

I.

WALTER SCOTT

The greatest man in the world is he who is most like the Savior of men; who lays all his honors, gifts and attainments at the feet of Jesus, and gives him all the glory. It is he who abounds in all goodness, purity and godly fear. It is he whose soul is moved at the wretchedness of mankind, and is only concerned to see men redeemed and God glorified through Jesus Christ. It is he who has the least taste, and is least attracted by the things admired and pursued by the giddy, gay, ungodly world of mankind, while he glories in the Lord.

—Walter Scott

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I. EARLY LIFE

The name of Walter Scott is inseparably linked with that of Alexander Campbell in the cause of religious reformation. Near the beginning of the movement which led to the organization of the Christian Church, these choice spirits formed a congenial fellowship, which was only broken by death. Campbell and Scott bore a somewhat similar relation to the Nineteenth Century Reformation, that Luther and Melancthon did to that of the sixteenth century. Or, if we may be allowed to liken the former to Paul in this new school of apostles, the latter was the counterpart of John, the apostle of love. Like the "disciple whom Jesus loved," Walter Scott's mind dwelt much upon the divine glory of the Master and the supernatural claims of his Messiahship.

It is a strange coincidence that these two leaders of the new religious thought in America, should each have descended from distinguished Scotch ancestry, and both have stepped out of the bosom of the Presbyterian Church.

Walter Scott, the preacher and reformer, was of the same stock as the illustrious poet and novelist, Sir Walter Scott. Both could claim relationship to heroes celebrated in the annals of Scottish history. Preacher and poet alike inherited, besides the sterner qualities of their countrymen, keen perception, vivid imagination, deep emotion and great tenderness of heart.

It was the inestimable privilege of Walter Scott to be well born. His father, John Scott, was a man of liberal culture and refinement of manners, and possessed of rare musical talent, a

gift which he used in the support of a large family, as an instructor of music. His mother, Mary Innes Scott, is described as a person of beautiful life and earnest religious devotion. She had a gentle nature, keenly sensitive to suffering and sorrow. An illustration of the depth and delicacy of her affection is presented in her untimely death. Her husband was taken ill, while away from home, and suddenly died. So deeply was she affected by the intelligence of his demise, that she immediately fell dead of a broken heart, and both were buried in the same grave.

Walter, the sixth child of this devoted couple, was born October 31, 1796, in Moffat, Dumfriesshire, Scotland. As the Scott family were all strict members of the Kirk of Scotland, Walter's religious training was not neglected. Under the kindly, sympathetic care of a devoted mother, his receptive nature unfolded its beautiful traits like the blossoms of springtime under the warm rays of the sun. His amiable disposition and warm sympathy soon made him beloved of all who knew him.

At a very early age he gave evidence of a decided talent. Though the resources of the family were only moderate, his watchful parents determined to give him every educational advantage, the mother the while praying that the kirk might enjoy the service of his rare gift of heart and mind, a purpose which Walter himself seems to have cherished from childhood. The Scotch family of the old school sought no greater honor than to have a son at the university. Though a collegiate education, at that time, was regarded within the reach of the sons of the wealthy only, in this devoted family the slender resources were so husbanded as to enable Walter, after a preparatory course at the academy, to enter the University of Edinburgh. Here he pursued his studies with a zeal and success that fully justified the labors and sacrifices of his parents. Perhaps the consciousness that every hour of privilege was purchased for him at a great sacrifice, helped him to avoid the follies and dissipations then prevalent among his fellow-students. Certain it is that his young life was

unblemished, and that a foundation of character was laid which enabled him to withstand all the subsequent storms that swept across his pathway.

While a student at the university, an incident occurred that finely illustrates the unselfish devotion of his whole after life. He had a fine voice, carefully trained, and possessing a sympathetic strain, which few were ever able to hear unmoved. On a pleasant evening he walked out in the city, and not returning at the expected hour, the family became alarmed at his absence. His brother James was sent out to search for him, and at midnight found him in the midst of a crowd, singing popular Scottish airs and stipulating, as the price of each song, that a collection be taken for a poor blind beggar, whose affliction had touched his heart. This was always characteristic of the man. His whole life was a song of sympathy for those in suffering about him.

After completing his university course, while casting about for a place to plant his feet and enter the service of his race, an unexpected turn of affairs changed the channels of his life. His mother's brother, George Innes, had some years before emigrated to America, and by faithfulness and integrity advanced himself to a place of responsibility in the government service in New York City. Anxious to assist his relatives still in Scotland, he had written his sister to send one of her boys, promising what assistance he could render in his advancement. Walter, as best fitted by education for the opportunities of a new country, was the one selected to go; and as the plan was in perfect harmony with his own wishes, he at once left home, arriving in New York, on July 7, 1818. He soon obtained employment in an academy as Latin tutor, a position for which he was eminently qualified. But in this position he did not long remain. He was a young man of adventurous spirit. A new world spread out before him, and he determined to press on toward the West, of which he had heard glowing reports from his acquaintances in the city of New York. Having resolved to see for himself the country of which he had

heard so much, he set out on foot, with a young man about his own age, to explore the regions which were beyond. Over the same route traversed by the family of Thomas Campbell, some eight or ten years previous, young Scott now bent his steps, little dreaming that he was following in the pathway of one whose fortunes would be so strangely blended with his own.

