

Restoration History

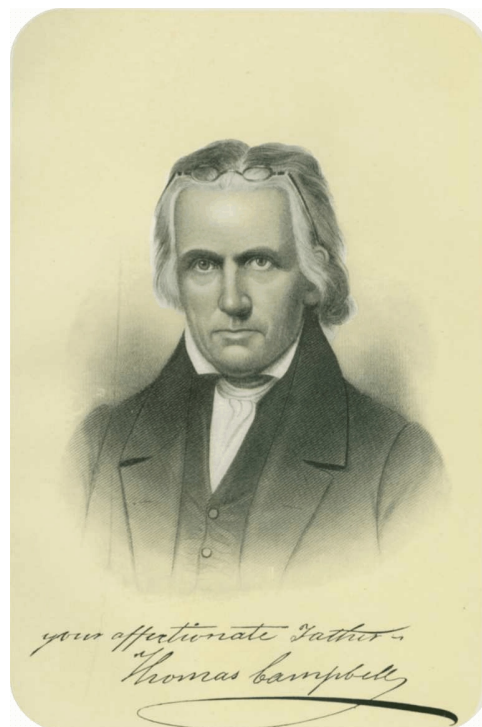
LESSON 2 – The Campbells in Ireland

- by Charles Dailey

(This short lesson series was designed for a church class and gives an overview of our heritage in being like the church of the New Testament era. The series is not designed for the college classroom with documentation on each point. We have relied heavily on the class notes of Dr. Roger Chambers.)

Introduction:

1. In the first lesson, we noted that God used at least five different men in the U.S. to lead break outs from the established denominations. They were aimed at ditching creeds and using the Bible alone as the only rule of faith and practice.
 2. These five, James O’Kelly, Elias Smith, Abner Jones, Barton W. Stone and John Mulkey, all came to their point-of-view before 1800.
 3. Any one of the five could have made such a move, but when we see all five making the same move in the same decade without knowing about each other, we are looking at the hand of God. The Pharaoh of Egypt knew about swarms of flies, but when they appeared at Moses call and provided national coverage, Pharaoh recognized the working of God.
 4. There is a sixth stream that enters our story from Europe, the British Empire to be specific. It was just after 1800.
 5. This movement that became more significant and had better leadership began in Scotland and Ireland and was led by **Thomas Campbell** and his talented son **Alexander**.
1. Thomas Campbell was raised in the Church of England, the break-away from the Roman Catholic Church. His father had been a Roman Catholic.



Donald Hunt writes in “*The Emerging Church*:”

Thomas did not care for the stiffness of the *Church of England* so joined the Seceder branch of the Presbyterian Church. Being of a very religious nature it was not surprising that he gave his life to the ministry. He was 24 when he enrolled in *Glasgow University* to prepare for the ministry. After his graduation from there, he enrolled in the Seceder’s theological school at Whithouse, Scotland. After completing his theological course of study there, he was licensed to preach as a “probationer,” filling in for Seceder congregations that were without ministers. After his “probation” he was assigned to the church at Ahorey in northeastern Ireland.

- A. Displeased with division. The Presbyterian Church was fractured by internal divisions. The city churches were divided from the country churches - and had labels. Those who favored revival

were split from those who did not - and they had yet other labels.

However some Independent (Congregational) preachers had a circuit that included the town of Rich Hill, near Ahorey. Mr. Campbell found their more tolerant attitude refreshing. Thomas Campbell was strongly attracted to their kindly expressions of faith. Among these preachers was **Robert Haldane**.



A recent photo of the same building where Thomas Campbell preached in Ahorey, Ireland.

- B. Campbell's wife, Jane Cornigle, had been raised as a French Huguenot. Robert Richardson wrote about her in his *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*:

"Like her ancestors, she had very decided religious convictions, and gladly co-operated with her husband in the moral and religious instruction of the family. It was their rule that every member should memorize, during each day, some portion of the Bible, to be recited at evening worship. Long passages were often thus recited, but if only a single verse was correctly repeated by the smaller children, it was received with encouraging approbation. Attention was usually called to the important facts or truths presented in each recitation, questions were asked in regard to them, and appropriate remarks briefly offered.

"Finally, the Scriptures repeated during the week were again rehearsed on the evening of the Lord's day. This sacred day also was faithfully observed. Every member of the household was expected to go to meeting, and it was understood that each one was to give, upon returning home, an account not only of the text, but of the discourse itself, embracing its leading points. This was designed to secure, on the part of the young especially, a proper attention to the services of public worship, so that the church might not be a place for the observance of cold and lifeless forms, but in reality a house of prayer and of true religious edification.

