

FROM PERTH TO PENNSYLVANIA: THE LEGACY OF ROBERT SANDEMAN

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Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

— Jude 3

I. INTRODUCTION

For most, the Lordship controversy began in the late 1970's to early 1980's. However, in an article entitled "History Repeats Itself," J. I. Packer correctly noted, "The view that saving faith is no more than 'belief of the truth about Christ's atoning death' is not new. It was put forward in the mid-eighteenth century by the Scot Robert Sandeman."¹ If the average Free Grace proponent was told that their view of saving faith was nothing more than a revival of Robert Sandeman's theology, they would most likely ask, "Who's Robert Sandeman?"

After discussing the ministry of Sandeman and the ill effects of his view of faith, Packer concludes by stating, "The narrow intellectualism of Sandeman's view of faith dampened life-changing evangelism. This was one reason why the Glasite-Sandemanian denomination did not survive."² Nevertheless, Sandeman's motto "contending earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"³ clearly demonstrates that he was not vying for denominational superiority. Rather, he was merely "contending earnestly for the faith." Therefore, while Packer's observation was correct concerning the demise of this group as an

¹ J. I. Packer, "History Repeats Itself," *Christianity Today* (September 1989): 22.

² *Ibid.*

³ Thomas J. South, "The Response of Andrew Fuller to the Sandemanian View of Saving Faith," (Th. D. dissertation, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993), 60.

organized fellowship, the impact that the theology of Robert Sandeman has had upon the church for the last 250 years cannot be ignored.

II. THE BIRTH OF SANDEMANIANISM

While there were certainly many who influenced Sandeman, John Glas, his father-in-law, had one of the greatest affects upon his life. Glas (or Glass) was born in Auchtermuchty, Scotland in 1695 but spent much of his formative years in Perthshire,⁴ where his father, Alexander Glas, served as a Scottish minister. In 1719, following in his father's footsteps, John was ordained a minister in the Church of Scotland within the parish of Tealing.

Because of his convictions that the local church should be autonomous, he was asked to leave the church of Tealing in 1730.⁵ Murray states, "He and his followers formed [Scottish Baptist] churches, first in Dundee and Arbroath..."⁶ and then in fourteen other towns including London and Edinburgh.

After leaving the Church of Scotland, those who agreed with Glas's doctrines formed a new sect, which would later be referred to as the Glasites. This neoteric sect firmly believed in the "autonomy of the local congregation and the authority of Scripture."⁷ These convictions were most likely a reaction to the present climate of the church and state in Scotland.⁸

⁴ D. B. Murray, "John Glas," *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 364.

⁵ South, 47.

⁶ D. B. Murray, "The Scotch Baptist Tradition in Great Britain," *The Baptist Quarterly* (October 1989): 187.

⁷ South, 52.

⁸ Black writes, "After the first rebellion [1715] there was passed a law which forbade any clergyman who had not taken an oath of loyalty to the reigning house to conduct a service attended by more than eight persons, including his own family... many and sometimes quaint expedients were resorted to by non-jurors to circumvent the law. In Inverness it was the custom for the Episcopal minister and his authorized congregation to meet in a room with a hole in the ceiling, through which his voice ascended to a larger gathering in the loft above. The law was thus being obeyed according to the letter, since the people in the loft were not actually present at the service. In some places the worshippers assembled in a barn, while the minister, hidden from view but

Glas's motto was "Let the people take the whole of scripture for their law and guide."⁹ Glas's literal approach to Scripture affected his view on the observance of communion. Black writes, "In an effort to follow closely as possible the first Holy Communion, their sacrament took the form of an actual meal."¹⁰ His motto affected other matters of Ecclesiology as well. The leadership of the Glasites was comprised solely of lay elders. Glas believed that the current hierarchy of the Church of Scotland was biblically unfounded and thus believed, like the soon to arise Plymouth Brethren, that elder leadership was the model advocated by the New Testament.

The advent of this new movement led some to refer to Glas as "the Father of Scottish Congregationalism."¹¹ This was the beginning of the Glasite movement, which would later be popularized by Glas's son-in-law, Robert Sandeman.