After a long journey on foot over the Alleghany Mountains, a journey that to him, with his keen sympathy with nature and overflowing mirthfulness, was filled with delightful experiences, he reached Pittsburg in the early spring of 1819. As his purse was as light as his heart, his first concern was to seek some employment. This was not, then, difficult for a young man of his attainments. Men of scholarship were rare among the hardy settlers of Western Pennsylvania and their services were in demand, so he was not long in securing a position as assistant in an academy conducted by George Forrester, a fellow-countryman, and a man of high Christian principle. This meeting with Mr. Forrester marked a turning-point in Walter Scott's religious life, and secured his services to the cause of primitive Christianity, then just beginning to claim attention outside of the obscure church in which it had been cradled.

II. TRAINING IN A NEW RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

The young scholar, as we have seen, received his classical education at Edinburgh. It was understood that he should enter the Presbyterian ministry, when the unexpected turn in fortune landed him in America. Without relinquishing his purpose, he entered the school-room as a stepping-stone to his ultimate life-work. The school at Pittsburg, which he entered as an assistant, now became his theological seminary, its text-book the Bible, and its instructor, that pious man of God with whom he had the good fortune to be associated, George Forrester. Under the guidance and inspiration of such a teacher, Walter Scott soon became a

proficient scholar in the Book which was later to become his effective weapon in the dissemination of new religious ideas.

Mr. Forrester had been trained under the Haldanes¹ of Scotland before coming to America, and had, in connection with his school duties, built up a small congregation of believers who shared his views. Young Scott was not long in discovering that his employer, though a deeply religious man, differed widely from the traditional doctrines in which he had been reared; and Forrester was not slow in impressing his intelligent assistant with the superiority of his position over that of the Presbyterian and kindred schools of religious thought.

Better soil for the planting was not to be found than that presented in the heart of Walter Scott. He was a sincere truth-seeker. He loved the Bible. He was ready to accept whatever could be clearly proven by its authority. No sooner, therefore, did he learn of this new religious movement than he set about diligently to test the correctness of his employer's views. Together they made an earnest, prayerful search, into the teachings of the Scriptures. The hours after school were spent over the Bible. Midnight often found Scott turning its sacred pages, or on his knees seeking for light and guidance.

The result of this painstaking search was, that in a few weeks he turned his back upon his past religious training, convinced that human standards of belief were without the sanction of God's Word. This conclusion, we may be sure, was not reached without much anguish of spirit. He further discovered that though he had adhered, in all strictness, to the church traditions, he had neglected obedience to some of the important commands of the Bible. Like Mr. Campbell, among his first discoveries, in this conscientious search for truth, was the absence of scriptural

¹ Robert and James Haldane had, in 1798, inaugurated a movement for the reformation of religious society in Scotland; somewhat similar to that afterward advocated by Alexander Campbell in America.

authority for infant baptism, and his need of personal obedience to a command so repeatedly enforced as that of baptism into Christ. With him to see the way of duty was to unhesitatingly pursue it. He, therefore, announced his purpose to reject all authority but Christ, and in obedience to the Divine command he was immersed by Mr. Forrester and united with the small company of believers to whom he ministered.

Walter Scott at once proved himself a valuable addition to this struggling congregation. Although he did not at once take a public part in their services, his genial presence, zealous devotion and Christian culture were the inspiration of the brotherhood. He humbly accepted the position of learner, continued his diligent search of the Scriptures and rejoiced in his newfound faith.

In the meantime, Mr. Forrester, desiring to devote himself exclusively to religious work, turned over the management of the school to his talented assistant, a position for which the latter was well qualified. Mr. Scott's original methods of instruction, his pleasing manner, his faultless character, won for his school a wide patronage. Had success in this line been the goal of his ambition, his situation would have proved eminently satisfactory. But this was not his ambition. The more he studied his Bible, the more he felt drawn toward the ministry of the Word. A new world of religious truth was gradually unfolding before him. He soon found that even his teachers in this new religious school but partially apprehended the Divine purpose and method in the world's salvation. From his study of the Bible, especially the Acts of the Apostles, which now enlisted his attention, the plan of redemption began to take form in his mind. Conversion had always been a perplexing subject to him, but in the light of this book all mystery fled. He now discovered that all who heard, believed and obeyed the glad message of salvation, were filled with peace and joy in believing.

While pursuing this line of investigation a small tract, sent out by an obscure congregation in the City of New York, fell into Mr. Scott's hands. The views expressed in it so perfectly coincided with those which he now held, that he determined to get acquainted with its authors, feeling that such an association would add greatly to his Christian knowledge. He, therefore, at once severed his connection with the school and set out in his search for more light upon the great religious problems that now consumed his thought. The visit proved a keen disappointment. He found the practice of the church much different from what he had been led to expect from their publication. So, after a short sojourn in the city, with a heavy heart he continued his journey, visiting Baltimore and Washington, in each of which he had learned of small congregations of independent believers. But these visits only added to his disappointment. These early attempts at religious reformation were not always successful and often resulted in a caricature of the thing attempted. "I went thither," he says, describing his fruitless journey, "and having searched them up, I discovered them to be so sunken in the mire of Calvinism, that they refused to reform; and so, finding no pleasure in them, I left them. I then went to the Capitol, and climbing up to the top of its lofty dome, I sat myself down, filled with sorrow at the miserable desolation of the church of God."

His drooping spirits were cheered by his return to Pittsburg, after a journey on foot of three hundred miles. He received a warm welcome from those who had learned his true worth, and, a suitable successor in the schoolroom not having been found, a handsome salary was pledged to secure his services. Broken in spirit and in purse, he accepted the position and continued in the management of the school for several years with remarkable success. But his chief delight now was to minister to the little flock, which, robbed of a pastor by the sudden death of George Forrester, looked to him for leadership.

