



Wilson, Craig Munro (2013) Aspects of Alexander Campbell's baptismal debate with John Walker in its biographical and societal contexts.  
MTh(R) thesis

<http://theses.gla.ac.uk/4257/>

Copyright and moral rights for this thesis are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

ASPECTS OF ALEXANDER CAMPBELL'S BAPTISMAL DEBATE  
WITH JOHN WALKER IN ITS BIOGRAPHICAL AND SOCIETAL CONTEXTS

CRAIG MUNRO WILSON B.D. B.Th.

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters

School of Theology

College of Arts

University of Glasgow

June 2012

© Craig Munro Wilson, June 2012

## Abstract

This dissertation seeks to measure the degree to which Alexander Campbell had retained and rejected his Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian tradition, as his mature ministry began. The principal means of assessment is discussion of a baptismal debate (Ohio, 1820), within its biographical and societal contexts. The debate's disputants were Seceder Minister John Walker and Baptist Pastor Alexander Campbell. The former contended for covenantal infant baptism from the perspective of a unified Covenant of Grace. The latter argued against this position from a two-covenant perspective; that is from the view that there is a fundamental discontinuity between the old and new covenants. Furthermore, contrary to Walker, he maintained that baptism is an emblem and so lacks sacramental efficacy. As such it demands retrospective faith from the baptisand, who cannot therefore be an infant. The dissertation discusses two aspects of this debate. Firstly, a comparison is drawn between circumcision and baptism that addresses the 'who?' of the sacrament. Secondly, the method of baptising is discussed and this addresses the 'how?' of baptism's application. It is my contention that although Campbell departed somewhat from the Calvinistic orthodoxy of his Irish roots, nevertheless his position was nuanced and that, by 1820, at heart he had remained a Calvinist.

## Table of Contents

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>General Introduction.....</b>                   | <b>7</b>   |
| <b>PART ONE: CONTEXTUALISATION .....</b>           | <b>10</b>  |
| <b>Section One: Alexander Campbell .....</b>       | <b>10</b>  |
| Preamble.....                                      | 10         |
| Earlier Life and Ministry.....                     | 10         |
| Later Life and Ministry.....                       | 18         |
| Postscript.....                                    | 24         |
| <b>Section Two: John Walker .....</b>              | <b>25</b>  |
| Preamble.....                                      | 25         |
| Development and Service.....                       | 25         |
| Issues and Conflicts.....                          | 30         |
| Postscript.....                                    | 37         |
| <b>Section Three: Frontier Society .....</b>       | <b>38</b>  |
| Preamble.....                                      | 38         |
| The Bible .....                                    | 38         |
| The Republic.....                                  | 43         |
| The Frontier.....                                  | 46         |
| Postscript.....                                    | 49         |
| <b>PART TWO: DISPUTATION.....</b>                  | <b>51</b>  |
| <b>Chapter One: Day One – Baptise Who?.....</b>    | <b>51</b>  |
| Preamble.....                                      | 51         |
| The Debate Begins: Pointers for Discussion .....   | 51         |
| The Debate Continues: Points of Dissimilarity..... | 56         |
| Gender .....                                       | 56         |
| Age .....  | 60         |
| Prerequisites .....                                | 64         |
| Administrators.....                                | 68         |
| Emblematical Import.....                           | 69         |
| Body Parts .....                                   | 71         |
| Blessings Conveyed.....                            | 72         |
| Postscript.....                                    | 74         |
| Chapter Two: Day Two – Baptise How? .....          | 75         |
| Preamble.....                                      | 75         |
| Walker's First Speech .....                        | 76         |
| Preliminary Remarks.....                           | 76         |
| Theological Arguments.....                         | 76         |
| Textual Arguments.....                             | 80         |
| Campbell's First Speech .....                      | 82         |
| Preliminary Remarks.....                           | 82         |
| Authorities .....                                  | 84         |
| George Campbell.....                               | 85         |
| Authorised Version.....                            | 87         |
| Westminster Assembly .....                         | 88         |
| Walker's Second Speech .....                       | 93         |
| Walker's Concluding Remarks.....                   | 95         |
| Campbell's Second Speech.....                      | 97         |
| Campbell's Concluding Remarks.....                 | 98         |
| Appendix.....                                      | 99         |
| Appeal.....  | 101        |
| Walker's Volume.....                               | 103        |
| Preliminary Remarks.....                           | 103        |
| Main Arguments.....                                | 105        |
| Supporting Statements .....                        | 107        |
| Postscript.....                                    | 108        |
| General Conclusion .....                           | 110        |
| <b>Bibliography.....</b>                           | <b>112</b> |
| Primary Sources: .....                             | 112        |
| Secondary Sources: .....                           | 112        |
| Books:.....  | 112        |
| Articles:.....                                     | 114        |

## Preface

## Acknowledgement

This study began under the supervision of Professor Ian Hazlett and continued after his retirement with that of Dr Charlotte Methuen. Professor Donald Macleod of the Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh also provided helpful comments. Professor Macleod's involvement with my work was a consequence of the Free Church of Scotland College's relationship with the University of Glasgow.

In addition to the indispensable direction which my supervisors offered, help was also received from the librarians and archivists of the University of Glasgow, The Historical Society of the Disciples of Christ and the Presbyterian Church, USA. I also received help from archivists at Erskine, Pittsburgh and Princeton Theological Seminaries, as well as Mount Pleasant Historical Society, Ohio.

### Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: Craig M. Wilson

## General Introduction

This dissertation discusses a baptismal debate involving two Ulster-Scots, namely Alexander Campbell and John Walker. The dissertation focuses on the former. It does so because Campbell was the first person to publish on the subject and so his opponent responded to his lead.<sup>1</sup> However, there is an additional reason for highlighting Campbell. He became, arguably, Northern Ireland's most influential protestant clergyman. He was the intellectual impetus behind the establishment of a protestant religious phenomenon, which was indigenous to America. It is now known as the Stone-Campbell Movement. Significantly, his debate with John Walker marked the end of the early period of his life and the beginning of his mature ministry. It therefore presents an appropriate point to look back at his career and observe developments in his thought. The debate with John Walker offers a particularly good opportunity to do this because Walker came from the same ecclesiastical tradition as Campbell. It is my contention that the Campbell-Walker Debate shows to what degree Alexander Campbell had retained and rejected his Irish roots within Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterianism at the time when his mature ministry began.

The dissertation explores aspects of the debate rather than attempting a comprehensive coverage of it. By implication there are other aspects of the debate, which the present study makes no attempt to discuss. Firstly, Campbell's volume presents us with an extensive discussion of the relationship between the Old Testament and New Testament churches. There is also a section in which the disputants attempt to bolster their positions by drawing support from the church fathers. Furthermore, Alexander Campbell wrote an appendix detailing his views on the covenant. Finally, beyond these aspects lies the contribution of another Ulster-Scot, Samuel Ralston and his respondents, Campbell and Walker.<sup>2</sup> Campbell's reply to Ralston is entitled *Strictures* and

---

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Campbell published *Debate on Christian Baptism* in 1820 and an enlarged second edition in 1822. The volume was published privately at Cadiz, Ohio. John Walker published *A Treatise on Baptism* in 1824 at Mount Pleasant, Ohio. Samuel Ralston published a series of letters initially in 1821, which he enlarged in 1823 within the *Presbyterian Magazine*. Ralston's letters were collected into a volume entitled *A Brief Review of a Debate on Christian Baptism* and printed by John Andrews at the office of *The Pittsburgh Recorder* in 1823.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Ralston (1756-1851) was born and raised in County Donegal, Ireland, studied at the University of Glasgow and emigrated to the United States in 1794. He served as a Minister of the Synod of North America.

appears as a second appendix in the second edition (1822) of Campbell's volume. Walker also published his reply as an appendix and entitled it *A Letter to Dr Samuel Ralston*.