III. THE RISE OF SANDEMANIANISM

Robert Sandeman was born in Perth, Scotland on April 29, 1718. His father, David, an indifferent Glasite by membership, introduced his son to Glas's ideas at an early age.¹² However, it was not until 1734 while a student at the University of Edinburgh that Sandeman became a member of a Glasite church.¹³ During his time in Edinburgh, Sandeman had the opportunity to personally meet Glas and some of his associates.

within earshot, stood in the kiln. In others, the service, with its tiny congregation, was conducted near an open window, through which it could be heard by the men and women standing outside, often in rain and snow." C. Stewart Black, *The Scottish Church* (Glasgow: William MacLellan, 1952), 201. Because of the restrictive nature of this oath, which the "loyal" were forced to espouse, some Glasite congregations met in the "open air" in order to circumvent the law. These churches were referred to as Kail Kirk because of the cabbage soup that was so frequently served after each one of the services. (cf. http://www.auchtermuchty.freeserve.co.uk/general_information.html).

⁹ D. B. Murray, "Robert Sandeman," *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 744.

¹⁰ Black, 216.

¹¹ Harry Escott, *A History of Scottish Congregationalism* (Glasgow: Congregational Union of Scotland, 1960), 17.

¹² South, 57.

¹³ D. B. Murray, "Robert Sandeman," *Dictionary of Scottish Church*, 744.

McMillon writes, “Within a few weeks Robert was converted to Glas’s persuasion. He also took part in the church where Glas was an elder.”¹⁴ Sandeman returned to Perth after college, and in 1737 married John Glas’s daughter, Catherine. Four years later he left his weaving business to devote all of his time to the church.¹⁵ This occupational switch was most likely incited by the inception of the Glasite movement.

In 1744, at the age of 26, Sandeman was appointed an elder of Glas’s congregation and became their primary literary publisher. The most controversial and widely read of all his works was *Letters on Theron and Aspasio* (1757).¹⁶ This work was a dialogue between Sandeman and James Hervey, a well-known Calvinist minister from Northamptonshire, concerning Hervey’s work *Dialogues between Theron and Aspasio* (1755). In this book, Hervey concentrated on the doctrine of justification by faith. South comments, “Hervey had been influenced by John Wesley at Oxford, but later asserted that he had altered his view of how salvation is obtained, through correspondence with George Whitefield.”¹⁷ This dialogue brought Sandeman’s theology into the spotlight.

In *Letters on Theron and Aspasio*, Sandeman wrote,

But one thing in the general may be freely said, that where the faith necessary to justification is described, every epithet, word, name, or phrase, prefixed or subjoined to Faith, not meant as description of the truth believed, but of some good motion, disposition, or exercise of the human soul about it, is intended, and really serves, instead of clearing our way, to blindfold and decoy us; to impose upon us, and make us take brass for gold, and chaff for wheat; to lead us to establish our own, in opposition to the divine righteousness; even while our mouths and our ears are filled with high sounding words about the latter.¹⁸

Two hundred years later, Earl Radmacher echoed Sandeman’s sentiment with these words: “We need to beware of the tendency to

¹⁴ Lynn A. McMillon, *Restoration Roots* (Dallas: Gospel Teachers Publications, 1983), 39.

¹⁵ South, 58.

¹⁶ Murray, “Robert Sandeman,” *Dictionary of Scottish Church*, 744.

¹⁷ South, 59.

¹⁸ Robert Sandeman, *Letters on Theron and Aspasio*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Sands, Donaldson, Murray, and Conchran, 1759), 329-30.

overpsychologize the word ‘faith’ and add to it more semantic baggage than it was ever intended to carry by distinguishing faith and saving faith or some other kind of faith.”¹⁹ Apparently, just as the word “faith” has been overpsychologized in the twenty-first century, so it was in Sandeman’s day.