This period marks the growth of Walter Scott in scriptural things. His reverence for Christ and his Word led to the constant study of the Bible. His chief delight after school hours was the Holy Scriptures. It was in these hours of communion with the Spirit of truth that he made his final dedication of himself to God, promising that if “He would grant him just and comprehensive views of his religion, his life should be spent in proclaiming it to the world.”

It was while thus engaged single-handed in working out the problem of human redemption that the pathway of a recognized champion of reformation crossed his and led him to his final stand in the defense of primitive Christianity. That man was Alexander Campbell, and his first meeting with Walter Scott took place in Pittsburg in 1822, and led to the formation of a friendship and copartnership in the work of reform which continued unbroken till death. They possessed many elements in common, had been reared in the same school of religious thought, had been driven by the same burning thirst for truth to the Bible, and through its message were led to pursue similar paths in their search for acceptance with God. The following, from the pen of Robert Richardson, beautifully presents the predominating characteristics in contrast at the time of their first meeting:

“The different hues in the characters of these two eminent men were such as to be, so to speak, complementary to each other, and to form, by their harmonious blending, a completeness and a brilliancy which rendered their society peculiarly delightful to each other. Thus while Mr. Campbell was fearless, self-reliant and firm, Mr. Scott was naturally timid, diffident and yielding; and, while the former was calm, steady and prudent, the latter was excitable, variable and precipitate. The one, like the north star, was ever in position, unaffected by terrestrial influences; the other, like the magnetic needle, was often disturbed and trembling on its center, yet ever returning, or seeking to return, to its true

direction. Both were nobly endowed with the powers of higher reason, a delicate self-consciousness, a decided will and a clear perception of truth. But as it regards the other departments of the inner nature, in Mr. Campbell the understanding predominated, in Mr. Scott the feelings; and if the former excelled in imagination, the latter was superior in brilliancy of fancy. . . In a word, in almost all those qualities of mind and character which might be regarded differential and distinctive, they were singularly fitted to supply each other's wants and to form a rare and delightful companionship.”²

They at once recognized in each other kindred spirits and joined hands, and with Thomas Campbell formed a trio of unsurpassed genius, eloquence and devotion to the truth. Twenty years later, Alexander Campbell, referring to this meeting in a letter to Scott, wrote: “We were associated in the days of weakness, infancy and imbecility, and tried in the vale of adversity, while as yet there was but a handful. My father, yourself and myself, were the only three spirits that could cooperate in a great work or enterprise. The Lord greatly blessed our very imperfect and feeble beginnings, and this is one reason worth a million that we ought always to cherish the kindest feelings, esteem, admiration, love.” From the day of his meeting with Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott occupied a recognized position as an advocate of religious reformation, and was one of the brightest stars in the galaxy of reformers.

III. FINDING A FIELD

Having now unreservedly dedicated himself to the service of the Lord and the cause of primitive Christianity, Walter Scott awaited the opening of a field suited to his peculiar talent. In the meantime he kept himself busy with the work nearest at hand. He possessed splendid qualifications for teaching, so he continued

² *Memoirs of Campbell*, Vol. 1, p. 510.

to teach. But all the while his heart was burning within him to get out and help wage a crusade against sin and sectarianism. He had come to regard the sect spirit, then so bitter, as the most serious barrier to the triumph of the Cross.

The little church in Pittsburg, formerly ministered to by George Forrester, looked to him as the spiritual successor of their lamented teacher so he continued to break to them the bread of life at their weekly assemblies, without remitting in the least his labors in the school-room. But this did not satisfy him. He longed for a wider field. He felt himself possessed of a message which would speedily correct the religious errors and apathy of the times, and he craved a suitable opportunity to deliver it.

His meeting with Alexander Campbell, already noted, was a providential circumstance, contributing to the enlargement of his field. At that time Mr. Campbell was planning the publication of a monthly journal, which should become the exponent of the movement which he and his father had inaugurated. He had recognized in Walter Scott a man of more than ordinary ability, and at once took him into his confidence, and urged him to address a wider field through the columns of the proposed journal. To this Mr. Scott readily acceded, and it was at his suggestion that the name "Christian Baptist" was adopted as the most suitable title. This beginning of labors was destined to continue uninterrupted to the end. Scarcely a number of the "Christian Baptist," through its seven years' existence, was issued without something from the pen of Walter Scott, and each article breathed a message that had burned itself deep into his conviction. It was the modern watch-word, "Back to Christ," stated in its primitive form, "Jesus is the Christ." This truth was the rock upon which he had planted his feet, the center and circumference of his religious system.

"Shut your eyes to it," he wrote in his Essay on Teaching Christianity, "and Christianity is a most dark and perplexing

scheme. Once behold it, and you behold the most certain and substantial argument for love to God and men. This same Holy One died for sin, and if the knowledge of it fails to influence our hope, and love, and joy, it may safely be said that the Scriptures have nothing of equal weight to propose for this purpose. That man is, or is not a Christian, who is, or is not constrained by this grand truth to abandon sin and live unto God, and this is all the Scriptures mean by the word Gospel, in the noblest sense of that term. This is the grace and philanthropy of God, which, having appeared unto all men, teaches us to deny all ungodliness and to live soberly, righteously and godly in the present evil world.”³

“In my humble judgment,” wrote Isaac Errett more than fifty years later, “the most thoroughly revolutionary element in Walter Scott’s advocacy of reformation, and that which has proved most far-reaching in its influence, is just this concerning the central truth of Christianity. It not only shaped all his preaching, but it shaped the preaching and practice of the reformers generally, and called the attention of the religious world at large to the fact that a person, and not a system of doctrines, is the proper object of faith, and that faith in Jesus, love for Jesus, and obedience to Jesus is the grand distinction of Christianity.”⁴

The numerous contributions from his pen at this period proved their author to be a man of vast knowledge and deep discernment of spiritual things, and speedily gained him a reputation scarcely inferior to that of the editor himself.