The aspects of the debate discussed here are drawn from each of the two days over which the oral debate was spread. The first concerns a comparison between circumcision and baptism. This comparison lies at the heart of the debate's principal issue, the relationship between the old and the new covenants and its implications for the subjects of baptism. The second aspect, which is drawn from the debate's second day, focuses on the mode of baptism. By considering both the subjects (the who?) and the mode (the how?) of baptism and by doing so from across both days of the dispute, the dissertation explores key aspects of the debate. Furthermore, consideration of the debate's biographical and societal context helps to orientate the reader to the dispute as a whole.

My response to the Campbell-Walker baptismal debate is to look at the subject diachronically, rather than synchronically. This explains the presence of a substantial contextualisation section in the dissertation. It explains also why the chapters, which deal with the debate proper, are presented chronologically, rather than thematically. The diachronic approach has the advantage of showing the reader something of the cut and thrust of the debate as it progressed. However, it contains the disadvantage of spreading subjects out across the speeches, rather than collecting them together in a systemised form as a synchronic approach is more likely to do.

Since this debate closed in 1824, no substantial work has discussed it. There are references made to the dispute in some studies of Alexander Campbell's debates, but they only deal briefly with it.<sup>3</sup> That this is an omission is clear from the debate's significance for the career of Alexander Campbell. It

---

<sup>3</sup> The principal work on Campbell's debates is *Campbell and Controversy* by Bill J. Humble. Humble discusses the Walker debate in fourteen pages. There is also a popular study by J.J. Haley entitled *Debates That Made History* which discusses Alexander Campbell's debate with John Walker in just eight pages.

launched him into a debating and publishing career which enabled him to lay the intellectual foundation for his emerging ecclesiastical tradition.<sup>4</sup>

It is my hope that this study will not only help to clarify development within Campbell's thought and suggest reasons for its occurrence, but that it will deepen our knowledge of Alexander Campbell's early career, which, in turn, will lay the foundation for a deeper appreciation of his mature ministry.

---

<sup>4</sup> According to E. Beauregard, John Walker's biographer, their disputation was of some historical significance; he called the discourse 'one of the earliest theological debates in the U.S.' (*Walker*, 16).

# PART ONE: CONTEXTUALISATION

## Section One: Alexander Campbell

### Preamble

It is my aim in this study to gain an appreciation of the life and work of Alexander Campbell. I hope also to learn something of his character which will help us to appreciate his debate with John Walker.

### Earlier Life and Ministry<sup>5</sup>

Alexander Campbell was born in 1788, probably within the environs of Randalstown, County Antrim, in what is now Northern Ireland.<sup>6</sup> His mother, Jane Corneigle, was of Huguenot descent and his father, Thomas probably of Scottish extraction.<sup>7</sup> Thomas had been raised an Anglican, but preferred to worship with the Seceder Presbyterians. In early adulthood he had changed denominational allegiance, as his own father and Alexander's grandfather, Archibald had done before him.<sup>8</sup> When Alexander was about three, in around 1791, Thomas moved his family from County Antrim to South Armagh, and about 1798 he took up the charge of the Anti-Burgher Seceder congregation at Ahorey.<sup>9</sup> Alexander was then just ten years old, and he seems to have had a fairly carefree childhood,

<sup>5</sup> Campbell's biographical account centres on the debate, using 1820 as an approximate division between his earlier and later life and ministry. This takes account of the debate's undoubtedly significance for his career.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Campbell's father, Thomas, worked as a schoolteacher at the time of his son's birth. The location of the family residence was, according to Richardson: 'near Ballymena, in the Parish of Broughshane, and about one mile from the site of the ancient and once beautiful Shane's Castle', (*Memoirs*, vol. 1, 19). Contrary to Richardson, Shane's Castle, now incorporated within Shane's Castle Estate, is located beside Randalstown, five and a half miles from Antrim and twelve miles from Ballymena.

<sup>7</sup> Scott suggested that Thomas Campbell's ancestors could be traced for five generations within Ireland, and that they were Roman Catholics. On this evidence, Scott concluded that Campbell was not Scottish, (*Ashorey*, 229). However, Scott's conclusion is probably incorrect because the name Campbell is local to Argyll in the Scottish Highlands. The Highlanders did not convert from Catholicism to Protestantism until after the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745-46. Consequently, Campbell's ancestors are likely to have been Scottish Catholics. What can legitimately be concluded from the evidence is this: Thomas Campbell's ancestors were not part of James VI's Ulster Plantation (1609 onwards) and that Campbell was therefore descended from Highland Gaels, not Lowland Scots.

<sup>8</sup> Archibald had been raised a Roman Catholic and, after returning to Ireland from Quebec where he fought with General Wolfe, he decided to worship according to law and so became an Anglican. (Richardson, *Memoirs* vol. 1, 21).

<sup>9</sup> See Bailie, *History of Congregations*.

with what today would be regarded as a healthy interest in sport, although this was then - and in those circles - viewed almost as a tendency towards delinquency.<sup>10</sup>

It seems probable that as a child Alexander Campbell witnessed a traumatic event.<sup>11</sup> He had been left at school in Markethill when his parents moved a few miles to Richhill.<sup>12</sup> However, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he worshipped in his father's church on Sundays and consequently witnessed the intrusion of Welsh troops. This occurred while he was in Ahorey at worship during the time of the United Irishmen Rebellion (1798), when soldiers, notorious for violence, disrupted the congregation in search of rebels. That this would probably have been an intimidating episode is indicated by the indiscipline within the Army in Ireland at this time.<sup>13</sup> Otherwise, the Rebellion, turbulent as it was, did not seem to disrupt Alexander's education which was completed in Newry. After finishing school, Alexander eventually went on to work as a teaching assistant in the academy in Richhill, which Thomas founded and ran in order to supplement his ministerial stipend.

Alexander's early life could be said to be shaped by a series of important decisions. To begin with, there was a decision that concerned conversion. In his own view, he was born again in 1805. His conversion was not from unbelief but from indifference, and occurred within the theological and sociological framework of Seceder Presbyterianism. The Anti-Burgher Seceders followed the Marrowmen in insisting that assurance of salvation is of the essence of authentic faith.<sup>14</sup> They also emphasised the importance of a conscious experience of the

<sup>10</sup> The sporting activities involved fishing, swimming, hunting and shooting, (Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 31-34).

<sup>11</sup> McAllister, *Thomas Campbell*, 33. Unfortunately, the 'Royal Regiment of Wales' has no record of this incident.

<sup>12</sup> Campbell was probably around ten to twelve years of age when he boarded at Markethill (Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 32-34).

<sup>13</sup> Bartlett identifies numerous reasons for this: the Army's rapid numerical expansion, the low standard of recruits and officers, sectarian attitudes, the thin dispersal of troops throughout Ireland, the blurring of distinctions between military and civil authority, criminal atrocities with which the soldiers had to deal and a lack of clarity about the Army's purpose in Ireland, (*Indiscipline*, 115-134).