Sandeman continues by saying,

In vain shall we consult catechisms, confessions, and other publicly authorized standards of doctrine for direction here. These are framed by the wisdom of the scribes, and disputers of this world. We can receive no true light about this matter, but from the fountainhead of true knowledge, the sacred oracles of divine revelation.²⁰

Sandeman’s rebuke proves prophetic when one reads S. Lewis Johnson’s pronouncement of the Westminster Confession of Faith as the “standard of reference that evangelicals as a whole will accept in the main.”²¹ Chapter XVIII Section I of the Westminster Confession of Faith reads,

Although hypocrites, and other unregenerate men, may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions: of being in the favor of God and estate of salvation; which hope of theirs shall perish: yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in a state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God: which hope shall never make them ashamed.²²

Hence, according to the Westminster Confession of Faith, only those who persevere in love and good deeds may have assurance of salvation. Apparently, Sandeman’s rebuke of those who consulted catechisms and confessions as standards of reference is just as true today as it was in his day.

¹⁹ Earl Radmacher, “First Response to John F. MacArthur, Jr.,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (March 1990): 38.

²⁰ Sandeman, 329-30.

²¹ S. Lewis Johnson, “How Faith Works,” *Christianity Today* (September 1989): 21.

²² This 1646 version of the Westminster Confession of Faith can be viewed online at http://www.reformed.org/documents/westminster_conf_of_faith.html.

Sandeman continues,

Thence it will appear, that justification comes from *bare faith*. As a Christian, What's his faith, the spring of all his hope? And he answers you in a word, The blood of Christ.²³

Hodges seemingly recapitulates Sandeman's words, when he states, "What faith really is in biblical language, is receiving the testimony of God. It is the *inward conviction* that what God says to us in the gospel is true. That—and that alone—is saving faith."²⁴ Hodges is in agreement with Sandeman that saving faith is faith, which is alone.

Sandeman then turns to the topic of the grace of God. He writes,

Ask a proficient in the popular doctrine the same question, and he immediately begins to tell you a long-winded story, how grace enabled him to become a better man than he was, and this he calls *conversion*. Thus we see what a wide difference there is between the false and the true grace of God.²⁵

In his book *Grace Unknown*, R. C. Sproul illustrates Sandeman's point by stating,

The perseverance of the saints could more accurately be called the preservation of the saints...The believer does not persevere through the power of his unaided will. God's preserving grace makes our perseverance both possible and actual.²⁶

The view that the grace of God will bring about perseverance is exactly the theology that Sandeman was arguing against.

Less than one year after the first printing of *Letters on Theron and Aspasio*, controversy ignited in London. In 1759 an anonymous female dissenter wrote,

I dislike too many things in Mr. Sandeman's Letters to notice, without being to you extremely tedious. And shall therefore give you my Thoughts only of some, as briefly as I can, with respect to,

²³ Sandeman, 329-30.

²⁴ Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1989), 31.

²⁵ Sandeman, 329-30.

²⁶ R. C. Sproul, *Grace Unknown: The Heart of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 210.

1. His Omission of the great Work of Regeneration, as previous to any Act of Faith in us, for Salvation.²⁷

The reformed theologian R. C. Sproul seems to agree with the dissenter when he writes, “We cannot exercise saving faith until we have been regenerated, so we say faith is dependent on regeneration, not regeneration on faith.”²⁸ The view that regeneration precedes faith is obviously not new.

Sandeman’s female dissenter concludes,

But, Sir, The Scripture Doctrine, concerning justifying and Saving Faith, is much more than a *bare* Persuasion of the Truth of the Gospel’s Report, That Christ died for Sinners.²⁹

This view of *bare faith*, for which Sandeman became well known, would later influence the likes of Alexander Campbell and the Plymouth Brethren.

In 1760, word reached Sandeman in London that his work *Letters on Theron and Aspasio* had caused quite a stir in the American colonies. Encouraged by their response to his views on *bare faith*, Sandeman left England for America with John Glas’s blessing.³⁰

While preaching in various towns along the east coast, Sandeman attracted great crowds. However, he was not always warmly welcomed. On December 14, 1764 in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, a mob broke out and smashed the windows of the meeting room where he was preaching. Sandeman was subsequently given four days to leave town.³¹ Nevertheless, soon after this incident, on May 4, 1765, a church was established in that very city. Several other congregations also sprang up in the surrounding areas.