While thus engaged in the triple service of teaching, preaching and writing, Walter Scott found time for courtship, which resulted in his marriage to Miss Sarah Whitsett. This pious young woman, though at the time a member of the religious body known as the Covenanters, was soon won to her husband’s views,

³ The Christian Baptist, p. 37.

⁴ Addresses, p. 320.

and shared without a murmur her husband's toils and privations. Of his appearance at this period, one of his admiring pupils has preserved us this picture:

“He was at this time about twenty-six years of age, about the medium height; slender and rather spare in person, and possessed of little muscular strength. His aspect was abstracted, meditative, and sometimes had even an air of sadness. His nose was straight, his lips rather full, but delicately chiseled; his eye dark and lustrous, full of intelligence and tenderness; and his hair, clustering above his fine ample forehead, was black as the raven's wing.”

Some time in 1826, Mr. Scott, still dissatisfied with the work in which he was engaged, closed his school in Pittsburg, and having secured a successor as pastor of the church, removed his family to Steubenville, Ohio. Failing yet to find a field which could assure him support in the ministry of the Word, and being wholly dependent on his own resources, he again entered the school-room. Though the change was at first attended with disappointment, there was something almost providential in his removal within the borders of Ohio at that time. His new situation brought him within the limits of the Mahoning Association of the Baptist churches, where the leaven of new truth, implanted by the debate between Campbell and Walker and through the monthly visits of the “Christian Baptist,” was already beginning to work. In the autumn of this year, he attended the annual meeting of the Association, and, though not a member, was invited to deliver one of the principal addresses. While his presentation of the Gospel message was with an originality and power that fixed him in the memory of the occasion, nothing came of it at the time in the way of enlarged opportunity; and he returned to his school-room in Steubenville so discouraged as to abandon, for a time, further thought of securing a footing in the ministry.

If God could not use him in the pulpit, he now determined to try and render him service in another way. The success of his contributions in the "Christian Baptist" led him to conceive the publication of the "Millennial Herald," a paper to be devoted to the defense of the Gospel, and to the advocacy of views of the millennium, in which he had become much interested. While Walter Scott was preparing to embark in this editorial enterprise, Alexander Campbell, on his way to the Association of 1827, visited him, and, after much persuasion, prevailed upon him to attend the meeting to be held in New Lisbon.

That visit became the turning point in Scott's life, giving him to the reformation as its most accomplished evangelist and committing the Baptist churches of the Western Reserve to the cause in which he was enlisted. The Baptist churches embraced within the Mahoning Association were, at that time, with few exceptions, in a languishing condition. Conversions were few and indifference wide-spread. A few zealous spirits, grieved at the prevailing indifference, urged, as a means of putting new life into the work, the employment of an evangelist, who should be sent among the churches. Walter Scott, though not a member of the association, was chosen for this important work. Distrusting his own abilities, and having, on account of many discouragements, planned for himself another career, it was with difficulty and only after prayerful, tearful consideration, that his consent was secured and the plans of his life changed. But yielding at last to the entreaty of his brethren, he accepted with all his heart, and dismissing his school, giving up his paper, and taking leave of his family, he at once began the work in which he was ultimately to distinguish himself.

At first his efforts were unsuccessful. He had studied the Word of God long and prayerfully. Its message and method had smitten his heart, and he resolved to try the experiment of preaching the Gospel according to the New Testament model; but after his earnest appeals nobody responded. It was so different

from the revival methods in vogue, that men were disposed to question rather than obey. Instead of giving way to traditional prejudice, he said to himself, "This is the way of God, and ought to succeed, and with his help it shall."

After two or three unsuccessful efforts, he began at New Lisbon. Here he was soon to witness the removal of the barriers and the triumph of the cause that was near his heart. On the first Sunday after his arrival, an eager throng filled the meeting-house where he was to speak. He preached a discourse of great power, unfolding the procedure by which men were made Christians in the primitive church, and urging men to accept Christ upon the terms offered by Peter on the day of Pentecost. As his discourse drew to a close, an intelligent man was seen to enter the door, and, at the invitation, having heard but the closing sentences of the sermon, he pressed through the crowd to accept Christ upon the conditions which Mr. Scott had quoted. That man, William Amend, had long been waiting for such an opportunity to obey Christ, and now became the first fruits of a mighty revival, which not only continued to attend Mr. Scott's ministry from that moment, but which spread with its Pentecostal blessing wherever the new way was proclaimed. The man, endowed, equipped, consecrated, had found his proper field, and from that day the name of Walter Scott became a household word to thousands of disciples whose lives were touched by his blessed ministry.

IV. GOSPEL TRIUMPHS IN MANY PLACES

The work which opened so auspiciously at New Lisbon, under the preaching of Walter Scott, marked the beginning of a new revival era, which, in its far-reaching results, is second only to that of Pentecost. It was not characterized by the deep feeling that attended the revival of religion under Jonathan Edwards at Northampton, beginning in 1740. Nor was it the scene of wild excitement and strange bodily exercises, like those which followed the preaching of George Whitfield and the early ministry of

Barton W. Stone. It was marked by a quiet thoughtfulness, an unwonted searching of the Scriptures “whether those things were so,” and a final decision to obey the personal Christ, expressed in public confession and scriptural baptism. Based upon an intelligent acceptance of the Gospel, it was saved from the peril of reaction which must follow a season of overwrought feeling, and as a revival of inexhaustible power, continues to the present time its season of refreshing, wherever the simple terms of the Gospel are faithfully presented.

