’s Quarterly, Vol. 4, April, 1867, p. 152)

One is led to wonder why Lard made a distinction between the “right” of brethren to have one practice, while denying that right in another instance. Was there some inscrutable mental block in the highly reputed brain of this famous editor and preacher? It
is very difficult to ascertain the answer to this question. A clue is found in a reference
dating just one year later. Lard was answering an article in the Quarterly which opposed
Missionary Societies in this way:

*This is our rule. The command to do a thing includes everything neces-
sary to the doing. Sometimes one way may be necessary, sometimes an-
other; but always the way that is necessary to the doing, and to do the
very best that can be done, is enjoined, and a “Thus saith the Lord” en-
joins it. If then, a Missionary Society is necessary to the most effective
support of preachers in destitute places, it is commanded in the command
to support such preachers.... All the machinery, then, that shall be found
necessary in order that churches may work together in sending the gospel
through the whole world, is authorized by the simple rule which was the
boast and strength of the Reformation in its early days. But not one single
device, or law, or office, which effective work does not require, will it al-
low us to employ. The work before us, therefore, is to simplify, and read-
just our machinery, till not one superfluous or unnecessary part shall re-
main, and until even the name by which we call it shall be the simplest
and most exact which the nature of the case will admit. This will satisfy
every right-thinking man, and will give strength irresistible to the plea for
cooporative effort.* *(Lard’s Quarterly, Vol. 5, April, 1868, pp. 199-200)*

In this statement, Lard has added a new condition to the original principles of the
slogan of Thomas Campbell. That new element is an appeal to count a thing necessary,
if it is judged (by whom, he does not suggest) to be the “very best” or “most effective”
machinery for the action proposed. We have already discussed the relative efficiency of
the Missionary Society in the words of its modern opponents. What we should notice
here is that the opposition to Missionary Societies, in the time of Moses E. Lard’s com-
ments, was not prompted by the question of their efficiency. They had not been given
ample time to prove their efficiency. To the contrary, they were being opposed on the basis of their right to exist at all within the framework of scriptural authority. In fact, the article that Lard was answering in his statement above has this point:

*Nearly all of those who have written in defense of Missionary Societies have admitted, nay, declared, that they are “human expedients,” claiming for them neither precept nor precedent from the Holy Scriptures. Those in the negative hold, with the affirmants, that the Scriptures do not authorize in any way the Societies, and for this reason oppose them.* (Article signed “W”, *Lard’s Quarterly*, Vol. 5, January, 1868, p. 33)

Thus, the opponents did not consider the matter in the light that Lard did. It is strange that Lard, McGarvey (his co-editor on the *Apostolic Times*), and others who shared their antithetical view did not realize their inconsistencies. If they defended the Society as the “most effective” means of doing “mission work,” there were many others who defended the “organ” as the very best type of music to be employed in congregational worship! (West, Earl I., *Search for the Ancient Order*, Vol. 1, p. 309.) At the same time, the opponents of the organ and the missionary society were making a parallel of these questions with the classic example of “infant baptism.” Jacob Creath was writing like this:

*We must speak where the Bible speaks, and we must respect the silence of the Bible, as well as what it says, says Thomas Campbell. You have only to do this one thing, and this war of words closes forever on my part. Here I rest the controversy until you produce the apostolic example or precept for your conventions. Your conventions stand upon precisely the same footing that the one now in session in Rome does – that sects, creeds, infant-sprinkling, organ-grinding in churches. . .stand upon. . .as another advocate for all these innovations says, “They are not expressly forbidden*
nor commanded.” Neither is Romanism nor Mohammedanism. (Gospel Advocate, 1870, p 566.)

Thus, the opponents put all the innovations into the same “basket,” and would not be turned aside by discussions of efficiency, or other side issues. In time, the inconsistencies of men like Lard, and J.W. McGarvey, became apparent to both sides on these issues and the “middle-of-the-road” position gradually lost its favor. West has this to say:

To oppose instrumental music as being a human addition to a divine worship was the same in principle as opposing the missionary society as a human addition to a divine work. Moses E. Lard and J.W. McGarvey could never see it this way. The Christian Standard saw the position, and on the same ground that it accepted the society it was led to accept the instrument. The American Christian Review and the Gospel Advocate saw it this way, and on the same ground they were led not to accept the society, (and) also rejected the instrument. (West, Earl I., Search for the Ancient Order, Vol. 2., p. 80)

Alexander Campbell and Societies

Alexander Campbell serves as an example of the “double standard” attitude, if we take him at his word. In speaking of the character of the apostolic church in the Christian Baptist (published between 1823 and 1830), Campbell said:

. . Their churches were not fractured into missionary societies, Bible societies, education societies; nor did they dream of organizing such in the world. . .In their church capacity alone they moved. They neither transformed themselves into any other kind of association, nor did they fracture and sever themselves into divers societies. . . (Christian Baptist, Vol. 1, No. 1, August 3, 1823, p. 6)
Yet, in later years, he advocated the establishment and encouraged the efforts of missionary, Bible, and education societies. He expressed a dissatisfaction with “missionary” efforts promoted and supported purely under the auspices of local congregations. The solution, he thought, was to be found in “cooperation” and “organization.” In pleading this cause, he wrote:

*We can do comparatively nothing in distributing the Bible abroad without cooperation. . .We can do comparatively but little in the great missionary field of the world either at home or abroad without cooperation. . .We can have no thorough cooperation without a more ample, extensive, and thorough church organization.* (Millennial Harbinger, Vol. VI, No. 11, November, 1842, p.523)

From this time up until the formation of the American Christian Missionary Society in 1849, Campbell worked hard for a consensus of the brethren to his views. The opponents of the Society saw its formation as a repudiation of the principles of the Restoration Movement. Jacob Creath wrote to Campbell, using this argument.