After this event Sandeman became an elder of a congregation in Danbury, Connecticut. Due to his religious and political beliefs, Sandeman

²⁷ *Mr. Sandeman Refuted by An Old Woman: or Thoughts on his Letters to the Author of Theron and Aspasio: In a Letter from a Friend in the Country to a Friend in Town* (London: J. Hart in Popping’s Court, 1759), 3.

²⁸ Sproul, 195.

²⁹ *Mr. Sandeman Refuted by An Old Woman*, 9.

³⁰ South, 60-61.

³¹ Jean F. Hankins, “A Different Kind of Loyalist: The Sandemanians of New England during the Revolutionary War,” *The New England Quarterly* (June 1987): 225-26.

was fined and asked to leave town in the spring of 1770. However, Sandeman never left Danbury. He died there on April 2, 1771. After a short controversy over whether his body could be buried in the city limits, the town relented and he was buried in the Old Wooster Street graveyard.³² To this day, his gravestone reads:³³

Here lies
 Until the Resurrection
 The body of
ROBERT SANDEMAN;
 A native of Perth, North Britain;
 Who, in the face of continual opposition
 From all sorts of men,
 Long and boldly contended
 For the ancient faith;
 That the bare work of Jesus Christ,
 Without a deed,
 or thought on the part of man,
 is sufficient to present
THE CHIEF [OF] SINNERS
 Spotless before God.
 To preach this blessed truth,
 He left his country—he left his friends;
 And, after much patient suffering,
 Finished his labours,
 At Danbury,
 Second April, 1771, Aged 52

IV. THE INFLUENCE

While he was alive, Robert Sandeman contended earnestly for the faith, forsaking cohort, comfort, and even country. On April 2, 1771, Robert Sandeman went to be with the Lord, however, his influence

³² Ibid., 233.

³³ South, 61. There seems to be two variant readings. For an optional reading visit <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~bronwyn/ssbionotices.htm#johng>.

would live on through the likes of Greville Ewing, John Walker, and Alexander Campbell.

A. GREVILLE EWING

Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, Greville Ewing was ordained in 1793 as the associate minister at Lady Glenorchy's Chapel. He became well known for his expository preaching and love for missions, establishing Scotland's first mission's periodical, the *Missionary Magazine*.³⁴ Richardson notes,

The object of the *Missionary Magazine* was to awaken the churches to the importance of missions to the heathen world; and it was conducted with marked ability by Mr. Ewing, and caused no little stir throughout Scotland.³⁵

In an alliance with the Haldane brothers, whom some claim were growth catalysts for Congregationalism in Scotland,³⁶ Ewing began tutoring students of theology. This alliance would soon unravel as Richardson notes,

In his religious sentiments generally he [Ewing] was much more favorable to the views of Glas and Sandeman than were the Haldanes. Indeed, the introduction of the works of Sandeman into the seminary at Glasgow gave umbrage to the Haldanes, who protested against it, and it was one of the reasons for the transfer of the seminary to Edinburgh.³⁷

Furthermore, Richardson comments,

As it respects the doctrines of the Haldanes, he found that they did not fully approve of the views of Glas, Sandeman, and of Walker... the Haldanes regarded the writings of Glas and Sandeman

³⁴ K. J. Steward, "Greville Ewing," *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 309.

³⁵ Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell: A View of the Origin, Progress, and Principles of the Religious Reformation Which He Advocated*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1868), 151-52.

³⁶ See John Butler's article at <http://www.congregational.org.uk/main3/history/scotland2.htm>. It is interesting to note that the Haldanes, who sold their estates in order to fund evangelistic efforts, in July 1798 began establishing Circus Churches where the poor could hear the gospel free of charge.