The conversion of William Amend confirmed Mr. Scott in his conviction that the old way, announced by God’s inspired messengers at Pentecost, was the right way. So the invitation was given from night to night, and large numbers became obedient to the faith.

Strange as it may seem, the reformers had none of them, up to this time, thought of making such a practical use of their discoveries. Thomas Campbell, it is true, had many years before announced as his platform, “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.” Alexander Campbell, in his debate with McCalla in 1823, had unfolded the design of baptism in terms almost identical with those now used by Walter Scott, and, in the “Christian Baptist,” had canvassed the whole ground of practical obedience to God. But what had been held by them as a theory, was for the first time used as a method of inducting men into the kingdom, as Walter Scott called upon his convicted hearers to “repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.”

There had been widespread lethargy among the churches before the advent of Walter Scott. The Mahoning Association, though made up of God-fearing men, was no exception. Religious life was stagnant. Conversions were rare. The enemies of truth were defiant. For the year 1825, the seventeen churches which comprised the association reported only sixteen converts to

Christ. The success of Scott in arousing the churches and winning converts soon opened before him a wide field. The tidal wave of revival once set in motion continued to rise. Appeals came to him from every side for assistance.

For the work which now consumed his strength he was eminently qualified. He had a voice of matchless sweetness and persuasiveness. His mind was well stored with truth and garnished with scriptural imagery. He was endowed with a rare gift of language by which the old story was clothed in most beautiful form. His heart was bursting with love for his matchless Savior and sympathy for his fellowmen. All his rare powers he had dedicated unreservedly to the Master's use. With an originality bordering on the eccentric, and a courage that did not hesitate to speak the truth, however unpopular, he succeeded in drawing together multitudes of earnest listeners wherever he went, nor did he fail in convincing the most intelligent and bringing them to the acceptance of the truth he preached.

As might be expected, a character so unique and a message so antagonistic to the prevailing instruction of the times, would soon encounter opposition and misrepresentation. The members of the Baptist Church, for the most part, received the Word gladly and welcomed the evangelist; but leaders of the other denominations became bitter in their opposition. Preachers warned their flocks against him, and charged him with preaching water salvation and ignoring the need of a change of heart. At last word was brought Alexander Campbell that Mr. Scott had become the author of rank heresy, and, fearing lest the young preacher, in his zeal and enthusiasm, had been carried beyond the bounds of prudence, he sent his venerable father to learn the exact state of the case. After a visit to the scene of Scott's labors and a careful observation of the course he was pursuing, Thomas Campbell wrote his son:

“We have long known the theory, and have spoken and published many things correctly concerning the ancient Gospel,

its simplicity and perfect adaptation to the present state of mankind, for the benign and gracious purpose of his immediate relief and complete salvation; but I must confess that, in respect to the direct exhibition and application of it, for that blessed purpose, I am at present, for the first time, upon the ground where the thing has appeared to be practically exhibited to the proper purpose.”⁵

Notwithstanding the boldness of Mr. Scott’s preaching and his independence of traditional forms, he was well received by the Baptist churches forming the association for which he labored. Wherever he went among them they speedily fell in with his way of thinking, and most of them, abandoning their creeds and covenants, determined, henceforth, to be governed by the Scriptures alone.

It was a period of tireless effort. “With his faithful horse, he traveled miles between appointments, preaching and teaching the people wherever he went. An eye-witness has thus described the scenes that were transpiring continually under his ministry:

“It was not uncommon for him to occupy the court-house or school-house in the morning at the county-seat, address a large assembly in some great grove in the afternoon, and have the private dwelling which gave him shelter crowded at night to hear him before he sought his needed rest. Sometimes the interest would continue until midnight; and in those stirring times it was not unusual for those who, on such occasions, felt the power of truth, to be baptized before the morning dawned. The beautiful Mahoning became a second Jordan, and Scott another John calling on the people to prepare the way of the Lord. Everywhere among the new converts arose men, earnest and bold as the

⁵ Life of Elder Walter Scott, p. 158.

Galilean fishermen, telling, too, the same story, calling their neighbors to repentance and baptizing them in its clear waters.”⁶

It is said that throughout that region at that time nearly every convert became a preacher, either in public or private; and the New Testament became the daily companion of every believer. By the close of Mr. Scott’s first year in the evangelistic field he was able to report a thousand converts, languishing churches revived, and many new congregations planted. So remarkable had been his success, that he was unanimously chosen to continue the work, and consented, stipulating only that he be given “his Bible, his head and William Hayden,” a zealous young preacher, as an assistant, promising with such an equipment to convert the world.

Shortly after entering upon his second year of evangelistic labors, a call came to Mr. Scott to a field where victory was not to be so easily won, and where he was to experience the bitterness of the sectarian hate which was shortly to set all those who sympathized with Mr. Campbell adrift.

The Baptist Church at Sharon, Pa., had heard of his earnest and successful labors among the churches of Ohio, and invited him to come to their aid. As soon as opportunity afforded he responded to their call. His clear, forcible, scriptural presentation of the truth soon led many to accept the Gospel. Upon a simple profession of their faith in Jesus as the Son of God, they were baptized in the river near by. This was a new and unprecedented course for that place and time. No sooner had the evangelist left than the church discovered that his converts had failed to conform to Baptist usages. They had not given an experience before a church meeting. Their fitness for the kingdom had not been determined by the accepted tests. It was, consequently, decided that they could not be admitted into the membership of

⁶ Life of Elder Walter Scott, p. 148.

the church. A serious trouble soon arose. Not satisfied with keeping out new converts, the conservative portion of the congregation determined that all who sympathized with the new converts and shared in Mr. Scott's way of thinking, should be excluded from the fellowship of the church. The result was the withdrawal of many of the leading members of the church, who, together with those who had accepted Christ under Mr. Scott's preaching, formed a new organization upon broad New Testament principles.