*Because God our Father divinely commissioned his Son to our world, and His Son sent the apostles as missionaries to the world, and they divinely organized individual congregations all over the Roman empire, in the first century, does it, therefore, follow, that we in the nineteenth century, without any divine warrant and contrary to our own rule of faith, have the right to call conventions, form Bible, missionary, and tract societies, elect popes, and do all other things we wish? My logic does not run this way. They had divine credentials for what they did. We have none for what we are doing. What is the difference between them and us?* (Millennial Harbinger, 1850, pp. 615-616)

Alexander Campbell did his best to draw a distinction between the societies that were organized by the “brethren,” and those that had denominational origins. He was
driven to the tactic before the onslaught of opposition. He professed that he held the same views he had always held about such organizations. In regard to the Society, he said:

_I now regard it as I then regarded it, as the church of any given district, in council assembled by her messengers, to devise ways and means for accomplishing this object with more concentrated power and efficiency._

_(Millennial Harbinger, 1850, pp. 207-208)_

A clue to the obvious change on the part of Campbell over the years is seen by comparing this quotation with one previously noted. In the earlier paragraph (appearing in the Christian Baptist in 1823), he refers to the “churches,” but in the later one (Millennial Harbinger, 1850), he merely refers to the “church.” An apparent swing from the consideration of local churches as the representation of the organizational presence of early Christianity, to a consideration of organized district churches comprised of a federation of local churches, is observed in these terms. These are but a prelude to the acceptance of an organized universal church, such as has been promoted in the “restructure” plans of the modern Disciples of Christ.

Later interpreters of Campbell’s “change” could only view with great depression the havoc that had been wrought by the formation of the Society and her sisters, and comment:

_We might greatly multiply quotations showing his conviction of the unlawfulness of all associations or conventions or representative connections of the church, that they, inimical to the pure character and destruction of the work of the churches, were robbery of both God and the church of God. This reaches over seventy years of his most effective advocacy of the supreme authority and supremacy of the word of God for all religious ends. That he afterward worked in Societies we have no disposition to conceal, that in doing it, he violated his own principles. . . is beyond_
doubt, true. It represents another case, so pregnant in the history of the church, opposing others, substituting the appointments of the institution of God, yet doing them himself. (David Lipscomb, Gospel Advocate, Vol. 26, No. 17, April 23, 1884, p. 262)

The pages of this book could be filled with multiplied instances of the inconsistent applications of the Restoration slogan. However, it will suffice to say that men are subject to both self-delusion and dishonesty. These maladies infect men in high places and low. It is most destructive of unity when a Moses Lard or an Alexander Campbell falls under its influence, but all who take such actions contribute something to division. Those who are infected with these spiritual diseases must bear the consequences connected with them, and those who are led by such diseased men need to heed the Holy Spirit, who has caused to be said, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” (Galatians 6:7).

CHAPTER FIVE

“From Heaven or From Men?”

By examining the language of the Declaration and Address closely, and seeking to find only what was in Thomas Campbell’s mind, we have discovered that the rules for unity he outlined were very strict. They were formed out of the agony of denominational division, and succeeded in winning the sympathetic support of thousands of souls who were weary of those divisions. Later, when innovations and human doctrines began to
invade the restored church, they were defended sometimes by the device of ignoring the unifying rule, or by liberalization of it. The premise was entertained by some that Campbell sought only temporary cleansing of the church, a “breathing spell,” until we could once again introduce practices pleasing to men, with the hope of winning unanimous approval for them.

To the contrary, he was not trying to educate men in the subject of tolerance, or simply to cool the fires of religious controversy in an atmosphere of temporary vacuum. He was offering what he considered to be the formula for permanent solution of religious division.

However, no appeal for adherence to the principles of the slogan have any persuasive force, if it is only a human formula. Those principles can only be thoroughly respected, if they agree perfectly with divine principles. When human words are recognized as a paraphrase of divine words, the human element grows in glory and power. In the slogan of Thomas Campbell, if it be divinely motivated, we should see less of Campbell than we see of God.

In the very first chapter of this book, I asserted my conviction that the principles enunciated in the slogan were scriptural and authoritative. We should now therefore, consider proof of this assertion. In doing this, we shall attempt to touch on the points covered from the Declaration and Address.

**Removing the Rubbish**

Thomas Campbell had reformation of the existing churches in mind, when he spoke of removing the “rubbish of ages.” Any reformation movement is a reclaiming process, for it seeks to return the object to be reformed to some antecedent standard. The work of Martin Luther, in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, reformed the Roman Catholic church, but the churches over which he had influence were not reformed as completely as those under the influence of his contemporary, Ulrich Zwingli. The difference in the extent of those
reformations is based on the standards to which the reformers wished to return. D'Aubigne, the great Reformation historian, records this fact:

*The German Reformer (Luther) wished to remain united to the Church of all preceding ages, and sought only to purify it from everything that was repugnant to the word of God. The Reformer of Zurich (Zwingli) passed over every intervening age till he reached the times of the apostles; and, subjecting the Church to an entire transformation, laboured to restore it to its primitive condition. Zwingli's Reformation, therefore, was the more complete.* (D'Aubigne, J. H. Merle, *History of the Great Reformation of the Sixteenth Century in Germany, Switzerland, etc.*, p. 342)

What began for Thomas Campbell as Reformation, therefore, became Restoration, because his spirit was more akin to that of Zwingli. He took the ancient order revealed in the Scripture as his model. All “rubbish” that had been heaped up, so as to obscure the model, had to be removed. This is the sort of Reformation that pleases God.

One cannot read the biblical history of the Kings of Judah without coming to the conclusion that God will bless the thorough reformer. Some of the Kings of Judah were as wicked as their counterparts in the Northern Kingdom, Israel. However, against those who were true reformers, the inspired writers registered the repeated complaint, “howbeit, the high places were not taken away” (1 Kings 22:43, 2 Kings 12:3, 14:4, 15:4, 35; 2 Chronicles 20:33). The one exception to this was Hezekiah. To other “reformer” kings, the inspired recorders give only a few verses, but much information is given about Hezekiah. The preamble to his record shows no rebuke for this most thorough reformer:

*Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah King of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Abi the daughter*
of Zechariah. And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that David his father had done. He removed the high places, and brake the pillars, and cut down the Asherah: and he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan. He trusted in Jehovah, the God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him. For he clave to Jehovah; he departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which Jehovah commanded Moses. And Jehovah was with him; whithersoever he went forth he prospered. . . (2 Kings 18:1-7a)

We note that Hezekiah’s reformation was so complete that he even destroyed the brazen serpent that Moses had made (Numbers 21:9). He did not violate the law of Moses by doing so, for the making of the brass serpent was for one special purpose. Once that purpose was fulfilled, it should have been discarded. However, it had been retained, and the children of Israel had burned incense to it in idolatrous fashion. If Luther had been Hezekiah’s place, he might have done little about this practice, especially in view of the fact that it had been designed by God. However, if Zwingli had been there, his iconoclastic spirit would have taken an action comparable to that of Hezekiah. They would have been together in sentiment, and would agree in calling it Nehushtan, “a piece of brass!”