³⁷ Richardson, 177-78.

as exhibiting, here and there, noble views of the freeness of the gospel and the simplicity of faith; but to their system, as a whole, and especially to the intolerant spirit manifested by them and their followers, both the brothers were always strongly opposed. With regard to faith, they regarded Sandeman's view, that it was the mere assent of the understanding to testimony, and that faith in Christ did not differ from faith in any other historical personage, as frigid and defective.³⁸

Ewing went on to influence many with Sandemanian doctrines, including Alexander Campbell, the founder of the Campbellites, the Disciples of Christ, and the Church of Christ, which will be discussed later.

B. JOHN WALKER

Not much is known about John Walker's formative years except that he was born in Exeter, England between late 1773 to early 1774.³⁹ While teaching at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, he ministered at Bethesda Chapel. After becoming disenchanted with the church as a whole, Walker resigned from the fellowship in 1804. Walker, a doctor by trade, was a peculiar sort who was not particularly concerned with the cares of this world. Richardson notes, "This singular man sold his carriage and traveled on foot through Ireland..."⁴⁰ According to Whitsitt, Walker was "a learned and unfortunate gentleman whose literalism had rendered him one of the most fantastic of all Sandemanians."⁴¹ In other words, Walker was a fanatic.

³⁸ Ibid., 177.

³⁹ G. B. Tatham, *Dr. John Walker and the Sufferings of the Clergy*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1911), 1. Because there is so little known about Rev. John Walker, his exact birth date is unavailable.

⁴⁰ Richardson, 61-62.

⁴¹ William H. Whitsitt, *Sidney Rigdon: The Real Founder of Mormonism*, Book 2 (unpublished), 105. (This work can be found at <http://sidneyrigdon.com/wht/1891WhtB.htm>). Richardson also implicitly ties Walker to Sandeman by saying, "As it respects the doctrines taught by the Haldanes, he found that they did not fully approve of the views of Glas, Sandeman, and of Walker..." (p. 176). Furthermore, in 1815 Alexander Campbell wrote, "I am now an Independent in church government; of that faith and view of the gospel exhibited in John Walker's *Seven Letters to Alexander Knox*, and a Baptist so

The influence of Walker's preaching in Ireland and England has some controversy behind it. Richardson states that Walker traveled "through England and gained here and there a few proselytes to his views, especially Plymouth, from whence they have become known as the Plymouth Brethren."⁴² Many have tried to link John Walker, and thus Sandeman, to the founding of the Plymouth Brethren. However, there is not unanimity among historians. Contrary to Richardson's opinion, William B. Neatby states,

Bretherenism cannot in any proper sense be affiliated with either of these movements [Walkerites and Kellyites], indeed, there is not a word in the narratives of any of the early Brethren to indicate that they consciously received any influence from them. But, that such movements existed is proof of the wide diffusion of ideas that went to form Brethrenism, and to which Brethrenism in its turn was destined to give a far more durable embodiment, and a far more extensive influence.⁴³

Whether or not Walker had a direct hand in the founding of the Plymouth Brethren cannot be proven, however, even those like Neatby who deny Walker's direct influence, acknowledge his influence on the movement.

F. F. Bruce notes,

Founders of the Brethren movement were a group of young men, mostly associated with Trinity College, Dublin, who tried to find a

far as regards baptism" (<http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/egates/tdoc/TDOC02.HTM>).

⁴² Richardson, 61-62. In the first footnote, Richardson notes, "These 'Brethren,' however, it is believed, do not accord with all the views held by Walker. They practice immersion, but do not make it a term of communion; have no officers in the church, and conceive that 'the unity of the Spirit' is shown by each member rising, as he may be moved to perform public functions. They have small churches in England at various points, as at Leeds, Liverpool, etc., and the philanthropist Müller, author of the 'Life of Faith,' was immersed by them."