<sup>14</sup> The Marrowmen advanced the ideas advocated by a volume published in 1645 and entitled 'The Marrow of Modern Divinity'. It embroiled them in one of the most important controversies in the history of the Church of Scotland, which began following the 'Marrow's' republication in 1717 and its condemnation by the General Assembly in 1720. The work attempted to steer a middle

new birth. This emphasis is discernible in Richardson's account of Alexander Campbell's conversion experience.<sup>15</sup> Richardson suggests that Campbell was persuaded early in life of Christ's divinity, of his own sinful nature, and of his need to obtain God's mercy. However, this was insufficient for Campbell, because he perceived a need, as he put it: 'to feel my reliance on him as the only Saviour of sinners'. This need led Campbell into experiencing sustained conviction of sin which eventually ended in his conversion. Richardson maintains that Campbell had a desire 'to obtain such evidences of Divine acceptance as his pious acquaintances were accustomed to consider requisite'.<sup>16</sup> It is, therefore, possible that what Alexander Campbell thought of as a conversion experience, was what some people would interpret as the gaining of assurance and what others would call social conditioning.

Alexander Campbell's next point of decision came while on board the ship *Hibernia* in 1808. He was attempting to cross the Atlantic with his mother and siblings, to join his father who had emigrated to America during the previous year. This second decision occurred when the *Hibernia* foundered in a storm off the coast of Islay, Scotland. Richardson suggests that Campbell had a premonition of the shipwreck. He depicts him as falling asleep after leading family worship and dreaming that as the vessel was foundering he saved his family and others from drowning. Richardson remarks: 'The appearances of the things in his fancy had been verified in the facts, and he had done the very things he supposed himself to have done in his singular dream'.<sup>17</sup> Richardson then portrays Campbell seated on the ship's broken mast, pondering his future: 'It was now that Alexander ... resolved that, if saved from the present peril, he would certainly spend his entire life in the ministry of the gospel'.<sup>18</sup>

course between anti-nomianism and legalism which the Marrowmen found convincing, but the Scottish National Church denounced as heretical.

<sup>15</sup> Although Richardson provides no citation for his source, he was Campbell's son-in-law and so is likely to have had access to oral comments regarding Campbell's 'conversion' experience from Campbell himself, and other family members.

<sup>16</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 48-49.

<sup>17</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 101.

<sup>18</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 103. Both Luther and Calvin made similar commitments during storms. It seems, therefore, that Alexander Campbell is being presented as a latter day magisterial reformer. He is certainly depicted as a pious hero: he leads worship, saves his family and shipmates from drowning and then sits on the stump of a broken mast where he offers his life in service to God.

The foundering of the *Hibernia* resulted in a further important decision, this time to study at the University of Glasgow.<sup>19</sup> Although he lived in Glasgow for just a single year, and matriculated in the university for but half of that time, from December 1808 to June 1809<sup>20</sup>, this period proved a formative intellectual experience for Campbell. Furthermore, it brought him to the fourth major decision of his early life: to begin severing links with Presbyterianism and any requirement to subscribe to ecclesiastical confessions. This moment occurred at a communion service toward the end of his year in Glasgow. It was a consequence of the influence of Greville Ewing, a prominent Congregationalist Minister in the city, and also perhaps the result of examples set by family members of earlier generations, given that both his father and paternal grandfather seceded from their respective denominations. This secession is the first clear evidence of Alexander Campbell's metaphysical departure from his roots.<sup>21</sup>

After his time in Glasgow, Alexander arrived in America in the autumn of 1809 and joined his father Thomas in Washington County, Pennsylvania. Thomas had recently been censured by the Anti-Burgher Seceders for allowing non-Seceding Presbyterians to the communion table. This resulted in Thomas and his followers organising themselves into the Christian Association of Washington on 17 August 1809. It was this group, not yet a formal church, to which Alexander attached himself.

---

<sup>19</sup> McAllister produced a volume consisting of twelve of Alexander Campbell's essays, which Campbell wrote at University of Glasgow. The titles of these essays, McAllister said, 'were given out to the students of the first philosophy class', and included 'Genius', 'Of the Syllogism', 'On the Aristotelian' (McAllister, *Glasgow University*, 8). According to McAllister, Campbell's academic performance was 'ordinary'. Of his essays and notes he said: 'they are typical of the college and university student; neither better or worse'. (McAllister, *Glasgow University*, 2). Campbell's philosophy teacher would have been George Jardine (1742-1827), Professor of Logic at Glasgow from 1774 to 1827 (Whytock, *Clergy*, 112). Jardine was a leading Scottish educationalist and he required logic to be taught in the first year of the Arts Course, unlike the Aberdeen Colleges that left the subject's study until years three and four. Whytock quotes Jardine, *Outlines of Philosophical Education*, 421: 'the anatomy of the mind must be studied before the mental powers can be thoroughly known or successfully exercised'. (Whytock, *Clergy*, 118). Given that Campbell only studied at Glasgow for six months and that philosophy was compulsory for first-year students, it is likely that Jardine was Campbell's primary academic influence.

<sup>20</sup> McAllister, *Glasgow University*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> In the *Christian Baptist* (September 1824), Campbell said 'I arrived in this country [America] with credentials in my pocket from that sect of Presbyterians known by the name of Seceders. ... my faith in creeds and confessions of human devices was considerably shaken while in Scotland'. Evidently, Campbell retained formal membership of the Seceders, but had moved from them in his convictions, (*Christian Baptist*, 92).

Soon after his arrival in America, Alexander Campbell became embroiled in a controversy about female deportment. According to Richardson, he was frustrated about the way in which female students of a local college conducted themselves. This frustration led Campbell to write a series of essays under the pseudonym of Clarinda, for the journal *The Spectator*, which was published in Washington County, Pennsylvania.<sup>22</sup> In some of his submissions, Campbell focused on affairs of the heart and seemed to express displeasure at the conduct of young people, particularly young women, during parties:

And as to you, my female friends, who have not yet entered into the connubial state, for whose sake particularly I undertake this laborious, and, what some no doubt may think, censurable task. ... Need we any other proof that the very end and intention of these parties is to create love - to excite amorous intentions.<sup>23</sup>

Precisely why Campbell chose to air his views and risk the disapproval of a community to which he had just become acquainted is unknown. Perhaps he had his own amorous intentions, which he sought to further by writing anonymously, and so arouse curiosity which he hoped would lead to female interest in him. Campbell's biographer offers a more dignified reason for his motivation in writing. According to him, Campbell thought that there was a need for a 'social as well as a religious reformation'. In Richardson's estimation, frontier society lacked social graces. In his opinion, Campbell wanted to encourage more genteel manners among the youth.<sup>24</sup>

Whatever Campbell's motivation for writing, the articles stirred up controversy, and in doing so, they revealed a characteristic that probably inclined Campbell to debate. Richardson says of him that 'he enjoyed the satisfaction in the end of having vanquished all his opponents'.<sup>25</sup> This poses the question as to whether Alexander Campbell derived vindictive pleasure from bettering others or if he simply saw this as a means of achieving status amongst his peers. Either way, it

---

<sup>22</sup> Richardson said that Campbell adopted: 'the manner of the Spectator in which the essayist personates different characters and sexes, (*Memoirs*, vol. 1, 283). *The Spectator* seems to have been a satirical publication. Richardson says of one of Campbell's submissions: 'The next essay gives a satirical and amusing account of various sorts of beaux – of lovers, of riches, of beauty, or of virtue', (*Memoirs*, vol. 1, 291).