Hezekiah’s reform became a Restoration of Israel to the standard of the Law of Moses. God was pleased, and blessed the reformer exceedingly. Could we not expect that we would receive corresponding blessings, if we were to be as thorough in our cleansing of the church from the influence of innovations?

**Uniformity**

In the *Declaration and Address*, Thomas Campbell often uses words like “uniformity” and “conformity” with reference to the practices of religion. He even dreamed of “un-
ion”, instead of mere “unity.” Defectors from the Restoration cause, however, have dis-sipated the power of the juggernaut created by the principles of the slogan. Now it is common to hear men in the Restoration Movement speaking of “diversity” as desirable, rather than “uniformity.” If Campbell insisted upon the need for uniformity, did his appeal have the support of Scripture?

The Apostle Paul became aware of some factionalism in the church at Corinth, and wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:10,

> Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Some of the Corinthians had gone so far in factionalism as to denominate themselves with the names of Paul, Cephas, Apollos and Christ. This local church had a very serious problem on its hands. What was the solution? Paul called for uniformity of speech, and for a “mending” of schisms, or the “restoring” of uniformity in both mind and judgment. (The word for “perfected” in the Greek is KATARTIZO, translated “restore” in Galatians 6:1, and is used of mending nets in Matthew 4:21, according to W. E. Vine in the *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*.) We glean from this command that Paul is not suggesting the toleration of schisms, but the correcting of them.

Carl Ketherside includes this passage for discussion in his book, *The Twisted Scriptures*. His purpose in this volume is to oppose the use made of some scriptures by some of his brethren. His general purpose is to attempt restoration of fellowship between all of the factions of the Restoration Movement. He works for it by trying to obtain tolerance of innovations. Others work for the same restoration of fellowship, but on the basis of a “uniform agreement,” as did Thomas Campbell, who further said:

> It is not the voice of the multitude, but the voice of truth, that has power with the conscience; that can produce rational conviction and ac-
ceptable obedience. . .Union in truth has been, and ever must be, the desire and prayer of all. . ."Union in Truth" is our motto. (Declaration and Address, p. 50)

Yet, when Carl Ketcherside speaks of 1 Corinthians 1:10, he says:

His (Paul’s) exhortation to speak the same thing simply meant to desist from these factional identifications. It was given to cure a condition and must be understood in the sense of its application to that condition. The statement has no reference to conformity of opinion or interpretation. One did not have to speak the same thing about eating of meats, or keeping of days, for instance. There was room for differences in such a sphere. (Ketcherside, Carl, The Twisted Scriptures, 1965, pp. 101-102)

Brother Ketcherside seems to think that the only problem here was the identification “tag.” Surely, there had been some reason, either real, or supposed, that had led the Corinthians to fracture their unity. Did Paul think that the unity could be restored without correcting the reasons for schism? We cannot be “perfected” together, just by dropping our identification tags. There must be some effort to come to agreement, as to the reasons for taking up the tags in the first place. In recent years, a great division has taken place in the churches of Christ over the subsidization of human institutions from the church treasury. This division had its causes, but has not yet been identified by distinctive names in the pattern of the former division over the instrument of music in worship. We cannot correct such a division by simply dropping distinctive names, for we have not progressed in the division to that point as yet. The causes of the division must be attacked first, not just the denomination of that division.

Brother Ketcherside would have us think that we have cured the division, when we cease to claim distinctive names, even though we have no agreement on issues. He mentions that it was not required in the early church to “speak the same thing about eating of meats, or keeping of days. . .” To the contrary, the Bible teaches that compunctions
about eating meats and the observing of days were signs of spiritual weakness (1 Corinthians 8:6-9, Galatians 4:10-11). This weakness is based on a lack of knowledge. Proper convictions about such things, Paul says, come under the umbrella of knowledge. Thus, toleration of such weak opinions is only temporary, until proper knowledge begins to regulate and restrict opinion. It is possible to have a relative agreement on the basis of more complete knowledge. The Word of God must guide us to that happy state of similarity in “mind” and even in “judgement.” Brother Ketcherside strikes at the intolerant spirit which, we confess, is to be found in some brethren, but he has no real formula for the correction of division caused by opinion. He is satisfied to fellowship all of the diverse practices based on opinions which confront him from place to place.

Speaking All

In his slogan, Thomas Campbell said, “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak.” We have shown that the principle of this statement was expanded in the “Address” portion of the Declaration and Address in Proposition Three. In his statement of the Proposition, he uses the negative approach by saying that “nothing ought to be inculcated” or “required,” or “admitted,” but what is “expressly enjoined by the Authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles upon the New Testament church; either in expressed terms, or by approved precedent.”

Whether we approach the problem from a positive standpoint, or from the negative, the real question is, “Do the Scriptures speak the same principle?” In his final instructions to the disciples, before He ascended to His glorious position at the right hand of God, Jesus said:

All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you (Matthew 28:18-20).

This passage says that those taught to “observe all” were those who had been baptized. Therefore, there was a body of teaching to be committed to those who had already been converted. Is this body of teaching concerned with matters such as organization and worship? The Scripture answers that God gave Christ “to be head over all things to the church, which is his body. . .(Ephesians 1:22-23).” What Christ has caused to be said through the Spirit (John 16:12-15) on the subjects of worship and church government has the same weight of authority behind it as do the conditions of salvation!