This was but the beginning of a bitter conflict which became widespread and which resulted in the complete separation of Baptists and those who accepted the principles of the reformation. When the Mahoning Association met in the autumn of 1830, such had been the leavening influence of Walter Scott's evangelism that it disbanded, and so ceased connection with the Baptist Church, which had already, as a denomination, repudiated all who were tinctured with the principles advocated by Alexander Campbell and his co-laborers.

It was at this point that Walter Scott, in the estimation of all friends of religious co-operation, "made the mistake of his noble, grand life" by leading in the overthrow of organized religious co-operation. Regarding the Association as "an ecclesiastical tribunal," he labored to accomplish its dissolution in opposition to the more practical judgment of Alexander Campbell; and men like William Hayden never ceased to deplore it. "It was at a juncture," wrote Isaac Errett fifty years later, "when the condition of numerous infant churches, and the widening fields for mission work required more than ever the combined wisdom and resources of the churches. But in a moment of rashness this system of co-operation was dissolved. The infant churches were left to struggle through the perils of infancy, or to die. The inviting fields of labor that opened on every hand were neglected or irregularly occupied by any preacher that could spare the time and labor, and the work that had gone so gloriously forward

under the Association suffered seriously. We have been trying now for over thirty years to recover lost ground; and to this day we reap the unhappy consequences of what I cannot help regard as the folly of that hour.”⁷

But whatever the blame attached to Walter Scott in this matter, it was shared by a majority of his brethren, and was the legitimate result of the relentless war which was being waged against ecclesiastic domination by all the reformers.

V. PECULIARITIES AND POWER

The point at which we have now arrived in the career of Walter Scott marks the zenith of his fruitful life and affords us a good outlook from which to survey those qualities of heart and mind which endeared him to the people.

He was yet comparatively a young man, thirty-one; but he had risen to a position second only to that of Alexander Campbell in the esteem of the brethren. Never before had he shown himself possessed of such irresistible power as a preacher; and seldom again did he rise to the height of impassioned eloquence which characterized his three years' evangelism among the churches of the Western Reserve. His whole nature, always intensely fervid, was aroused. The vast multitudes that gathered to hear him, and the constant success that attended his preaching, called forth the best there was in him. He felt that upon the adoption of the principles which he advocated rested the victory of truth. It was not the narrow zeal of a bigot, but the broadening spirit of Christian liberty and human sympathy, that fired his soul. He saw Christ, and Christ only, and saw in him, rather than in the prevailing systems of theology, the hope of the world's redemption. Whatever was peculiar in the preaching of this man of God, was born of intense loyalty to Christ.

⁷ Linsey-Woolsey and other Addresses, p. 335.

These were great years in his life,—I feel almost justified in saying that they embrace all that is essential and enduring in his life-work. At a critical period in the history of the reformation, the churches among a most intelligent people were won to the cause of primitive Christianity. Furthermore, in them, he set a pace in revival work, and whatever there is of good or evil in the present-day methods of revivalism among the Disciples of Christ, may be traced to him.

In his method of winning attention, Mr. Scott was often regarded as eccentric; though, in fact, his eccentricities consisted, for the most part, of a deeper sense of the importance of Divine truth than that possessed by most men of his time. He felt himself anointed of God to lead his children into the larger liberties of the Gospel. In his zeal as the messenger of the Most High, his complete self-forgetfulness sometimes made him appear peculiar to cold and undemonstrative natures.

His novel, original methods were sometimes quite surprising, but always successful. In the absence of the daily paper and regularly appointed services, he would often resort to methods of his own in announcing his presence and mission in the community. On one occasion, meeting a group of children on the road home from school in the village where he desired to preach, in a kindly way, with good humor beaming from his face, he gathered them about him. Gaining their attention, he requested them to hold up their hands, while on their fingers, beginning with the thumb, he marked off the Gospel terms in the order in which he had formulated them,—faith, repentance, baptism, the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then he had the children repeat with him, “Faith, repentance, baptism, the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Then he had them say it over again faster, until they could all repeat it in concert. “Now,” said he, “run home and tell your parents that a man will preach the Gospel tonight at the school-house, as you have it on the five fingers of your hand.” The children ran away

in great glee with their message, and at the appointed hour the house was thronged. They came out of curiosity, but were soon led to heights of spiritual vision of which they had never dreamed.

On another occasion, when his announcement brought out only a few and they were characterized by the most stolid indifference, instead of going on with the service, he asked all who were on the Lord's side to arise. No one stood up. He then asked all who were in favor of the devil to stand. Still there was no response. After a thoughtful survey of the house, he remarked that he had never seen such an audience before,—that if they had stood up either for God or the devil, he would have known what to do, but that he would have to study their case and try and meet it, and that on the next evening he would give them the result of his reflections. He then took his departure, leaving them in amazement; but the next evening the house was not large enough to hold the people who came, and in the end a great victory was achieved.

Another characteristic that made him greatly beloved by the people, was his intense sympathy with human need and his generosity in contributing to human relief, always far beyond his means. He never thought of his own necessities, and, I fear, sometimes forgot those of his family, when others seemed in greater need. He was always ready to share, though himself often reduced to the extremest poverty. He would sometimes go to the market for food and return with an empty basket, having given away the money with which the purchase was to be made, either to friend or stranger, whose real need seemed to be more pressing than his own.