"In carrying out these regulations, as in all his family discipline, and indeed the whole conduct of life, Mr. Campbell was most punctual and methodical. He was by no means exacting, but made his appeal, as far as possible, to the heart and conscience, showing the most affectionate interest in the welfare of all the members of his household. When called away, as he frequently was, to assist other ministers at a distance, his pious wife constantly labored to keep up the regular order of religious worship and instruction in the family."

We doubt that Jane Campbell ever heard her children whine, "I'm bored."

- C. Supplemental Income. To help out his small ministerial wage, Mr. Campbell farmed and held a private academy in nearby Rich Hill (36 miles from Belfast) where he could teach his own children as well as those of others. The school project was profitable for the family. In his absence, his 17-year-old son Alexander would fill in as teacher. Thomas Campbell had trained Alexander in Greek classical literature, English literature, French and the philosophy of Thomas Locke.
- D. Declining Health. Over time, Mr. Campbell became sickly and his physician suggested that he should move to the better climate of America. Thomas Campbell agreed, booking passage to the New World in 1807, and leaving Alexander to finish teaching the school year. The family, consisting of Jane and the seven children, was to follow when Thomas got settled.

Donald Hunt says:

At the age of 45 he preached his farewell sermon to the weeping Aforey congregation, and leaving his family under the oversight of his dear wife Jane and their son Alexander, boarded a ship for the long voyage to America. In leaving Ireland he was saying goodbye to his native land, for he would not get to return.

Thomas Campbell wrote a letter to his Jane that has been handed down to our time:

My dear Jane, let nothing discourage you. Turn to God; make his word and will your constant study, and rely upon it that as 'the days wherein you will have seen and years your grief have had,' so the Lord will make you glad, and satisfy you with his tender mercies.

My dear children, let me address you together: if you have any sympathy, any sincere affection for a father who cannot cease to love you and pray for you so long as his heart shall beat or tongue be able to articulate, see that you follow the directions that I gave you at my parting, whether by word or writing. Be a comfort to your mother; love, cherish and pity one another.

Love the Lord your God; love his Son Jesus Christ, and pray to the Lord constantly and ardently for me your poor father, who longs after you all, and who cannot rest, if the Lord will, till he has prepared a place of residence for you all, where I trust we shall spend the rest of our days together in his service."

This is the same Thomas Campbell who is sometimes characterized as being "legalistic" and uncaring about others. His uninformed critics believe that he did not understand love and grace.

When he arrived in America, he quietly left the Presbyterian Church, but we will return to Thomas Campbell in Lesson 3.

II. Alexander Campbell was born in 1788, the oldest son of Thomas and Jane Campbell.

(Charles Dailey has a 495 page Genealogy of the Campbell family in .pdf format that he will share with anyone having interest. Charles@CharlesDailey.com)

Robert Richardson, his biographer and physician, writes of the young Alexander:

Although thus diligently engaged, under his father's guidance, in literary and grave pursuits, it is not to be supposed that Alexander's natural disposition was so much altered as to render him either very serious or very sedentary. On the contrary, his naturally active and lively temperament, full of vivacity and sportiveness, still demanded a sufficient amount of physical exercise, and he still delighted to engage occasionally in the games and amusements of youth.

Having an athletic frame, and a hand unusually large for his years, he soon made himself noted among his companions for the large size of his snow-balls and the force with which they were hurled. For the same reasons he was expert in sowing grain, and loved to practice the art with the neighboring farmers at the proper seasons. He was extremely fond also of frequenting the streams for the purposes of fishing and of bathing, and became, by dint of practice, an excellent swimmer. But his greatest delight was to traverse the fields in search of game, to capture birds with nets, or with dog and gun to rouse them from their secret coverts. His indulgent parents freely sanctioned such recreations at proper times, believing them conducive, if not absolutely necessary, to health and vigor.

When the father, Thomas Campbell, arrived in America, he sent word for his family to come.

A. The Shipwreck. After packing the family possessions, Jane, her son Alexander and the rest of the children booked passage to America. But it wasn't to be.

1. At the outset of the trip, Alexander had a dream. It is recounted by Robert Richardson:

At length he started up with evident marks of alarm, and told his mother and sisters that he was confident a great danger was impending, and that he feared they were about to be shipwrecked. He said he had just had a most vivid dream, in which he thought the ship had struck upon a rock, and that the water came rushing in and nearly filled the vessel. He thought he had been making the most strenuous exertions to save the family and secure their luggage; and so strong was the impression made upon his mind that he said, "I will not undress to-night. I will lay my shoes within my reach, and be ready to rise at a moment's warning; and I would advise you all to be prepared for an emergency."