Is it therefore impossible to imagine that a man may have a proper relationship with God without the willingness to apply every scripture on every subject to himself. Christ, himself, said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

**Respecting Silence**

As to action in the realm of the silence of God, Thomas Campbell considered it unthinkable to speak of anything except that which was “indispensably necessary to the observance of divine ordinance.” He called such things “human expedients,” but the Bible treats of some expedients as necessary! When the High Priest, Caiaphas, said, “It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and the whole nation perish not,” we are told that he said this by inspiration of God (John 11:49-51). The Holy Spirit was not merely saying that it would be an optional advantage for Christ to die. He obviously meant that it was necessary for Christ to die, for, otherwise, the nation could not be saved! Again, when Christ said, “It is expedient for you that I go away,” he assigned a reason that proved to be a necessity, “For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you” (John 16:7). Now, Christ did not mean it would be merely convenient and profitable for Him to go away, it was obviously necessary!

It is only this sort of expediency that holds any promise of not disturbing the peace of the church. Expedients that are unnecessary must always be the source of quarrels,
for they have nothing to commend them to the minds of all men. Necessary expedients commend themselves readily to logical minds.

When something is left unsaid, in the Scripture, it is possible to determine if there are any necessary conclusions that need to be supplied. As an example, consider the conclusion reached by the writer of Hebrews while considering some prophecies from the Old Testament. He reminds his readers of the fact that a prophet of the Old Testament announced that the Christ would be “a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrew 5:6, from Psalm 110:4). He develops interest in this doctrine over the next two chapters, and shows his conclusion about his prediction, that this priesthood could not be assumed without some necessary conditions. Several factors had to be taken into account, as we see, when we read:

*Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the Law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are said belongeth to another tribe, from which no man hath given attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests. (Hebrews 7:11-14)*

Without damaging the main application of this passage at all, we can learn a very important side lesson from it, a principle dealing with respect for the Law of God. It shows that divine law must stand, undefiled by perversion. The Law of Moses provided information about the qualifications of the priesthood. The tribe of Levi was designated as the tribe from which the priests should be chosen. The first priests were Aaron and his sons, Aaron being the High Priest. Then in the midst of the age in which the Law of Moses is in force, comes David with the prophecy that the Messiah would be a Priest
after the order of Melchizedek. Such a prediction seemed to offer great complications that would hinder fulfillment, because it was also revealed by prophecy that the Messiah would be a descendant of Judah, not Levi (Micah 5:2).

The Jews knew their law. They were completely aware of the degree of respect that had to be given to it. If Christ were from the tribe of Judah, and yet he was to be a priest, the situation demanded a “change of the law.” The writer of Hebrews says this change was necessary. It was impossible to accommodate the Law of Moses to the fulfillment of these prophecies. (Christ said in another place, “The law cannot be broken,” John 10:35.)

Did the Jews realize this, in this case, because there were plain prohibitions in the Law of Moses against priests from the tribe of Judah? No! Rather, it was a simple fact that “Moses spoke nothing concerning priests” from the tribe of Judah! What Moses had said was that the priests were to be Levites. The specific designation of Levi served also as a specific prohibition of Judah! In order for Christ to serve as a High Priest, in spite of the demands of an inspired prophecy, there had to be an abrogation of the Law of Moses, replacing it with the New. Students of the Bible know that this change came at the death of Christ (Colossians 2:14, Hebrews 9:15-17), so Christ evidently took up the office of High Priest at his death. This is confirmed in Hebrews 9:11-12.

Thomas Campbell saw the importance of making a distinction between the force of the Old Testament Law, and that of the New. He included this rule in the propositions for unity in proposition four of the Declaration and Address. This proposition was recognized as a unique contribution to interpretive thought, but was, for that reason, unacceptable to many denominational teachers. One historian writes:

*The contention for the supremacy of the New Testament over the Old was quite new and unorthodox in Campbell's day. It closed the doors of all churches against him.* (Walker, Dean E., *Adventuring in Christian Unity*, p. 21)
Yet, Campbell knew (and we should learn this truth) that while the Old Law stood, it remained as inviolable as any other Word from God, even though, in its “faultiness,” it could never accomplish the perfection of the worshipers who were under its authority (Hebrews 10:1-4). Even so, it had such authority that even Christ could not violate it by “adding to its institutions,” or going beyond its specific statements.

Here, then, we have in our New Testament an example of the principle, “Where the Scriptures are silent, we must be silent.” No person under the Law of Moses would dare say, “I can set up my own priesthood, because Moses did not prohibit it.” It was enough for Moses to specify the priestly tribe. That specification excluded any other tribe from the privilege. Those of us who do not use the instrument of music in worship feel the same way about the New Testament. When an Apostle specifies “singing,” we do not dare presume to add “playing.” When Paul denotes the “heart” as the instrument of “melody,” we will not presume to add the “organ.”

Whatever system of religion may be devised to the honor of God, it cannot demonstrate its respect of God, if it does not conform itself exactly to that which is revealed on the pages of the Bible. It will be an incomplete system, if it does not utilize all of the information there; and it is a perverted system, if it adds more to it that is not necessarily expedient.

Opinions Truly Private

This is why Thomas Campbell is so explicit in his insistence that opinions of men never gain a place in the practice of the church. Even in this, he is supported by the New Testament, as Paul said, “One man hath faith to eat all things; but he that is weak eateth herbs. . .The faith which thou hast, have thou to thyself before God” (Romans 14:2, 22). The “faith” spoken of here is not the faith of the gospel, but the persuasion of your own judgment. The command is to keep it to yourself, so that it cause no “occasion of falling” (Romans 14:13). The public exposure of one’s convictions can be destructive to the weak. It follows, also, that the public exposure of one’s opinions can serve to add to
the practices and doctrines of the church by subtle degrees, until tradition may establish a sect around them.

Of Essentials and Non-essentials

When Campbell deals with the question of distinguishing between essentials and non-essentials, he simply says that he will not be forced to make such distinctions. “Simply considered,” he says, “the high obligation of the Divine Authority revealing, or enjoining them, renders the belief, or performance of them, absolutely essential to us” (Declaration and Address, p.11.) The man who “simply considers” this question is driven to the conclusion that the presumption of man to make such distinctions is devastated by the Word of God. Paul says, “Let God be found true, but every man a liar,” that God may be “justified” in His words, and might “prevail” when judgment time comes (Romans 3:4). In respect to the force of the old, imperfect Law of Moses, Christ said, “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:19). In condemning the Pharisees for their inconsistencies, he did not allow for a distinction between the importance of tithing “mint and anise and cummin,” and observing the “weightier matters” of “justice, mercy, and faith.” Rather, he said, “These ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone!” (Matthew 23:23).