<sup>23</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 284-288.

<sup>24</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 282.

<sup>25</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 63.

seems that Campbell was rather opinionated at this stage in his life. Richardson remarks that 'In these exercises the young reformer was whetting his appetite for future conflicts in which he was to engage'.<sup>26</sup> It seems that even at this stage in his life, Campbell had developed a confidence, which enabled him to engage in public debate.

That Campbell should have taken up this issue of female deportment at all, offers us an insight into his character. He was a young and single man. Up to this point in his life, there is no mention by his biographer of any female friend, platonic or otherwise. In fact, even his mother is seldom referred to.<sup>27</sup> Yet Campbell was so strongly opinionated about female deportment that he felt confident enough to publicise his views, even representing himself as an older and wiser woman offering younger women advice. This suggests a personality that was confident, opinionated and probably also contentious.

It also seems that at this stage of his life Alexander Campbell was seeking out the company of influential men. Richardson reports that he 'formed an agreeable acquaintance with Mr. William Sample'.<sup>28</sup> Sample was the editor of the *Reporter* a newspaper local to Washington County, Pennsylvania. According to Richardson, it was he who requested that Campbell write for his paper. Richardson gives the impression that Campbell was doing Sample a favour, but the reality is more likely that Campbell was networking to create opportunities for himself. Another influential individual with whom he became acquainted was Matthew Brown, Principal of Washington College, which was one of two colleges in close proximity to Campbell's residence, the other being Jefferson. Washington College 'had received considerable patronage',<sup>29</sup> and it was with the Principal of this more prestigious institution that Campbell formed an acquaintance.

However, here too, Campbell embroiled himself in controversy. He was not entirely happy with Washington College, and again felt compelled to air his

---

<sup>26</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 64.

<sup>27</sup> These female omissions may also reflect Richardson's own assessment of the role and influence of women, rather than Campbell's experience.

<sup>28</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 283.

<sup>29</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 295.

views publicly. In 1810 he wrote to the *Reporter* under the pseudonym Bonus Homo, observing that he had 'noticed many defects in the system of education adopted, and in the order and discipline of the institution'.<sup>30</sup> Richardson, his hagiographer, represents Campbell as a learned man who had experienced education in one of Europe's leading universities and had therefore insight to share with a younger and less distinguished place of learning. However, given that in reality Campbell had spent only six months at the University of Glasgow, it seems likely that a more plausible explanation for his articles had to do with his temperament, which inclined him to self-assertion.

On 4 May 1811, Alexander Campbell was licensed to preach the gospel. The licensing took place at a meeting to form a new church, Brush Run, which had thirty members consisting of Thomas Campbell and his followers. Although at this time the congregation was not part of any denomination, before long it became associated with the Redstone Association of Baptist Churches. Campbell's membership of this Association would be important for the Walker Debate, because it gave Campbell credibility as a minister of a recognised denomination, without which he would not have been accepted by John Walker as an appropriate adversary. This credibility removed what the Anti-Burgher Seceders considered to be a serious deficiency. The Seceders had refused Thomas and his followers admittance to their denomination, in part because Thomas had encouraged his son to preach without 'regular authority'.<sup>31</sup> Having now received such authority, Alexander Campbell could be accepted as a representative of Baptist churches.

This new church is probably best described as a Baptist-like congregation due to its baptismal practice and its later membership of the Redstone Association. However, unlike the Baptist churches of the area, it was non-confessional. Thomas Campbell had drafted, not a Confession of Faith, but basic guidelines upon which he and his followers united: 'Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent'; and 'that they all may be one'.<sup>32</sup> While these guidelines were intended to be irenic, they were nevertheless

---

<sup>30</sup>. Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 296.

<sup>31</sup> See Hatfield, *Campbell and the Disciples*, 529-552.

<sup>32</sup> Grafton, *Campbell*, 79.

potentially divisive because with the removal of any requirement to subscribe to a confession, the individual is bereft of a unifying guide to aid the interpretation of Scripture. In fact, divisions between the Campbells and the Baptists were in evidence from the very beginning of their relationship, and these were due to baptismal formulae.

In 1811 Alexander married Margaret Brown, and during 1812 a daughter, Jane, was born.<sup>33</sup> This prompted him to reconsider the issue of baptism, which in turn resulted in a departure from paedo-baptism. Later that year, Alexander Campbell was baptised with his wife, his parents, and his eldest sister by the Baptist Minister Matthias Luce.<sup>34</sup> The significance of his baptism for future relations with the Baptists stems from Alexander's insistence that he be baptised only upon the confession of Christ's divinity, rather than upon that of God's Trinitarian nature, which was normative Baptist formulae.<sup>35</sup> It is apparent that Campbell, from the outset, refused to conform to some aspects of Baptist tradition.

Four years later, potential problems became a present reality when in August 1816, Alexander Campbell was invited to address the Annual Meeting of the Redstone Association, Wellsburgh. He chose as his text Romans 8:3: 'For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh'. His ensuing oration became known as his 'Sermon on the Law' in which he sharply distinguished between the old and new covenants and so parted from Reformed tradition. According to Grafton, Campbell's disregard for tradition led to opposition from the Baptists.<sup>36</sup> In 1817, an attempt was made to censure him for

<sup>33</sup> His marriage to Margaret, with whom he had eight children, ended with her death on 27 October 1827 at the age of thirty-six. In 1828, Alexander Campbell married her friend, Selina Bakewell of Wellsburgh with whom he had six children. Tragically, not only his first wife, but also ten of his children were to die before him.

<sup>34</sup> Given that the family would have been baptised as infants, this re-baptism amounted to a formal rejection of the theology of their past, both in the Episcopal and Presbyterian traditions.

<sup>35</sup> The precise formula is not given, but Richardson remarked that Alexander Campbell refused to give an account of his conversion experience because there is no record of New Testament baptisands doing so. Furthermore, Richardson also remarked that his baptism was administered on the confession 'Jesus is the Son of God'. Richardson said: 'Elder Luce had, indeed, at first objected to these changes, as being contrary to Baptist usage' (Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 398).

<sup>36</sup> Grafton, *Campbell*, 94.

antinomianism by members of the Redstone Association, as a direct result of his sermon, but he was acquitted. Nevertheless, the preaching of the Sermon on the Law led to polarisation amongst the Baptists with respect to Campbell, some accepted him while others did not. This polarised situation still existed in 1820 when his supporters persuaded him to represent their cause by debating the subject of baptism with John Walker.

The debate with Walker was formative for Campbell's life and ministry. In fact, 'some people are disposed to date the beginning of the Restoration Movement from the time of Campbell's debate with Walker'.<sup>37</sup> They do so because the disputation set in motion a chain of events leading to the Movement's establishment. It provoked an even stronger reaction against him than the Sermon on the Law had done. The negative response eventually resulted in Campbell leaving the Redstone Baptists for the Mahoning Association, which consisted of Baptists in eastern Ohio who were more sympathetic to his views. This brought him a stage closer to founding the movement for the restoration of New Testament Christianity, for which he is renowned. Additionally, the disputation and its subsequent publication (1820) helped Campbell to realise the utility of debate, for the propagation of his principles. This enabled Campbell to both consolidate and expand his position.