⁴³ William B. Neatby, *A History of the Plymouth Brethren*, 2nd ed. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1902), 27.

way in which they could come together for worship and communion simply as fellow-Christians, disregarding denominational barriers.⁴⁴

If this statement is true, because of his connection with Trinity College, John Walker must have had some influence on the founders of the Plymouth Brethren movement. Krapohl notes, “It is difficult to believe that Darby did not become familiar with the views of... Walker during Darby’s days at Trinity College.”⁴⁵ Callahan also notes,

It is interesting to note that early Brethren were aware of the Walkerites and turned acquaintance into insult when it served a purpose. One may note a tendency among Brethren historians to align the Walkerites and the early Brethren. For example, George Stokes argued that there was a direct relationship between the Walkerite meetings and the formation of Darby’s early ecclesial convictions; Robert Krapohl saw so many similarities between Darby and the Walkerites that a direct connection seemed probable...⁴⁶

Although there is disagreement among historians, the evidence seems to indicate that Walker’s influence on the Plymouth Brethren Movement was profound. Callahan notes a study by Harold H. Rowdon in which Rowdon acknowledges that there are “numerous similarities between the Brethren and historically coordinate movements, especially the Recordites and the Walkerites.”⁴⁷ Furthermore, Richardson comments that “[Walker] taught that there should be no stated minister,

⁴⁴ Bruce’s article “Who are the Brethren?” can be found at <http://web.singnet.com.sg/~syec/literature/brethren.html>.

⁴⁵ Robert H. Krapohl, “A Search for Purity: The Controversial Life of John Nelson Darby,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Baylor University, 1988), 36.

⁴⁶ James P. Callahan, *Primitivist Piety: The Ecclesiology of the Early Plymouth Brethren* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1996), 70. In n. 21 Callahan quotes Anthony Groves as accusing an ecclesial position similar to the Walkerites and Glassites: “practically [your ecclesial practices] will prove that you witness against all but yourselves, as certainly as the Walkerites or Glassites...” Cf. *Memoirs of the Late Anthony Norris Groves, Containing Extracts from His Letters and Journals, Compiled by His Widow*, ed. Mrs. [Harriett] Anthony N. Groves, 2nd ed. (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1857), 539.

⁴⁷ Callahan, 21. See Harold H. Rowdon, “Secession from the Established Church in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Vox Evangelica* 3 (1964): 76-68.

but that all members should exercise their gifts indiscriminately.”⁴⁸ This same view of Ecclesiology was earlier purported by Glas and Sandeman. The common practice in Plymouth Brethren congregations to observe weekly communion and autonomy in church government, characterized earlier Sandemanian congregations as well. Murray notes, “Practice developed with a fresh study of Scripture, and weekly Communion, and a lay leadership were instituted.”⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Walker’s Sandemanian⁵⁰ influence did not stop with the Brethren movement.

In an address to the members of the Methodist Society of Ireland, Walker plainly aligned himself with Sandeman’s view of justification by faith alone writing that:

The doctrine of a sinner’s justification, as the *free gift of God* in Christ Jesus, to every one that believeth, is the essential difference of the Gospel, that distinguishes it from all human systems: and all other ways of justification, which men propose to themselves, are alike dishonorable to God—alike opposed to the truth of his word,—and alike ruinous to those who walk in them. The doctrines, as Luther justly observed, is the turning-point of a standing or falling church; and it may as truly be said to be the turning-point of *true or false religion*.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Richardson, 61.

⁴⁹ Murray, “John Glas,” *Dictionary of Scottish Church*, 364.

⁵⁰ Walker signed a document called the “Portsmouth Compact,” which contained names such as: (1) William Hutchinson, Jr., who was the husband of Anne Hutchinson who was banished along with Roger Williams from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for antinomian beliefs—believing that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone; (2) William Coddington who was the first Governor of Rhode Island and who supported Anne’s beliefs (see A. C. Addison, *The Romantic Story Of The Mayflower Pilgrims And Its Place In The Life Of Today* [Boston: L.C. Page & Company, 1909, 184], which is available online at <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/users/deetz/Plymouth/addisontxt.html>); and (3) John Clarke who founded Rhode Island with Anne Hutchinson and William Coddington and aided Anne in the antinomian controversy. See “William Coddington” *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), <http://www.bartleby.com/65/>. Also see <http://www.rootsweb.com/~rinewpor/compact.html>. The first three names were banished for their antinomian beliefs. This seems to further substantiate Walker’s soteriological convictions.