If we presume that the New Testament is less demanding of obedience than the Old, we should read, “A man that hath set at nought Moses law dies without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God. . .?” (Hebrews 10:28-29). Such passages as theses should make us tremble at the very thought of presuming to make any distinction between essentials and non-essentials, when God himself has apparently made none. The Old Testament is filled with examples of the attitude of God toward such presumption, and Paul says it was written “for our learning” (Romans 15:4). Well, let us learn, and cease our presumptions!
Thus, we see that Thomas Campbell was simply paraphrasing the Scripture in his slogan, and in many of the things said in support of it in the *Declaration and Address*. Those of our “movement” who reject the principles of the slogan are simply “rejecting for themselves the counsel of God.” Christ challenged the Chief Priests and Elders with the question, “The baptism of John was from what *source*, from heaven or from men?” (*Matthew 21:25*). They could not answer without indicting themselves, for they had not submitted to the baptism of John. If we were to ask the modern “leaders” of the church, “The slogan of Thomas Campbell, does it conform to Scriptural principles, or is it the invention of a man?” they should be left with as little reply as the Priests. For in many instances, they have not submitted themselves to the scriptural principles it proclaims!

CHAPTER SIX

The History of a Principle

Much has been said in this book regarding the application of Thomas Campbell’s slogan to various controversial issues that have disrupted the unity of the Restoration Movement. The divisions that have resulted from these controversies are a source of great disappointment to all of the idealists within the movement. Many have been so disillusioned that they have forsaken the cause and have become bitter against the movement.

It is difficult, we admit, to keep idealism alive in the midst of so much destructive disagreement. However, part of our training for the struggle should be the realization that “God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (*Ecclesiastes 7:29*). Because of the inclination of man to seek his own ends, and to ignore the sovereignty of God, we must expect that the church will always suffer the consequences of schismatic contentions. Even the Apostle Paul warns us in the inevitability of division.
He says in 1 Corinthians 11:19, “For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you.”

Accepting controversy as a part of the task of Restoration, we should be forearmed against disappointment. This will make the warrior steadfast in his determination to carry on the task of unifying all believers on the basis of Bible truth. At each step in his progress, he must be willing, also, to examine his own motives and positions in light of the Scripture. For, he must realize, with the Apostle Paul, that “it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me (Paul says) it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of any man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord” (1 Corinthians 4:2-4).

In the struggle to maintain the goals of the Restoration Movement, it is my personal conviction that we have not applied the rules of the Restoration slogan with as much vigor and power as they might have been applied. Others, I am sure, feel that the rules have been applied with too much vigor, and hold that the action has been destructive to unity. Nevertheless, the principles of the slogan have been applicable to nearly every division that has fractured the Restoration Movement. These divisions within the movement serve as a copy of the divisions of denominationalism, and it is my conviction that both the schisms of the movement, and those of denominationalism, can be attacked by diligent application of the slogan.

Taking history in reverse, let us say first that most of the controversies in the church today are subject to the application of the rule. Certain aspects of the question of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, for instance, should receive attention in this way. Beyond the information that is supplied, certain men are prone to advance opinions concerning the possible remarriage of those who have been “put away” because of “fornication.” The Bible supplies no information regarding this action, so those who respect
this silence will not support theories which allow for it. Hence a division of thought and speech occurs because some go beyond the express information in the Bible.

Similar applications can be found for nearly all of the little troublesome controversies that occur periodically in churches of Christ. Whether the opinions that have become practice deal with the Lord’s Supper, the “one-cup” question, the “Sunday School” question, the “War” question, located preachers, stipulated wages for them, or any other issue, there are places where the silence of the Scripture has been violated.

The issues which have caused major divisions are all subject to application of the principles of the slogan. In fact, the disputants have nearly all used arguments based on the slogan in their discussions. The first divisions over the organ and the Missionary Societies resulted in the formation of two distinct fellowships finally recognized officially by the United States Census of 1906. The one using the organ in worship embraced not only the Societies, but organized many institutions, educational and benevolent, maintained a national convention as well as state conventions, and thus became an “institutional” church. The other major fellowship had no conventions, supported no human institutions from church treasuries, and rejected the formation of choirs as well as the use of organs.

In process of time these two branches were divided again. The one that became institutional in character divided over the issue of theological liberalism. This division became crystalized by the pressure for “Restructure” among the left of center churches, and thousands of more conservative churches are becoming “independent.” The other branch is now divided over the question of “institutionalism.” This means that those principles which, when applied to the first division, freed the churches from support of human institutions, are now being abandoned. As a result, the “independents” of the “Organ brethren” and the “institutionalized” churches of the “non organ brethren” have practically nothing dividing them except the organ, itself. It could be reasonably
expected that much effort will be put forth in the next few years to re-unite these two fellowships, on their present ground.

There is little hope expressed by anyone that the “restructured” Disciples Church will ever again be compatible to the Restoration Movement. It has gone too far in its search for union with tradition-bound denominations. Those in the most conservative fellowship, however, still entertain the hope that the two similar wings described in the last paragraph will return to the position which they now hold, and which they consider to be the most harmonious with the concepts of Thomas Campbell. Forsaking the organ and institutional innovations as practices founded on purely by human opinion, and applying the rule for unity worded by Thomas Campbell, we can rid ourselves of the embarrassing spectacle of division in a movement designed to conquer division!

**Gone and Forgotten**

There was a time long ago when the Restoration Movement had many in it who believed in the practice of infant sprinkling. This was an opinion based on the assumption that men were born in Original Sin. Even the Campbells, being Presbyterians, held to the practice. However, by the application of the rules of the *Declaration and Address*, the practice was abandoned. Alexander Campbell required two years of study to come to his decision, and Thomas Campbell resisted the pressure of Alexander and others for a long while, before surrendering! *(Richardson, Robert, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, Vol. 1, p. 240.)* However, when Alexander Campbell had opportunity to answer the objection “that your principles exclude infant baptism,” he said “We dare not inculcate infant baptism in the name of the Lord as indispensably incumbent upon Christians, because the Lord has nowhere expressly enjoined it” *(Address before a meeting of the Christian Association of Washington, November 1, 1810, found in Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, Vol. 1, p. 344.)*. The exclusion of such a practice from the Scripture was justification enough for its exclusion from the practice of the church. This change thus forced a re-examination of the doctrine of Original Sin, and the truth on that subject came to
light as a result! Removing an unscriptural practice led to the overdue expulsion of a long-established doctrinal error.