## **Later Life and Ministry**

In assessing Campbell's ministry subsequent to the Walker Debate, two prominent themes are of importance: his journals and debates. *The Christian Baptist* and *The Millennial Harbinger* were the titles of his journals; in his debates he encountered Presbyterians, a Secularist, and a Roman Catholic.

*The Christian Baptist* commenced publication on 4 July 1823, giving as its purpose 'the eviction of truth'.<sup>38</sup> Grafton comments that 'its continuous

---

<sup>37</sup> West, *Campbell-Walker Debate*, 86. The Restoration Movement refers to the religious phenomenon which is also known as the Stone-Campbell Movement. It emerged during the Second Great Awakening and Alexander Campbell was its intellectual leader. It sought to restore the church to a pattern which its members perceived to be presented in the New Testament, and on that basis, to unite all Christians.

<sup>38</sup> Campbell, *Christian Baptist*, 1. The fifth usage of 'eviction' in the Internet edition of the Oxford English Dictionary is this: 'The action or process of eliciting or establishing by argument; demonstration, proof'. The latest date given for this usage is 1776. The example, which the dictionary cites, is taken from George Campbell's work: 'Philosophy of Rhetoric'. We know from

message was a call to repentance to erring ecclesiastics'.<sup>39</sup> In this journal, Campbell presented the clergy as the monopolisers of biblical interpretation:

Behold the arrogance of their claims! and the peerless haughtiness of their pretensions! they have said, and of them many still say, they have an exclusive right, an official right to affix the proper interpretation to the Scriptures; to expound them in public assemblies; insomuch, that it would be presumptuous in a layman to exercise any of these functions which they have assumed.<sup>40</sup>

It was an interesting approach to take in the opening article of his new journal, and diametrically opposed to the irenic spirit of the religious society, which his father established, and to which Alexander ostensibly adhered. Perhaps he was attempting to attract new members to his religious gathering. If so, it is possible that he was targeting Christians who belonged to other congregations. Campbell may have calculated that attacks on the clergy would encourage their disaffection.<sup>41</sup>

At this time in his life, in his mid-thirties, Campbell seems to have been angry. According to Grafton, 'So radical were his views at this time, that his own friends became alarmed. ... they frankly told him of his error, and urged a milder and more conciliatory course'.<sup>42</sup> The conciliatory course emerged by 1830 with the appearance of *The Millennial Harbinger*, which took a less radical line, perhaps due to its broader scope. 'Campbell had no intention of restricting his new magazine to questions that were exclusively religious in nature'.<sup>43</sup> In it he covered educational, social, and political issues as well as theological ones.

the Walker Debate that Alexander Campbell was familiar with his namesake's works and this may explain his deployment of the word 'eviction' after it had fallen out of general usage. In fact, Alexander Campbell mentions George Campbell by name and cites him on the third page of the Preface to 'The Christian Baptist', just two pages after the appearance in the text of 'eviction'.

<sup>39</sup> Grafton, *Campbell*, 109.

<sup>40</sup> Campbell, *Christian Baptist*, 18.

<sup>41</sup> Edwin F. Hatfield seemed to think that Campbell was successful in encouraging disaffection: 'The disciples of Thomas Paine, of David Hume, of Fanny Wright, the cynic sceptics and the ribald scoffers of the period, ... revelled in Mr. Campbell's denunciations of the clergy and the sects, and were more than ever emboldened in their blasphemy and scurrility. But it was mostly among the Baptist churches that its influence was felt, encouraging disaffection, dissension, and division; drying up the streams of benevolence; strengthening the prejudices of the miserly against salaried ministers', (Hatfield, *Campbell and the Disciples*, p. 554).

<sup>42</sup> Grafton, *Campbell*, 115.

<sup>43</sup> Wrather, *Literary Biography*, 293.

However, it was not without a contentious tone for its purpose was to ‘combat sceptics and secularism’.<sup>44</sup> Although *The Millennial Harbinger* maintained a more conciliatory course than *The Christian Baptist*, nevertheless, Campbell was still, at this time in his life, embroiled in controversy.

In the year of *The Harbinger*’s first publication, the Redstone Baptist Association withdrew fellowship from Alexander Campbell. ‘He was charged with denying the necessity of the new birth and with rejecting heart-religion. He was denounced as a breeder of heresy and sedition, and undeserving of fellowship or recognition amongst Baptist churches’.<sup>45</sup> This break with the Redstone Association became, over a three-year period, also a break with the Baptist Church. Significantly it was made not only by Campbell himself, but also by the Mahoning Association so that 1830 is the date given by Grafton of ‘the separate existence of the religious body known as The Disciples of Christ’.<sup>46</sup> It seems that there was an inevitability in this secession due to the issue of subscription. The Baptists subscribed to the Philadelphia Confession of Faith,<sup>47</sup> a Baptist revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith, to which the Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterians subscribed, and from which the Campbells had already withdrawn.

The discord had begun with Campbell’s delivery of the Sermon on the Law in 1816, and was exacerbated by his debates with Walker and McCalla. The Reverend W. McCalla, a Seceder like Walker, was Campbell’s disputant for his second formal baptismal debate with the Presbyterians, which was held in Washington, Kentucky in October 1823. Theologically, this debate was a development of his encounter with Walker, which in turn had developed the Sermon on the Law. Those earlier events had drawn reservations from the Baptists, and the McCalla Debate only increased them. Alexander was inadvertently proving correct his father’s view that oral debates produce

---

<sup>44</sup> Wrather, *Literary Biography*, 292.

<sup>45</sup> Grafton, *Campbell*, 122. The author does not explain the meaning of the term ‘heart-religion’. It may be a reference to religion as it is subjectively experienced and understood. Campbell referred to these charges in *The Christian Baptist*. ‘But so consecrated is the phrase ‘experimental religion,’ that if you make the least freedom with it, every feeling is excited, and it is like calling into question a man’s title to his estate’, (May 1824, 64)

<sup>46</sup> Grafton, *Campbell*, 127.

<sup>47</sup> See Ferguson, *Sermon*, 71-85.

discord.<sup>48</sup> Humble comments: ‘Unfortunately the Campbell-McCalla Debate was marred by party bitterness, in much the same fashion as the Rice Debate twenty years later’.<sup>49</sup> The Rice Debate was Campbell’s final baptismal disputation with the Presbyterians. Nathan Rice was the most erudite opponent that the Presbyterians offered to dispute with Campbell. It took place during November 1843 in Main Street Church, Lexington, Kentucky. The building was filled to its 2000-seat capacity an hour before discussions began. According to Humble, the fact that people travelled from throughout America, during the winter, to witness this debate is indicative of the high regard in which the disputants were held and this is further supported by the fact that Henry Clay, one of America’s statesmen of the time, officiated as chairman.<sup>50</sup> Regarding the inter-personal tone of the dispute, Humble remarks that: ‘Unfortunately, Campbell and Rice were unable to keep themselves aloof from the bitterness which characterised their followers’.<sup>51</sup>

If Alexander’s encounters with the Presbyterians seemed to prove Thomas correct in his reservations about oral debates, his debates with the Secularist Owen and the Catholic Purcell showed that such debates need not produce discord. Owen was famous as an industrial philanthropist and his encounter with Campbell was said by its observers to have been an even-tempered discussion: ‘The disputants appeared on the best terms during the debate and dined frequently together’.<sup>52</sup> The debate took place during May 1829 in Cincinnati. The venue was a Methodist Church building capable of holding a thousand people, which apparently was filled to capacity with hundreds standing and hundreds more sent home. The topic for discussion was the reasonableness of religious belief itself. The final debate, with Bishop Purcell of Cincinnati, focused on Catholicism versus Protestantism, and was also held in Cincinnati: from 13 - 21 January 1837, in Sycamore Street Church. It too seems to have been conducted with civility.