2. The dream was correct.

Donald Hunt writes:

"When they began their voyage, a violent storm arose, and their vessel was wrecked upon rocks. The dark of night added to their fears as they could not see where they were - at sea or near land. They knew the wrecked vessel would never sail again. As the storm raged, all hope of their survival was gone.

"At 21 years of age, young Alexander, facing apparent death, thought of the vanity of earthly pursuits, remembered the fine example of his dear father, and promised God that if perchance they survived, he would follow in the footsteps of his beloved father by becoming a minister of the gospel. Finally daybreak came, and they were able to make their way to shore and safety. They secured temporary lodging while deciding their next move."



Lochindaal on the Isle of Islay, off Scotland.

The shipwreck on the Island of Islay took place near where other Campbells lived and they helped the family and others to safety and to recover some of their possession.

Robert Richardson says,

. . . for as it now appeared, instead of going to America, they had been thrown directly among the Campbells of Argyleshire, from whom they deduced their lineage. Having, in this hospitable mansion, got themselves warmed, dried and refreshed, along with many others of the passengers they proceeded to the town, which was about two miles off, where they obtained lodgings in the house of a Mr. McAllister. Here they meditated with grateful hearts upon the eventful scenes through which they had just passed, and recalling the premonition given by Alexander, were assured by him that the reality, as it occurred, was precisely what appeared to him in the forewarning.

God has his way of getting decisions from people and training them to further his cause.

B. Detour through *University of Glasgow*.

The Isle of Islay is west of Glasgow, Scotland.

Hunt continues:

It was too late in the fall (October) to make arrangements with another ship, so they decided that since Alexander was to follow his father into the ministry, and they wouldn't be sailing again until the following year, they would go to Glasgow, Scotland where his father had been educated at the University of Glasgow, so Alexander could enroll. Alexander was delighted to find that some of his father's old professors were still on the faculty. So desirous was he to take every advantage of the opportunity that he arose each morning at 4:00 and retired at 10:00 at night, filling his day with his classes, general outside reading, and privately tutoring some to help defray his own educational expenses.



University of Glasgow - old campus

C. Leaving the Presbyterian Church.

While in Glasgow, he became acquainted with Independent preacher **Greville Ewing**, through whom he learned of the work of the Haldane brothers (Robert and James), who had withdrawn from the Church of Scotland and were leading an independent revival movement in Scotland. Through this important association, even though it was only for the short year he was in Glasgow, he decided to leave the Presbyterian Church.

The decision to leave is instructive. It was time for the semi-annual communion in the Seceder Presbyterian Church. To qualify, Alexander had to be examined by the elders and to receive a token so he could partake. He qualified. But his heart was not in this event.

Robert Richardson writes:

The hour at which the administration of the Lord's Supper was to take place found him still undecided, and, as there were about eight hundred communicants, and some eight or nine tables to be served in succession, he concluded to wait until the last table, in hopes of being able to overcome his scruples. Failing in this, however, and unable any longer conscientiously to recognize the Seceder Church as the Church of Christ, he threw his token upon the plate handed round, and when the elements were passed along the table, declined to partake with the rest.



It was at this moment that the struggle in his mind was completed, and the ring of the token, falling upon the plate, announced the instant at which he renounced Presbyterianism for ever--the leaden voucher becoming thus a token not of communion but of separation. This change, however, was as yet confined to his own heart. He was yet young, and thought it unbecoming to make known publicly his objections, and as he had fully complied with all the rules of the Church, he thought it proper to receive at his departure the usual certificate of good standing.

So young Alexander Campbell became an ex-Presbyterian in good standing!

During these years, the entire family practiced infant baptism (sprinkling) because the creed they were under required this. In a short while after leaving the creed, they were able to realize that Bible baptism is by immersion and is a part of the salvation experience. This will appear in Lesson three. Right now, God is getting their minds ready to learn that truth and their bodies positioned to fully develop that truth and lead others to believe and accept it.

Later in America Campbell reminisced on his year in Glasgow with these words: “My faith in creeds and confessions of human device was considerably shaken while in Scotland, and I commenced my career in this country under the conviction that nothing that was not as old as the New Testament should be made an article of faith ... or a term of communion among Christians.”

D. The Atlantic crossing had its perils, but the family finally landed in New York in September of 1809.

Conclusion:

The father and son are brought to the same conclusions separately. In Ireland, Alexander quietly quits his world of creeds and moves to America. In Pennsylvania Thomas has conflict with the power and creeds of the Presbyterian Church and withdraws to be his own man. God is at work and his work is about to set in motion a permanent movement that would sweep much of America east of the Mississippi.