Today, no church of Christ, nor any Christian Church, to my knowledge, is troubled with the problem of infant sprinkling. It is gone and forgotten. It has no opportunity to be revived, it seems, and no one is interested in reviving it. If we could have the same attitude toward instrumental music and human institutions, we could set an example of fellowship reunion that would astound the religious world. The fractured wings of the Restoration Movement now comprise millions of God-fearing people, and could become the most influential religious movement in the world, but for these practices.

The attitude which prevents this restoration of fellowship is that expressed by James DeForest Murch. In describing the “Centrists” of the Restoration Movement, he says:

In the broad sense the Center might be characterized as consisting of all those who continue to hold to the basic Biblical principles set forth in Thomas Campbell’s Declaration and Address and Isaac Errett’s Our Position. Let it be emphasized: to the basic Biblical principles – not to the historic documents themselves as such. Through one hundred years of history, Disciples had been Biblical inclusivists, and modern Centrists are of the same persuasion. (Murch, James DeForest, Christians Only, Standard Publishing Co. 1962, page 293)

To Murch, the Leftists are the modern “restructured” Disciples, and the Rightists are all of the “non-organ” brethren. The Centrists, he says, follow the example led by the Disciples through “one hundred years of history,” presumably dating from the division over the organ and the societies instead of from the birth of the Restoration Movement. We would grant that during that one hundred years, the Disciples could certainly be characterized as “inclusivists,” but we have some reservations about such being “Biblical.” The key to the “inclusivists” philosophy is found in the fact that Murch wants the Declaration and Address to be “interpreted” by Isaac Errett’s pamphlet, Our Position. One
quotation from this pamphlet will show the reason why Disciples became “inclusivists.” Errett says on pages 8 and 9 of his pamphlet:

   In judgments merely inferential, we reach conclusions as nearly unanimous as we can; and where we fail, exercise forbearance, in confidence that God will lead us into final agreement. In matters of expediency, where we are left to follow our own best judgment, we allow the majority to rule. In matters of opinion – that is, matters touching which the Bible is either silent or so obscure in its revelations as not to admit of definite conclusion – we allow the largest liberty, so long as none judges his brother, or insists on forcing his own opinion on others, or making them an occasion of strife. (Errett, Isaac, Our Position, pp. 8-9)

   In practice, the “majority rule” principle, and the insistence upon the practice of “love” and “forbearance” by all dissenters (meaning nonresistance to the will of the majority, in most cases), has molded the Disciples Church into one of the most inclusive religious bodies of all time. They have included so many things, in fact, that there is now little to identify them with any “non-organ” church. Churches to Murch’s “right” are generally “exclusivist” in the pattern of the Campbell’s rejection of infant sprinkling. They exclude the instrument of music on the same basis, and some refuse the encroachments of institutions, also. Thus, the Declaration and Address, as “amended” by Our Position, forms the philosophical base for the “Centrists” of Murch’s description, while the Scriptural principles formed in the words of Thomas Campbell alone serve as the basis for conduct in the churches of Christ. We hold no allegiance to the documents as a “creed.” Our loyalty is to the Word of God, without addition, subtraction or amendment!

   The “exclusivist” pattern of applying the principle is seen in many historical situations, both biblical and non-biblical. As the Campbells excluded the practice of infant sprinkling, because it was “nowhere enjoined,” they also applied it to other doctrines.
Alexander Campbell was called upon to comment on the validity of a “church constitution” which provided that non-immersed persons should be admitted to a sort of second-class membership in a Restoration Movement church. He replied in the *Christian Baptist*, Vol. 6, page 528:

*But I object to making it a rule, in any case, to receive unimmersed persons to church ordinances: -*

1. *Because it is nowhere commanded.*

2. *Because it is nowhere precedent in the New Testament.*

3. *Because it necessarily corrupts the simplicity and uniformity of the whole genius of the New Institution.*

In applying Campbell’s words to the question of “open membership,” which has plagued the Disciples Church for several decades, Harold W. Ford, Dean of Pacific Christian College, says in *A History of the Restoration Plea*, 1952, page 36:

*A more clearly defined answer to the question of present day “open membership” would be difficult to construct.*

We could say, “A more clearly defined answer to any innovation of men would be difficult to construct,” including the organ and the institutions. It takes only some consistent application of the rule expressed here by Alexander Campbell, to accomplish the unity for which we all sigh.

The imitators of the Campbells applied the rule ruthlessly to many practices held over into Restoration churches from denominationalism, and in the process of time cleansed the church so thoroughly that it appeared to be a bare skeleton rather than a living and vital body. It proved its vitality, however, in the years before the Civil War, amazing the religious world by its exertions.

**Zwingli and the Slogan**

Going back beyond the Campbells by three hundred years, we find another reformer who applied the principles of the Restoration, Ulrich Zwingli. Here was a man who
came to conclusions similar to those of Thomas Campbell, because he was a devotee of the same book, the Bible. (Zwingli was a “proof-text” preacher of the first rank. In a sermon on “The Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God,” he quoted 128 references from the Scripture.) The attitude of this Swiss contemporary of Martin Luther, is seen in the following passages from historians:

While Luther was disposed to leave untouched what the Bible did not prohibit, Zwingli was more inclined to reject what the Bible did not enjoin. (Fisher, George P., The Reformation, Scribners, 1899, p. 145.)

Luther appears in this passage as an “inclusivist,” and Zwingli as an “exclusivist.”

