

"WHY WE DIVIDE"

The illuminating discussion at the recent Butler Institute of the so-called "Lunenburg Letter" of Alexander Campbell, by Marion Stevenson and Daniel Sommer, called attention to the fact that most of our differences have arisen because there were really two Alexander Campbells instead of one as we frequently assume.

The young man who went into the Baptist Church after he and his father had been practically kicked out of the Seceder Presbyterian fold, was a different figure from the Sage of Bethany who helped found the American Christian Missionary Society and wrote the Lunenburg Letter. The Campbell who wrote and taught during the thirty-five years from substantially 1812 to 1837 was impetuous, dogmatic, inclined toward legalism and disposed to be intolerant when his views were called in question. The Campbell of the last quarter century of his life was more inclined toward peace, tolerance, breadth of comprehension, and that spirit of good-will which is the essence of the gospel.

It is almost a duplication of the career of the apostle John, who early in his life wanted to call down fire from heaven on his enemies, but later became the apostle of Love. During his Boanerges years, Alexander Campbell edited *The Christian Baptist*, opposed musical instruments in worship, objected to missionary societies, practiced close communion, and in general laid the foundation which his more conservative followers have built on with such industry. That he changed his view later simply means to these brethren that he became an apostate and deserted the faith. Of course; to the more progressive group it means he grew in grace and knowledge.

One saving factor about the Campbell dualism is that it possesses an underlying unity. In spite of early and later divergences, the essential program of the great reformer never varied. This should encourage us to hope for more complete unity in our Brotherhood life. Assuming some of us prefer *The Christian Baptist* to the *Millennial Harbinger*, there is still no reason why we should not stand together on the New Testament.

"The preceding is from the pen of Prof. F. D. Kershner, Dean of the 'School of Religion' in Butler University, Indianapolis. That was formerly 'Northwestern Christian University,' and is a formidable factor of the so-called Christian church.

"I regard Prof. Kershner as a friend of truth, and sometimes designate him as my 'brother in hope' because I have hope for him. And my reason for hope is because he seems to wish both sides of questions offered in the 'Discussion Institute' held in July, in Butler University. For that reason he has invited me to assist on four different occasions. With this explanation I now offer comments on the preceding article.

"Firstly, that article is found in a journal named 'The Christian Evangelist'. That name is wrong in every particular. 'The' is too inclusive and exclusive—too comprehensive and too intensive. It embraces too much and rejects too much. But even 'Christian-Evangelist' would be wrong. For 'Christian', as used in the Sacred Text, is a noun or name-word, and there applied to the only being on earth that God created in His own image. Besides, that name is in that text applied to that being only when he has obeyed the

Gospel, and thus has been renewed in the image of Christ. Finally, 'Evangelist' means a preacher of the Gospel in form of a man.

"Secondly, the reason we have divided and my yet divide is offered in the preceding paragraph, but may need amplifying or explaining. 'Christian Baptist,' 'Christian Standard,' 'Christian Leader,' 'Christian Evangelist,' and 'The Christian,' as names of human enterprises are all wrong. Those names for human enterprises may be justly regarded as irreverent, illogical, untruthful, misleading. The philosophic definition of Truth is, The exact relation of what is signified to the sign used to signify it. And the right expression of Truth is—The use of such word or words as expresses that exact relation. But this was not considered by the rhetorical-Alexander Campbell nor by his rhetorical followers. As a result we have divided, are divided, and may hereafter divide. With all our colleges and professed devotion to learning, yet our inaccuracy in regard to Biblical and philosophic speech is lamentable! We, as a 'disciple brotherhood' are in certain respects unbiblical, unphilosophical, inaccurate. We censure our religious neighbors for inaccuracies, and then, after making a few corrections, we imitate them! Nearly all of us seem to have forgotten that Paul wrote to Titus and enjoined on him this command: "Sound speech that cannot be condemned: that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of thee' (Titus 1: 8). As a result we are divided and subdivided, and, as Cains Cassius is represented as saying, 'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings.' To this I add that when ancient speculators concerning the soul of man disregarded what the Grecian Socrates said about the soul of man being the mind which controls body, and then disregarded consciousness as the standard of measuring in the domain of mental philosophy, they became visionists of the most divergent kind. As a result, Sir John Davies, philosophic poet of the Elizabethan age, wrote concerning them;

Musicians think our souls are harmonies;
Physicians think that they complexions be;
Epicures make them swarms of atomies
Which do, by chance, into our bodies flee.
One thinks the soul is air; another fire;
Another blood diffused about the heart;
Another saith the elements conspire,
And to her essence each doth yield a part.
Some think one general soul fills every brain,
As the sun gives light to every star;
Another saith the name of soul is vain,
And that we only well mixed bodies are.
Thus these great clerks their little wisdom show,
While with their thoughts they at hazard play,
Tossing their light opinions to and fro,
To mock the lewd as learned in this as they.
For no crazed brain could even yet propound
Touching the soul so vain or fond a thought
But some among these doctors have been found
Who in their schools the selfsame thought have taught!

"Thirdly, in the domain of so-called Christendom a similar admixture and confusion may be found. Yes, and the shame of it is that disciples who came into existence in the 19th century, in order to unite followers of the Savior, are not free from such admixture and confusion! To this I add that if Prof. Kershner will consider that 'the sage of Bethany' was in the prime of life when he wrote his reply to the 'Lunenburg Letter' and when he started Bethany College, he would not liken him to the apostle John in old age. And if he would read again the apostle John's letters and record of his vision on the Isle called Patmos, he would modify his comparison of Campbell with John. For John in his letters could call a man a 'liar' with the grandest grace of any writer. Besides, he was the man the Lord directed to declare that 'all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death' (Rev. 21: 8). Yes, and I think John and all other apostles should be esteemed because of their inspiration rather than by reason of their natural temperament. On the same principle we should esteem Alexander Campbell by reason of his devotion and integrity and adherence to strictness of the word of God, rather than by supposed changes by reason of age or supposed growth in grace.

Finally, I mention that whoever will read Alexander Campbell's essays on the difference between change of heart and change of state, published in 1859 (See Millennial Harbinger Abridged, Vol. I, p. 521) will learn he was as intense as ever even in his old age, or within seven or eight years of his death. My own estimate of Campbell is that he was always honest, dignified, eloquent. But he was a rhetorician rather than a logician, and his popularity caused him to forget much that he had written. Readers of his writings should have accepted truth he offered but rejected his errors. But as they did not all do this, we have two or three orders of 'disciples'. For over sixty years this has been one of the chief burdens of my heart and oppressions of my mind. Yet I am not discouraged, especially while such an institution as Butler University has men connected with its management who will invite a 'conservative' speaker into certain of its discussions without placing restrictions on him. By reason of this fact, and the number of men and women who have rejected man-made societies and are considering propriety of the disuse of instrumental music in worship, I have hope! Such disciples are yet in the wrong position but headed in the right direction, and thus are as 'prisoners of hope'. For their full deliverance all apostolic disciples should hope and pray everyday! Many of them are willing to be told of their faults and don't mad about it. This is a hopeful indication of mind, and encourages those who believe in teaching and exhorting as well as reproofing and rebuking. I go among them as Paul went into Jewish synagogues and made the Gospel known."