---

<sup>48</sup> Thomas initially opposed Alexander’s engagement in public oral debate, because he thought that debaters ‘were too often tempted to strive for victory, rather than truth’, (Richardson, *Memoirs* vol. 2, 13). However, he relented because both he and Alexander agreed that ‘no valid objection could lie against a public defence of the truth’, (*Memoirs*, vol. 2, 16).

<sup>49</sup> Humble, *Controversy*, 183.

<sup>50</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 502.

<sup>51</sup> Humble, *Controversy*, 221.

<sup>52</sup> Humble, *Controversy*, 107.

Campbell's debates are significant for an understanding of his character. They offer evidence for his handling of inter-personal relationships. Insight is shed into this matter by Purcell, who, as Bishop, had debated with both Campbell and Rice. After his elevation to Archbishop, Purcell commented: 'In his discussions with our clergy, he [Campbell] had always been kind, affable, courteous; Rice quite the reverse. One was a gentleman, as to the other, what shall I say of him?'<sup>53</sup> Purcell's comments, like Humble's, suggest that while Campbell found it difficult to enjoy cordial conversations with his Protestant protagonists, nevertheless he did achieve such relations with Catholics and Secularists. In this respect, he seems to have been in advance of at least some of his peers. It is striking that Campbell's debates with Presbyterians, with whom he had much in common, were intemperate; and yet those he had with men with whom he had much less in common, were apposite. Perhaps the problem between Campbell and the Presbyterians was their theological and cultural closeness, which meant that they represented a mutual threat.<sup>54</sup>

Campbell was more than a debater. He was also an educationalist and, as such, was successful in founding Bethany College, a Liberal Arts Institution, in 1840.<sup>55</sup> He was involved in national and international affairs, and his influence reached far beyond ecclesiastical matters. He was elected as a delegate from Brooke County, Western Virginia to attend the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829, which had been convened to discuss amending Virginia's Constitution and in particular, the basis of representation. At the time, the eastern part of the State of Virginia had greater representation than the western section due to the high number of slaves east of the Blue Ridge Mountains. As a result, the people

<sup>53</sup> Humble, *Controversy*, 225.

<sup>54</sup> In *The Christian Baptist*, (September 1824, 93), Campbell informed his readership that he was generously treated by Presbyterians, they had offered him a teaching position at Pittsburgh, soon after his arrival in America. He wrote: 'I never received any personal pique or experienced any disappointment from any Presbyterian sect, Seceder or other. ... Insults and injuries I have received from some Baptists, but until my appearance on the stage in defence of the truths I had espoused in common with them, no insults or injuries are recollected ever to have been received from any body of Paedo-Baptists'. It seems then that it was the baptismal debates that soured relations between Campbell and his Presbyterian brethren.

<sup>55</sup> Alexander Campbell began his first educational institution in Buffalo, West Virginia. It was named after its location and flourished from 1818-22. Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 491-2. In June 1820, a series of advertisements appeared in the Western Herald & Steubenville Gazette publicising that Alexander Campbell had 'obtained the assistance of his father, Rev. Thomas Campbell in his Seminary.' The advertisements are important because they show that leadership had shifted from Thomas to his son.

in the west thought that legislation was biased toward the east.<sup>56</sup> Former Presidents James Madison (held office from 1809-1817) and James Monroe (held office from 1817-1825) were delegates representing eastern counties, and during the convention, Campbell, speaking in favour of western counties, apparently debated the issue of representation with the former presidents.

In 1850, Campbell was invited to address both Houses of Congress in Washington D.C.<sup>57</sup> The biggest issue with which the Houses of Congress had to deal, during this period, was slavery. It was an international issue and this dimension eventually led to serious trouble for Campbell, which began with his travels to raise funds for Bethany College. These journeys led Campbell throughout the south and brought him into contact with slavery as never before. The position that he adopted towards it was one of 'apparent indifference'.<sup>58</sup> Campbell maintained that slavery is not immoral in principle but rather inharmonious with civilisation because it failed to advance society's morals.

Nevertheless, Campbell maintained that no Christian community should make the abolishing of slave ownership a term of communion. He advocated the gradual emancipation of slaves but he did not support illegal action to achieve that goal. This suggests to Watts that: 'Campbell seemed to place the obligation to obey the laws of the land over the need to alleviate the suffering of those being oppressed'.<sup>59</sup> During this period, some Christians were promoting illegal action in response to the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, which enabled runaway slaves to be returned to their owners. Campbell feared that this illegality could produce violence; he dismissed concerns that returned slaves would be the victims of violence at the hands of their owners. Watts concludes: 'In the end, he [Campbell] opted for law and order over justice'.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> There was an opinion among the eastern states that they should not be allowed to be outvoted by western states because people from the east took responsibility for the nation's administration and defence, (Turner, *Significance*, 42).

<sup>57</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 588. Campbell preached for thirty minutes from John 3:17.

<sup>58</sup> Grafton, *Campbell*, 190.

<sup>59</sup> Watts, *Disciple*, 93.

<sup>60</sup> Watts, *Disciple*, 97.

This position on slavery was to cause Campbell personal problems when he returned to Glasgow. In 1847, he travelled to England and then north to Scotland. In Edinburgh, members of the local Anti-Slavery Society accused him of supporting slavery. As a result of statements made around the issue of slavery which became personal, a certain Rev. James Robinson filed a charge of defamation of character against Campbell. This accusation led to legal proceedings, which resulted in Campbell's ten-day imprisonment before the charge was dismissed. He was subsequently offered £2 000 compensation for his loss of liberty but declined to accept it.<sup>61</sup>

Some of Campbell's contemporaries felt that he had allowed himself to be squeezed into the mould of nineteenth-century southern society. It seems rather ironic that while Campbell was very critical of the religious establishment, he failed to be critical of the political one. It may be that this inconsistency is explained by self-interest, in that while rejection of the religious establishment would have furthered his ambitions, rejection of the political one was likely to have curtailed them.

When Campbell died on 4 March 1866, he left a substantial estate, which secured the material comfort of his wife and remaining family with sufficient left over to distribute \$10 000 to Bethany College and \$5 000 to establish a preaching fund.

## **Postscript**

From our biographical study of Campbell it appears that he was ideally equipped to meet the challenges of his day.<sup>62</sup> Garrison describes Campbell's personality as 'plastic', making him temperamentally able to cope with the diversity of his situation. Furthermore, his rural and academic experiences in the Old World fitted him well for his experience in the New one. Campbell's experience closely resembled the cross-cultural mixture of the American frontier. He had

---

<sup>61</sup> Alexander Campbell was held in Bridewell Gaol, Glasgow which later became Duke Street Prison. The first prisoners were incarcerated in Bridewell in 1798. The prison was expanded between 1824 and 1840 to accommodate 400 cells. Chalmers spoke of Campbell's voice (doubtless lungs) being affected by the experience: 'Its great power was being forever undermined by the cold, damp walls of Bridewell Prison' (*Tour*, 126-128). Apparently, Campbell never fully recovered from the experience.