But, what things did Zwingli’s attitude lead him to exclude? Hear another historian:

Luther said we may do what the Bible does not forbid. Zwingli said what the Bible does not command we may not do, and on that account he gave up all images and crosses in the churches. In this respect he was like the Iconoclasts. Organs in church were also given up. The Lutherans loved to sing around the organ. The Zwinglians, if they sang at all, did so without any instrument. (Bainton, Roland H., The Church of Our Fathers, Westminster, 1941, pp. 143-144.)

Here is an amazing statement by a respected historian. Following the exclusivist principle of not doing “what the Bible does not command,” Zwingli “gave up” the practice of instrumental music in the worship. One must not jump to the conclusion that Zwingli was “tone deaf,” or was an “organ-hater.” The truth is that he was an accomplished musician and composer. Luther is honored for his musical contributions to the 16th century Reformation, but Zwingli was a better musician, according to historians. Yet he was willing to relinquish a practice he dearly loved for the sake of his principles. Any one with the same principles, today, will do the same. Campbell did, and thousands of others who followed this example.
Zwingli also applied the principles of the Restoration slogan, hundreds of years before its enunciation by Campbell, to the doctrine of Purgatory. When invited to participate in the famous “Berne Disputation” in 1528, he simply defended his rejection of Purgatory in the thesis, “Scripture is silent about a purgatory after this life” (Rilliet, Jean, Zwingli, Third Man of the Reformation, Westminster, 1959, p. 190.). What argument could be more sound in opposition to the false doctrine of Purgatory than this? “Scripture is silent, therefore I will be silent!” Zwingli said, and that was enough.

**David and the Slogan**

But let us drop back another several hundred years to the time of David’s accession to the throne of Israel and Judah. Possibly prompted by the desire to unite a people recently dissected by civil war, David proposed to fix a permanent site for the Tabernacle and to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem from its distant storage place in the house of a Levite. In the narrative of 1 Chronicles 13:1-12, we are told that he collected the Levites and gained their support for the venture. He said, “For we sought not unto it in the days of Saul.” And so, “they carried the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinidab: and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart.”

At one point on the journey, the oxen stumbled, prompting Uzza to “put forth his hand to hold the ark. . .And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put forth his hand to the ark; and there he died before God.” David was both angry and perplexed by this terrible event. In a time of much rejoicing and singing, God had stricken a man dead in His anger. In deference to his fear, David let the ark be placed in the house of Obed-edom, a distance short of its intended site. In deference to his perplexity, he asked, “How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?”

There seems to have been a little research into the causes of this disaster, in the meantime, for when the chronicler returns to the story (1 Chronicles 15:2-25), he shows that David had learned something about the transportation of the ark of God. He must have learned from Numbers 4:15 that no one other than priests were to handle the Tab-
ernacle and its furniture. Here was a direct prohibition. However, there was no prohibition of the use of a “new cart,” upon which to move the sacred object! Yet, David concluded that they were wrong in using this method. All that was said in Scripture was that the Kohathites were to “bare it upon their shoulders” (Numbers 7:9). Simply from this specific command, David was led to conclude that “none ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites (the Kohathites were Levites): for them hath Jehovah chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever.” So, David called the proper men, and said, “...sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of Jehovah, the God of Israel, unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because you bare it not at the first, Jehovah our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not according to the ordinance.” In consequence of this “interpretation,” the “children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of Jehovah.”

The new cart was an innovation of man that circumvented, or replaced, the ordinance of God. There was no prohibition of it, it simply was not commanded. The Scripture was silent concerning it. God demonstrated that what was not important to man, He considered to be essential. In “inclusivist” circles, this lesson is seemingly lost, but it supports the attitude of “exclusivists.”

Balaam and the Slogan

We can make one more jump backwards in history to the time of Balaam, the covetous prophet. Though Balaam was rebuked by his donkey, in Numbers 22:28-30, and is condemned by the Holy Spirit in 2 Peter 2:15, Jude 11 and Revelation 2:14, nevertheless he had the sense to recognize the principle of respecting the silence of the Word of God. In Numbers 22:18, he said, “If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of Jehovah my God, to do less or more.” Later, in chapter 24 verse 13 he said, “If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go
beyond the word of Jehovah, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; what Jehovah speaketh, that will I speak.”

God prevented Balaam from cursing the children of Israel. Otherwise, left to his own desires, the prophet might have yielded to the seduction of “silver and gold.” By dominating the human nature of Balaam, God demonstrated that he resents the attempts of men to run contrary to His will. We cannot hope that God will miraculously subdue the inventive spirit of uninspired modern teachers, because He has purposely revealed that opposition to false teachers is the responsibility of faithful teachers. (Ephesians 5:11) His Word is the tool for that opposition, and it must be wielded with power and steadfastness. Still, in view of the number of false teachers still at large, we could wish that God would silence those who pervert His will as efficiently as He did Balaam.

It is possible that we could fill the tremendous gaps in this short historical account with other instances of the recognition of this principle by men, but we cite these only to prove the case at hand, and hope they will be sufficient to impress our readers with the importance of respecting the silence of the Scripture.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The End of the Matter?

We can make no claim of ending the controversy over this vital subject in this short document. We are persuaded that the controversy will rage as long as there is any “movement” to restore the church of Christ to its apostolic simplicity. However, it is hoped that this treatise will point up the importance of the Restoration Movement slogan to the maintaining of the effort.

Many debates and discussions have occurred within the Movement in the two hundred years since the writing of the Declaration and Address. They have dealt directly with the innovations causing division, but each debate has also demonstrated a concern for interpretive principles. The time has come again, perhaps, to debate the “scriptural-
ness” of the principles themselves. Certainly, those who express a desire to be free of the Restoration slogan, and who question its validity, form the negative of the proposition. This book has asserted the affirmative, so the negative side is invited to review and rebut these assertions.