⁵¹ John B. D. Walker, *An Expostulatory Address to the Members of the Methodist Society in Ireland* (Dublin: R. Dapper, 1804), 33-34. This was printed

For Walker, the “fantastic Sandemanian,” the doctrine of *sola fide* was not something to be debated, but the “turning-point of *true* or *false* religion.”

C. ALEXANDER CAMPBELL

Alexander Campbell was born in County Antrim, Ireland in 1788 to a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian minister named Thomas Campbell. After studying at the University of Glasgow, Alexander moved to the United States in 1809. Ordained in 1812, he assumed a leadership role in his father’s ministry, The Christian Association of Washington (Pennsylvania). This gave Alexander the opportunity to travel throughout Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, West Virginia, and Tennessee as an itinerant preacher. His converts soon began calling themselves “Disciples of Christ.” Hope states, “Campbell claimed to derive his theology and churchmanship from the Bible, especially the NT, in which the basic pattern of Christian faith and practice was displayed.”⁵²

There is no question that Campbell sought to base his theology solely on the Scriptures, but as a theologian, he could not help being influenced by others. There is no doubt that the Sandemanians influenced the Campbellites—even a “meetinghouse in Edinburgh is marked with a small sign that reads: *Church of Christ (Commonly Called Glasites or Sandemanians)*...”⁵³

Undoubtedly, Sandeman’s move to America led to his influence upon the Campbellites. Garrett writes, “The Glasite churches, perhaps as many as thirty in Great Britain, eventually had practices that made their way to America and into the Stone-Campbell Movement.”⁵⁴ However, this influence most likely began prior to Campbell’s move to America. John Walker was certainly “another individual who visited and preached at Rich-Hill... whose abilities and learning made quite a strong impression on the mind of young Alexander.”⁵⁵

while John Walker was a fellow at Trinity College, where he most likely knew Darby.

⁵² N. V. Hope, “Alexander Campbell,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 189-90.

⁵³ Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co., 1981), 50.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵⁵ Richardson, 60.

Certainly, the theology of Alexander Campbell was forever changed through his encounters with Sandeman, Glas, Walker, and also Greville Ewing. Richardson writes,

This change [Campbell's disengagement from the Seceder denomination and all forms of Presbyterianism] seems to have been occasioned chiefly through his intimacy with Greville Ewing... Alexander was frequently at Mr. Ewing's to dinner or to tea, where he formed agreeable intimacies with the guests at his hospitable board, and acquired, during this intercourse, an intimate knowledge of Mr. Ewing's previous religious history.⁵⁶

Garrett states,

Besides an emphasis on weekly communion, it can be concluded that Ewing's influence on Campbell would include these elements of reform, all of which were indeed rare for their time... the view that faith is not supernaturally or subjectively induced, but is based upon the belief of scriptural testimony, the appeal being to man's intellect as well as his heart.⁵⁷

Concerning Campbell's view of faith, Ray writes, "This Campbellite faith does not concern the heart; it is the mere *persuasion that the Gospel is true!*"⁵⁸ While Greville Ewing had a profound affect on Campbell, Sandeman's affect cannot be underestimated. Whitsitt writes,

Returning to the subject of faith, Alexander describes as follows the method in which he pursued his investigation: "I assembled all the leading writers (that day on) these subjects. I laid before me Robert Sandeman, Hervey, Marshall, Bellamy, Glas, Cudworth, and others of minor fame in this controversy. I not only read, but studied, and wrote off in miniature, their respective views. I had Paul and Peter, James and John, on the same table. I took nothing upon trust. I did not care for the authority, reputation, or standing of one of the systems, a grain of sand. I never weighed the consequences of embracing any one of the systems as affecting my standing or reputation in the world. Truth (not who says so) was my sole object. I found much entertainment in the

⁵⁶ Ibid., 148-49.