<sup>62</sup> Garrison, *Pioneer*, 56.

been raised in rural Ireland and possessed a farming background, and yet was professionally trained by his father, having assisted him in the Richhill Academy. He had attended the University of Glasgow, albeit as a non-graduating student, where the frontiers of learning were being advanced. He therefore possessed an education while lacking formal qualifications, and so would not be perceived as an expert of the establishment. He had mixed with the establishment, and yet with his father, had both rejected it and been rejected by it. All this equipped Campbell for leadership on the frontier. In this connection, Hill refers to the Geertzian theory of leadership, which asserts that the leader needs to speak consistently with the people's perceptions in order to be effective.<sup>63</sup> According to this theory, it takes inchoate agreement to create a following. Campbell was able to provide this leadership on the American frontier because of his temperament, experience and education. It is on this basis that Hill maintains that Campbell is best understood as a builder rather than as a reactionist.<sup>64</sup>

## Section Two: John Walker

### Preamble

In approaching a biographical study of John Walker it is my aim to learn not only about his character but also of his experience, so that I can compare and contrast him with his baptismal opponent. It is my hope that this will add to our appreciation of their disputation.

### Development and Service

John Walker was born on 16 February 1784 on his parents' farm close to Canonsburg, Pennsylvania. His mother Margaret was a Scot by birth and a Seceder Presbyterian by conviction. His maternal ancestor James Marshall is reputed to have fought with the Covenanters on the Parliamentarian side at Marsden Moor (1644) during the English Civil War. The paternal side of John Walker's family was of Ulster-Scots extraction. His great-grandfather William Walker is said to have defended Londonderry during the Siege of 1688-9 and

---

<sup>63</sup> Hill, *Frontier*, 68-69.

<sup>64</sup> Hill, *Frontier*, 69.

fought at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690.<sup>65</sup> The Walker family emigrated to Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century.<sup>66</sup>

Clearly, John Walker inherited from both his maternal and paternal family lines a strong Presbyterian tradition. However, in order to determine what this could have meant for the development of his character, an outline of his denominational background, as it developed in both Scotland and America is required. Walker's denomination arose out of the 1733 secession from the Church of Scotland led by Ebenezer Erskine. In 1747 this divided into the General Associate Synod of Anti-Burghers and the Association Synod of Burghers. The Anti-Burghers opposed the Burghers' Oath of 1745, which committed its subscribers to defend the religion then professed in Scotland and authorised by Scots law. The Anti-Burghers abandoned those of their number who took the Burghers' Oath, one of whom was their founder Ebenezer Erskine.

The Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania was organised in 1758 when the first Seceders arrived in America. In 1782, it divided into the Associate Reformed Synod and the continuation of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, which was a presbytery within the General Associate Synod of Anti-Burghers Seceders of the Church of Scotland. In 1801 the latter group, to which John Walker adhered, and which was the minority of the 1782 division, formed the Associate Synod of North America. At this time the Synod consisted of four presbyteries: Cambridge, Philadelphia, Charters, and Kentucky. In 1808 a fifth prestery, Ohio, was added.

It is probably not unreasonable to say of the Seceders that their many secessions were created by a mindset, which was narrow, strong and inflexible.<sup>67</sup> Nor is it unreasonable to suggest that John Walker was to develop and display these characteristics. However, it is possible to identify not only general influences on

---

<sup>65</sup> The wider Walker family was certainly involved in Ireland's famous conflicts. The remains of the Walker Column on the Walls of Derry commemorate the contribution made by the Rev. George Walker (1618-1690), Bishop-designate of Derry and Governor of Londonderry, to the defence of the city against its besiegers. Rev. George Walker had two sons, William and Robert, both of whom served in King William's Army and were present at Derry's siege. However, although the above mentioned William Walker seems to have been the only such named person who fought in the siege, it is unclear if he was John Walker's great-grandfather because George Walker and his family were Anglicans, (Young, *Fighters*, 20).

<sup>66</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 1.

<sup>67</sup> Hart & Muether, *Seeking*, 13-32.

Walker's character but also specific formative experiences. The first of these was the Whiskey Insurrection, which broke out in western Pennsylvania in 1794. Canonsburg, Walker's home county, was at its epicentre. This violent insurrection was a protest against excise tax. In reaction, Walker developed a lifelong antagonism toward the brewing industry and the consumption of its produce. He regarded both, quite literally, as diabolical.<sup>68</sup>

A further formative experience for Walker occurred in 1798 at age fourteen, when he read Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason*. This resulted in a spiritual and intellectual rebellion against his upbringing, but by 1801 he had experienced what he interpreted to be a spiritual rebirth that drew him back to his roots.<sup>69</sup> His education also contributed to the formation of his character. Walker's college education began at Canonsburg Academy, an outgrowth of the Log Cabin School established by John McMillen, who was known as the father of Presbyterianism in the West.<sup>70</sup> Canonsburg was a liberal arts college, which offered a general curriculum. Walker studied there from 1802 to 1804. Immediately after leaving Canonsburg Academy, he enrolled in Jefferson College, another liberal arts institution, for an additional two years. Jefferson had also been founded by John McMillen, and it too was located in Canonsburg. The curriculum of these colleges was broad, covering both the arts and sciences. Beauregard reports that Walker achieved average grades in both institutions.<sup>71</sup> From 1806 to 1809 John Walker completed his full-time education by studying for the ministry at Service Seminary, Beaver County, Pennsylvania.<sup>72</sup> Service

<sup>68</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 2.

<sup>69</sup> The lost and found motif was regarded by nineteenth-century Seceder Presbyterians as a hallmark of authentic faith. This probably explains the dramatic conversion story of an adolescent, (Beauregard, *Walker*, 2).

<sup>70</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 3.

<sup>71</sup> Beauregard said of Walker's studies: 'The curriculum included Greek (parts of the Greek Testament, Homer, Lucian, Xenophon), Latin (parts of Ovid, Virgil, Horace, and Cicero besides the common introductory books), arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, surveying, Martin's Natural Philosophy, astronomy and geography, also rhetoric, logic, and Moral Philosophy. John emerged as an ordinary student.' (See Beauregard, *Walker*, 3). These comments are important because they suggest that Walker and Campbell were on a similar academic level. (See reference to Alexander Campbell's education).

<sup>72</sup> Service Seminary (1794-1819) was the first theological seminary to be established by the Seceder Presbyterians for the sole purpose of training ministerial candidates. It was located close to the modern city of Aliquippa, Pennsylvania. When Service Seminary closed, its assets were moved to Canonsburg Seminary when it opened in 1821. Service Seminary's Professor was John Anderson (1748-1830) who was probably a graduate of the University of Glasgow. He also graduated from the General Associate Divinity Hall, which was located in Alloa,

was the theological seminary of the Associate Presbyterian Church; through time and amalgamations, it would emerge as Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

By the time John Walker had reached his mid-twenties, his course in life was set. In June 1809 he was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Ohio. His education was broad, if narrowed by the ultraconservative attitudes, which existed within the institutions of the Secession Church, to which all three of his colleges belonged. He was, therefore, well prepared for ministry within that denomination, but perhaps not for service beyond its bounds.