The largest property he seems to have owned was two cows, and this possession he did not long enjoy; for, finding a neighbor who did not have any, they were soon on an equality, each having

one, the only difference being that the neighbor had the best cow. One intimately associated with him at that period writes:

“These were pioneer days—days of great trials and triumphs. Bro. Scott enjoyed the triumphs with a keen relish, and felt the crushing weight of pioneer privations and trials, as only such natures as his could feel. He had embarked his all in his plea for the primitive Gospel, and at that time there was no earthly compensation for such labors. He was poor, very poor; while I lived in his family it was not at all uncommon for them to be almost destitute of the common necessities of life. He was a great believer in prayer, and just at the point of greatest need help always came.”

But, whatever his earthly lot, Walter Scott had an unfailing fountain in which his soul daily delighted. It was the Word of God, no mere ornament in his home, but his companion by day and the subject of his meditation in the night watches. He loved the Bible, and he would at times burst forth in an apostrophe like this:

“Oh, book of God! thou sacred temple! thou holy place! thou golden incense altar! thou heavenly shew-bread! thou cherubim-embroidered vail! thou mercy-seat of beaten gold! thou Shekinah in which the Divinity is enshrined! thou ark of the covenant! thou new creation! thou tree of life, whose sacred leaves heal the nations! thou river of life, whose waters cleanse and refresh the world! thou New Jerusalem, resplendent with gems and gold! thou paradise of God, wherein walks the second Adam! thou throne of God and the Lamb! thou peace-promising bow, encircling that throne unsullied and unfallen! Image of God and his Son who sit thereon, what a futurity of dignity, kingly majesty and eternal glory is hidden in thee! thou art my comfort in the house of my pilgrimage! Let the kings and counselors of the earth and princes who have got gold and silver, build for themselves sepulchers in solitary places; but mine, oh, be it mine, to die in

the Lord! Then earth to earth and dust to dust, but the great mausoleum, the Word of God, be the shrine of my soul!"⁸

VI. THE COURSE FINISHED

The story of the remaining years of Walter Scott's life must be briefly told. They were busy years, not unfruitful of results, but the great victory of his life had already been won. Henceforth his energies were spent in his Master's service, over a wide field, in many useful labors; but never again was he confronted by such a problem as that presented in Eastern Ohio, in the early years of his ministry, and never again did he witness such heart-cheering results.

Although still in the prime of life, his severe and unremitting toil had told sadly on his health. Afflicted with dyspepsia and depressed in spirit, he ceased for a time from evangelistic labors, and, in the autumn of 1831, removed to the vicinity of Cincinnati, leaving behind him thousands whose entrance into the kingdom of light and life and joy was secured by his logical, scriptural, warm-hearted presentation of the claims of divine truth.

On his removal to Cincinnati, he attempted to follow the revered James Challen as pastor of the church. His fame had preceded him and much was expected. But both pastor and people were disappointed in the result. Missing the inspiration of great audiences and hundreds of converts, he fell below the expectation of his hearers. At last in despair he wrote Mr. Challen: "The flock are sighing and pining for their former shepherd; you must come back, you alone can satisfy them. I cannot and will not consent to remain with them, as long as there is any hope or prospect of your return."

⁸ Life of Walter Scott, p. 292.

Not long afterward Mr. Scott removed to Carthage, a village in the vicinity of the city. He found here a community without church or religious privileges other than a Sunday-school, and given over to all forms of vice and dissipation. It was such a place as appealed to the sympathies of his warm nature. They were as sheep without a shepherd, and he set about at once gathering them into the school-house and instructing them in the principles of the kingdom. He was again in his proper sphere. With a heart bursting with love for humanity, he wept and prayed and talked, until he had those who had known only sin, weeping and praying. In a short time the entire character of the community was changed. Temperance and piety took the place of drunkenness and disorder. A church was established which has continued to the present day as a power for good. Here he continued to reside for thirteen years, not as pastor, for much of his time was devoted to evangelistic work abroad; but the little church during all these years was the object of his fostering care, and enjoyed his labors and fellowship whenever other duties permitted.

Hitherto Mr. Scott's labors had been confined to Ohio and Pennsylvania, but now a wider field claimed his service. In Kentucky, where the cause of reformation had made rapid progress, he was much in demand, and wherever he went his presence was a benediction.

At last, wearied with the hardships and privations of an evangelist's lot, he determined to devote himself to the quieter sphere of journalism. Returning with his family to Pittsburg, the scene of his early labors, he began the publication of a weekly paper, called the "Protestant Unionist," advocating the principles of the reformation, but especially urging the union of God's people. In his intellectual equipment he was well qualified for the position he now occupied. A man of native genius and liberal education, none were better fitted than he to set forth the claims of the cause to which he had given his heart. But here, as at every

turn in his path through life, the gaunt figure of poverty arose before him. Unable to meet his bills and provide for his family, he was compelled, after a time, to suspend the publication of the paper.

Recognizing as he did the importance of the Bible and the value of its companionship in the home, he now did service as a colporteur. In this way seeking to bring the truth of God into the homes, he went from house to house with a basket of Bibles, selling or giving them away as circumstances demanded. He still continued to preach as he had opportunity, and the friendships and fellowship which he now enjoyed afforded him great pleasure. The few years spent at Pittsburg in this golden autumn were possibly the happiest of his life.