Campbell invited the same response to the Declaration and Address. He asked for an opinion on the validity of his propositions in this way:

*Do they exhibit truths demonstrably evident in the light of Scripture and right reason, so that to deny any part of them the contrary assertion would be manifestly absurd and inadmissible? Considered as a preliminary for the above purpose, are they adequate, so that if acted upon, they would infallibly lead to the desired issue? If evidently defective in either of these respects, let them be corrected and amended, till they become sufficiently evident, adequate, and unexceptionable. In the mean time let them be examined with rigor, with all the rigor that justice, candor and charity will admit. If we have mistaken the way, we shall be glad to be set right; but if, in the mean time, we have been happily led to suggest obvious and undeniable truths, which, if adopted and acted upon, would infallibly lead to the desired unity, and secure it when obtained, we hope it will be no objection that they have not proceeded from General Council.*

*(Declaration and Address, p. 19.)*

No one who has read through the Declaration and Address could deny that Campbell was sincere in his appeal for critical examination of his offering. It is a fact, however, that the document was not seriously challenged during the first few years of the Restoration Movement. Now, in view of the divided condition of that movement, it should be tested to see if it is useful in healing the wounds of the present-day factionalism in “Restoration” oriented churches, in the same way it was originally used to repair denominationalism.
My sentiment is, that, without the rule, there would be no such thing as a Restoration Movement, and no hope of re-vitalizing its prostrate form. Others have also sensed the vital character of the rule such as H. Christopher in *Lard’s Quarterly*, Vol. 4, 1867, p. 351, where he said:

> . . .if we would preserve the unity of the church, and keep out corruptions and innovations of every kind, we must confine ourselves to the teachings of the apostles, and to the practice of the apostolic church. We are driven to this position and confined to it by the highest considerations for the interests of the church and the most inexorable logic.  

*This step is the distinctive feature of our reformatory movement, our power and glory, and our hope of success; the only means and way by which the world can be converted to Christ, and the church preserved from corruptions with which human ambitions and pride have flooded it in days gone by. It was a grand and mighty conception, a sweeping generalization, that carried us, at one bound, over the heads of eighteen centuries, and placed us behind all the corruptions and causes of division which now defile and distract the church.*

The same author, on page 366, submits that we must be willing to apply the rule to the particular causes of division, such as the instrument of music, or forsake the Restoration cause:

> We are compelled to discard this innovation on primitive practice, or give up all pretension and purpose of prosecuting any further the grand design of our reformatory movement. And if we have been right up to this time, to abandon this ground and principle would be nothing less than apostasy. To this dilemma we are driven by the most remorseless logic and by the highest considerations for honesty and consistency.
This attitude was echoed by many spokesmen of the Restoration Movement. Moses E. Lard envisioned with dread the possible result of false reasoning on the subject of expediency. He wrote in *Apostolic Times*, Vol. 1, No. 3 from April 29 of 1869 on page 20:

*The subject of expediency, as interpreted by some of us, may yet prove the rock on which the reformation for which we are pleading goes to pieces. That is not said in the spirit of alarm; it is the utterance of calm conviction. I do not deny that expediency is sometimes right, nor that the New Testament, in very special cases, sanctions it. Certainly not...When we plead expediency to justify practices unknown to the apostolic age, we are not within the limits of the expedient. We are then violating the word of God. Expediency is no law for innovation, either in faith or practice; and he who pleads it to this extent has abandoned the only rule which can save us from ruin.*

And, he followed the lead of Dr. Christopher in applying the vital rule to the use of instrumental music in the worship. We quote here from *Lard’s Quarterly*, Vol. 1, 1864, p. 333:

*...these organ-grinding churches will in the lapse of time be broken down, or wholly apostatize, and the sooner they are in fragments the better for the cause of Christ. I have no sympathy with them, no fellowship for them, and so help me God never intend knowingly to put my foot into one of them. As a people we claim to be engaged in an effort to return to the purity, simplicity, freedom from ostentation and pride, of the ancient apostolic churches. Let us, then, neither wink at anything standing in the way, nor compromise aught essential to this end. The moment we do so our unity is at an end, and our hopes are in the dust.*

Since these words were written, the Restoration Movement has been “fragmented” by the wedge of instrumental music, and its impact upon the religious world has been
seriously blunted. It cannot recover this lost ground until there is a diligent application of our slogan to all aspects of our church practices.

**Other Considerations**

The debate on the scriptural nature of the slogan will have to involve all of the offspring of former debates, including discussion of the law of expediency, the nature of the universal church, the exclusiveness of specific authority, etc. But, the fruits of the discussion may be so delectable that we will not regret wading through painful fields of thorns to reap them. Who would not sacrifice much to the day “When love in one delightful stream through every bosom flows: when union sweet and dear esteem in every action glows.” Pragmatic considerations would dictate that every sectarian will not respond to such an appeal, but the response that is gained, however meager, will be ample reward for the effort made at Restoration.

If every person reading this treatise will re-examine his motives in religion and his direction by the standard which is discussed herein, it will be a beginning toward that happy end of re-uniting all believers under the sole authority of Jesus Christ. If from this humble spark, a great bonfire of correction will burn away all excess practices which now encumber the Restoration Movement, we will have ample compulsion to thank God with every breath.

Thanks, however, should include Thomas Campbell, of whom it has been said by W.E. Garrison in *Religion Follows the Frontier*, on page 88:

*After the Declaration and Address, Thomas Campbell never wrote a line, delivered a speech, or made a decision which had any marked effect on the faith or fortunes of the movement which he had started. But the production of that document was, under the circumstances, a sufficient title to gratitude and fame.*
Therefore, let us take up the torch of Christian unity again, rescuing it from the rubbish heap while it still smolders, and light the way to a new revival of New Testament Christianity.

Recognizing the difficulty of the task, we would not rhapsodize overmuch, but would endorse the eloquent words of Alexander Campbell, when he wrote in the *Millennial Harbinger*, Vol. 3, p. 195, the following:

*If the Christians in all sects could be drawn together, then would the only real, desirable and permanent union, worthy of the name of the union of Christians, be achieved. How to affect this has long been a question with us and many others. To us, it appears, the only practicable way to accomplish this desirable object, is to propound the ancient gospel and the ancient order of things in the words and sentences found in the apostolic writings – to abandon all traditions and usages not found in the Record, and to make no human terms of communion. But on this theme much must yet be said before all the honest will understand it. One thing, however, is already sufficiently plain to all, that a union amongst Christians can be obtained only upon scriptural grounds, and not upon any sectarian platform in existence.*

More important than an endorsement of the words of a man is the acceptance of the words of the Holy Spirit as written in Colossians 2 verses 8 - 10:

*See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority (NASB).*