

I was prompted to give a brief Outline on this topic after receiving a series of hate-emails from a very irate and nasty character, who accused me, and my ministry, of being 'Sandemanian'. We invite you to read this paper and compare with our published materials. If you agree that we are indeed Sandemanian, then let us know!

The Origin of Sandemanianism

This theological error is founded on the ideas promoted by Robert Sandeman (1718-1781) and his father-in-law, John Glas (1695-1773). Their belief is simple yet heretical – that 'saving faith' is merely the intellectual assent to a proposition. Their ideas are exemplified by the following:

"In a series of letters to James Hervey, the author of Theron and Aspasia, he [Sandeman] maintained that justifying faith is a simple assent to the divine testimony concerning Jesus Christ, differing in no way in its character from belief in any ordinary testimony." (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th Edition).

For those who do not readily recognise it, this is yet another version of Arminianism, for it tells us that our own works (assent) bring salvation. The problem is, that "simple assent" can be made to anything, from the colour of a car to choice of herbs in a soup! Mere assent is not how we obtain eternal salvation.

We must certainly agree with the terms and commands of the Lord, but unless we are reborn (regenerated) by the Holy Spirit, our assent is only intellectual and not spiritual. Therefore, it will not lead to salvation, but to an illusion causing us to join the tares. All true charismatics are with the tares, for example, as are Roman Catholics, etc. They do not know salvation, because their assent is only intellectual, or even emotional, or both. It is essential to understand that genuine regeneration is ONLY given to those who are already elect and predestinated to salvation. So, the deepest and most profound "simple assent" will have no effect on our eternal position, unless it is firstly caused by regeneration. And true assent will be enjoined with joy.

The "easy assent" taught by Sandeman is the same as "non-Lordship salvation", or "easy believism" (or "cheap grace") taught by so many cults and unbiblical groups today. It is found in their constant battle to get people to "just believe", without teaching that belief must be backed by action – a truly saved life of discipleship. Sadly, we see abundant evidence of 'non-Lordship'

Sandemanianism

Written by K B Napier

Thursday, 19 March 2015 14:30

lives, who assent to Christ and the Gospel but then do nothing to prove their salvation by way of discipleship. They tend to be very active in their church life – something they believe is what they ought to do. But, this is not the same as discipleship, which has nothing to do with following the ‘churchy herd’ in planned activities and corporate misbeliefs. This kind of easy-believism is usually found amongst Arminians, whereas Reformed people tend to hold to ‘Lordship salvation’. However:

"These days, support for the no-lordship gospel is mostly confined to a small but prolific group of speakers and writers. Dallas is still the geographical hub of their movement. The Grace Evangelical Society has published their journal since 1988. In fact, for the past 15 years or so, GES has almost singlehandedly kept the drumbeat alive for the no-lordship position." John MacArthur notes that, "Apparently, no-lordship doctrine no longer dominates Dallas Seminary the way it once did, but controversy over the issue is by no means dead." (Phillip Johnson: theopedia.com).

John Glas, a clergyman, took members out of the usual church life to begin a new church, and its people became known as ‘Glasites’; members accepted him as their overseer. He mainly taught the views and theology of the reformation. He was later joined by his radical son-in-law, Sandeman, who took the ideas and changed them, thus becoming open to the charge of antinomianism (the rejection of God’s laws in favour of grace alone). The Glasite churches no longer exist. (The same churches found in England were known as ‘Sandemanian’.

Sandeman disputed imputed righteousness, and taught that faith was a continuous activity finally resulting in assurance of hope. This is, again, faith achieved by works, whereas God says faith is a gift freely given by Himself to the born-again. At the time there was much heated argument over his views, which today are said, by some, to be “repetitive and of low intellectual worth” (banneroftruth.org).

We should note that the current Alpha Course can be described as ‘Sandemanianism in action’, for assent to its words is taken to equal salvation. Sandeman failed to see that his notion, that “simple assent” is itself a work and not faith, though his intentions appeared to be honourable. Many men, in an attempt to strip scripture to bare bones, can fall into error. The aim should simply be to expound what God says. The famed preacher, Christmas Evans, at one time adopted Sandeman’s view, but noted that this led to a deterioration as he entered *‘the cold and sterile regions of spiritual frost’*, and was in the grip of *‘a cold heart towards Christ, and his sacrifice, and the work of his Spirit’*. (the-highway.com). He then discarded Sandemanian ideas.

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Andrew Fuller of Kettering, England, wrote a definitive opposition to Sandeman, from actual contact with his churches. He agreed, as I do, that many churches were subjective and without truth, looking inwards instead of to Christ, to feelings instead of to the Spirit – much as happens today in charismatic circles. The heart cannot be separated from objective truth, he said.

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