But here, in 1849, a great sorrow cast its shadow over his life in the death of the heroic woman who, since 1823, had shared his labors and uncomplainingly endured the privations which fell to the lot of the pioneer preacher. This loss, together with the death of others very near to him, led him again to seek a new home, going this time to Kentucky, first to Covington and later to Mayslick, where his earthly pilgrimage was to reach its end. He closed his lifework as he began it, in the school-room. In no place was he more at home and for no work was he better qualified. He was a born teacher of men. It was in recognition of his splendid ability as an educator that he was invited to address the College of Teachers which held its annual meetings in Cincinnati, and which embraced among its members some of the ablest men of that period.

As the shadows of his life lengthened, he sought to put his life-thought into permanent form, in the preparation and publication of a volume entitled "The Messiahship, or the Great Demonstration." Who better than he could unfold in its matchless splendor the work of the world's Redeemer? All his life long he had lived in an atmosphere of faith and adoration. Christ

had been his theme, his hope, his joy. The preparation of this volume, revealing deep lessons of human experience and divine truth, was the fitting close of his literary labors. With the weight of more than three score years resting upon him, he now relinquished the work that had consumed most of his active ministry.

His last days were spent amid the excitement and anguish of the beginning of the great rebellion, to which his own sensitive nature responded with deep concern. He was a patriot whose love for country was only less intense than his love for Christ—the forerunner of the Christian-citizenship movement of today. Though a foreigner by birth, the nation had few more loyal sons than he.

“I remember distinctly,” he once said, “the moment I became an American citizen at heart; it was not when I went through the forms of the laws of naturalization, but on the occasion of my meeting with a procession headed by a band playing national airs and bearing a national banner. Inspired by the strain, as I looked on the national emblem, I felt that under that flag and for it, if need be, I could die, and I felt at that moment that I was in feeling as well as in law an American citizen; that that flag was my flag and that this country was my country.”

Animated by such a spirit, his heart bled over the threatened disunion. At the firing on Fort Sumter, only a few days before he died, he wrote: “Oh, my country! my country! How I love thee! How I deplore thy present misfortunes!” These were the last words he ever penned. A few days later he fell asleep, rejoicing in the promises of a glorified Redeemer. And so passed from earth on the twenty-third of April, 1861, one of its choicest spirits, whose life and memory have been a benediction to thousands.

Walter Scott was an important, may I not say providential, factor in the work of religious reformation to which his life was devoted. It was no small circumstance that brought this talented young man to America at the opportune time, as men were searching for the old paths, that threw him at once into companionship with such a choice spirit as George Forrester, that led early to his association with the Campbells, and that resulted in his selection as evangelist to go among the scattered Baptist churches of Ohio. Each step was important in the preparation of the man for the splendid service he was to render. With a trained mind capable of a broad grasp of the truth, with a sympathetic heart that never failed to awaken enthusiastic response, with a loyal spirit that followed unhesitatingly in the steps of the Master, he was pre-eminently the man for the work to which God called him. None knew him better than his eminent co-laborer, Alexander Campbell, and none were capable of placing a fairer estimate upon his service.

“Next to my father,” writes the Sage of Bethany, “he was my most cordial and indefatigable fellow-laborer in the origin and progress of the present reformation. We often took counsel together in our efforts to plead and advocate the paramount claims of original and apostolic Christianity. His whole heart was in the work. He was, indeed, truly eloquent, in the whole import of that word, in pleading the claims of the Author and Founder of the Christian faith and hope, and in disabusing the inquiring mind of all its prejudices, misapprehensions and errors. He was, too, most successful in winning souls to the allegiance of the Divine Author and Founder of the Christian institution, and in putting to silence the cavilings and objections of the modern Pharisees and Sadducees of sectariandom.”⁹

As a preacher, in his best moments he had few equals, but he was not always great. His efforts were characterized by peculiar

⁹ *Millennial Harbinger*, 1861, p. 296.

unevenness, often disappointing to his friends and crushing to his own sensitive nature. This was doubtless in part due to extravagant expectations which it was impossible for any man to meet, and partly from ill health and attendant depression of spirits. Painfully conscious of his failure at such times, he was wont to remark: "The smile of the Lord was not on me today." But when he enjoyed the "smile of the Lord," few men equaled him in the power to thrill an audience. Men were known, as they listened to his flights, to unconsciously rise in their places and bend forward, lest they should miss a word. Once in a discourse of unusual power, in which he unfolded the glories of redemption, Alexander Campbell, though naturally not demonstrative, was so filled with rapture and admiration that, as the preacher reached his climax, he shouted "Glory to God in the highest." In his great moments Walter Scott was sublime. But whether sublime or commonplace in his utterance, he was always loyal to the truth.

I cannot better close this sketch of a noble life, than with this comparison between him and his distinguished co-laborer, Alexander Campbell, from the pen of William Baxter:

"In no sense were they rivals, any more than Moses and Aaron, or Paul and Silas; but like them, with different gifts, devoting their lives to the accomplishment of the same glorious end. Campbell was always great and self-possessed; Scott subject to great depression, and, consequently, unequal in his public efforts, but at times he knew a rapture which seemed almost inspiration, to which the former was a stranger. Campbell never fell below the expectations of his hearers; Scott frequently did, but there were times when he rose to a height of eloquence which the former never equaled. If Campbell at times reminded his hearers of Paul on Mars' Hill, commanding the attention of the assembled wisdom of Athens, Scott, in his happiest moments, seemed more like Peter on the memorable Pentecost, with the cloven tongue of flame on his head and the inspiration of the

Spirit of truth in his heart, while from heart-pierced sinners on every side rose the agonizing cry, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'"

This is a sample of the material contained in
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