⁵⁷ Garrett, 169.

⁵⁸ D. B. Ray, *Text-Book on Campbellism* (St Louis: St. Louis Baptist Publishing Co., 1881), 166.

investigation; and I will not blush, nor do I fear to say, that, in this controversy, Sandeman was like a giant among dwarfs. He was like Samson with the posts of Gaza on his shoulders.”⁵⁹

There is not doubt that Sandeman heavily influenced Alexander Campbell at least in regard to his definition of faith. Garrett writes,

“Sandeman’s theological contribution to the [Campbellite] Movement... was his view of the nature of faith... Sandeman contended that faith in Christ is not all that different from any other faith that man has, for all faith is based upon testimony and comes through man’s assent to facts.”⁶⁰

Furthermore, Garrett writes, “He also taught that faith begins with intellectual assent...”⁶¹

The Campbellites, as they were known early on, are commonly known today as the Disciples of Christ or the Church of Christ, which presently number around four million members.⁶² Whitsitt opines,

The Disciples of Christ are direct descendants of the Sandemanians; it is possible to point out in the literature of Sandemanianism the source whence Mr. Campbell derived almost every one of his religious opinions. If he ever had an original idea he took pains to avoid giving expression to it in such of his writings as have been submitted to the inspection of the public.⁶³

The Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ rely heavily on Acts 2:38 for their view that justification is not solely through faith but also through repentance (viewed as a turning from sins) and water baptism. Concerning Campbell’s view of justification, Humble writes,

While Campbell argued that simple historical belief of testimony constitutes saving faith, he nevertheless contended that this belief must be operative to constitute saving faith and that to become

⁵⁹ Whitsitt, 111.

⁶⁰ Garrett, 53-54.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁶² This number was taken from the Disciples of Christ Historical Society website <http://users.aol.com/dishistsoc/>.

⁶³ Whitsitt, 124-25.

operative it must lead the sinner to obey the Lord in baptism. Baptism is the test of faith; for without it, faith will not save.⁶⁴

In taking both elements in Acts 2:38, repentance and baptism, as pertaining to justification it is not surprising that the Church of Christ/Disciples of Christ correctly make the distinction between faith and repentance (as viewed as a turning from sins). Ray writes,

The Campbellites often ask, in fancied triumph, “How can one repent before he believes?” “Can a man repent before he is heard of Christ, or the plan of salvation?”⁶⁵

Although they correctly delineate between faith and repentance, they unfortunately see both of them as necessary for salvation. This is further qualified by the need for water baptism in order to transform faith into saving faith.

V. CONCLUSION

Although Robert Sandeman’s definition of faith seems to have cleared up a point of contention, for many, Sandeman’s theological derivation might be somewhat embarrassing. Most would be excited about Sandeman’s influence upon the Plymouth Brethren, however, the discovery of his influence upon the Church of Christ/Disciples of Christ might not lead to hearty rejoicing. Sandeman’s view of *bare faith* when coupled with repentance and baptism as necessary elements of saving faith hardly exemplifies Sandeman’s view of justification. South noted,

In his endeavor to remove any concept of merit from saving faith he carried the issue to the extreme. He described faith as the mere mental persuasion of the truth of the Gospel, the “intellectual apprehension of objective revelation.”⁶⁶

For Sandeman, saving faith was nothing more than “mental persuasion of the truth of the Gospel.”

⁶⁴ Bill J. Humble, *Campbell & Controversy: The Debates of Alexander Campbell* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co., 1986), 286.

⁶⁵ Ray, 162.

⁶⁶ South, 61.

Just as the gospel survived from its first controversy in Galatia until Sandeman's day, the burden is on those in the Free Grace camp to carry the torch until Christ returns. May Sandeman's motto "contending earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,"⁶⁷ forever characterize those in the Free Grace movement. Just as 2 John 8 admonishes believers to "watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward," we must remain watchful and alert, not only striving for clarity in our definition of faith but also striving for clarity when answering the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

⁶⁷ Ibid., 60.