The year 1811 was very significant in John Walker's life, because it was then that began his ministry and also married his first wife, Rachel Stuart on 12 August; he was twenty-seven, and she three years his junior. In her he found a soul mate. Both were Seceders and came from Canonsburg. Together they would have nine children. Walker found theological justification for a couple producing many children; he is said once to have remarked that 'Scripture looks approvingly on begetting a large family',<sup>73</sup> and his biographer reports that his study of scripture 'called for unwavering cultivation of the family bond'.<sup>74</sup> This conviction stemmed from reading both Testaments. In the Old Testament, Walker discerned God 'intimately involved in the family events of the patriarchs'.<sup>75</sup> From his reading of the New Testament, he concluded that God 'sanctified the monogamous life and smiled on children'.<sup>76</sup> Rachel died in 1830 and Walker then married Elizabeth Morrow in 1833. His second wife was twenty-four years old when they married and Walker was twenty-one years her senior. Again, he married a Seceder Presbyterian, and together they produced five children, giving Walker fourteen offspring in total. However, before Walker died in 1864, he had to bear the loss of eight of his children.

Scotland and run by William Moncrieff. (See Jamison, *Ever A Frontier*, 69-96 and Whytock, *Clergy*, 187-207). Anderson's career is indicative of how some frontiers people developed themselves. He left Scotland for America in 1784, due to an inability to secure a charge. Initially, he faced similar problems in America and so served the church in an itinerant capacity. However, eventually he achieved renown as a frontier preacher, pastor and theological educator (Jamison, *Ever a Frontier*, 72-76 and Davis, *Pioneer*, 11).

<sup>73</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 151.

<sup>74</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 149.

<sup>75</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 149.

<sup>76</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 149.

John Walker was ordained and inducted into the Mercer congregation within the Ohio Presbytery in 1811. During his ministry Walker was active, not only locally but also synodically. His 'sterling performance at all levels - congregation, presbytery and synod - brought him election, to the highest position in the church of the Seceders, Moderator' in 1829 and 1838.<sup>77</sup> In 1814 Walker demitted the charge of Mercer and became a pioneer minister in eastern Ohio. In 1815, he took on the four-point charge of Cadiz, Mount Pleasant, Unity, and Piney Fork. Of the first three of these congregations, Walker was their first minister and of Piney Fork the second. His ministry was, therefore, characteristically developmental, as would be expected of a frontier charge.

There was also the practical aspect of commuting that was peculiar to a frontier charge consisting of multiple congregations. Walker's manse, which he built in 1815, was in New Athens, Harrison County. The Unity congregation was in Belmont County, two and a half miles to the south of his home. The Cadiz congregation was in Harrison County, some seven miles to the north of New Athens. Initially, Walker travelled to these congregations on the Sunday and Wednesday of every second week. On the Sunday and Wednesday of the intervening week, he would journey to Mount Pleasant and Piney Fork, both of which were in Jefferson County. Mount Pleasant was twelve miles east of his manse and Piney Fork twenty miles further to the northeast.<sup>78</sup> In the nineteenth century these distances represented long hours of travel by horseback and exposure to summer heat and winter snow. The physical demands were therefore considerable. It is perhaps partly indicative of the effort that Walker made that his congregations grew.

However, his ministry was not entirely appreciated and he was criticised for preaching sermons of 'immoderate length'.<sup>79</sup> This remark is of particular interest when considering Walker's debate with Alexander Campbell. After the opening exchanges of the debate, according to Campbell, Walker criticised him for verbosity and indicated his own preference for brevity: 'My opponent has made you a long speech - I don't intend to make long speeches, I keep to the

---

<sup>77</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 23.

<sup>78</sup> He demitted the charge of Cadiz and Piney Fork in 1820 and Mount Pleasant in 1827 but remained at Unity until his death.

<sup>79</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 15.

point'.<sup>80</sup> Perhaps he had learned something from his congregants that he carried into the debate. Ironically, Walker's brevity was used against him by Campbell who inferred that it was indicative of a lack of substance. The debate with Alexander Campbell was of relatively little direct significance for John Walker's future life and ministry, either positively or negatively.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, it is possible that the debate had indirect influence on Walker's career. In 1824, he published an attempted refutation of Campbell's account of their dispute. According to Beauregard, 'Walker's work gained widespread attention and approval in various Presbyterian circles'.<sup>82</sup> This enhancement to his reputation may have led to Walker's first moderatorial appointment, certainly, without becoming well known, the honour could not have been conferred.

## Issues and Conflicts

John Walker's ministry can be divided into major and minor areas of interest. The major areas concerned education and slavery: he was devoted to the establishment of a college on the Ohio frontier as a means of developing its rural society and he was fiercely determined to achieve the immediate and absolute abolition of slavery. His minor interests focused on opposing Freemasons and Brewers while, more positively, he was committed to the practice of medicine, and more radically to the cause of female suffrage.<sup>83</sup>

John Walker took a militant stand against the Masonic Order. This was in part a position inherited from his parents. His father, Robert, had blamed the Freemasons for the violence perpetrated during the Whiskey Insurrection, and

<sup>80</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 14.

<sup>81</sup> According to Campbell's supporters, their champion won the day and the debate impacted negatively on Walker's reputation (see Hudson, *Debate* 1-11). However, this is contradicted by Joseph Smith, Samuel Ralston's biographer, who wrote of Campbell's 'pretended triumph' (see Smith, *Biographical Sketch*, 192-232). These claims are probably examples of where a lack of neutrality can lead to a lack of objectivity. However, as Trueman points out while the former is inevitable, it need not lead to the latter, (Trueman, *Fallacies*, 27-28). By objectivity Trueman means: 'agreed procedures of historical verification and logical falsification', (*Fallacies*, 171).

<sup>82</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 19.

<sup>83</sup> According to Beauregard, John Walker corresponded with the suffragette author, Elizabeth Wilson. In the preface to her volume, Elizabeth Wilson wrote: 'A prominent part of what appears in the succeeding pages was embraced in a correspondence which passed between a Reverend gentleman, of very reputable talents, and our humble self, on the position woman occupies in some of the important relations of life', (Wilson, *Woman's Rights*, p. vi (see Beauregard, *Walker*, 154)).

also held them in contempt for alcohol abuse, which he believed to be rife amongst them. His son John opposed the Freemasons for the same reasons as his father had done, and also because he thought that they took 'sacrilegious oaths sworn on their pagan altars'.<sup>84</sup> John's opposition to them was further justified, in his own eyes, by the significant Masonic influence, which he perceived to exist both locally and nationally. President Andrew Jackson (held office 1829-1837) and four of his six cabinet ministers were popularly believed to be members of the order. Walker's opposition to the Masons was deeply engrained in his attitudes. It came from his upbringing and was therefore a prejudice but it also arose from his theological convictions and from his perception of current affairs.<sup>85</sup>

John Walker was opposed not only to the Masonic Order but also to Brewers and to the consumers of beer and liquor. That he was a fervent prohibitionist was doubtless fuelled by the widespread abuse of alcohol and by his work as both minister and medical practitioner, which allowed him to witness its destructive effect first hand.<sup>86</sup> The consumption of liquor by his contemporaries led Walker to regard alcohol itself, and not just its abuse, as diabolical and to consider his prohibitionist activity to be 'divinely impelled'.<sup>87</sup> However, not all of the Seceders agreed with him and he bemoaned the lack of support that he received from congregants and colleagues. Nevertheless, 'during his two terms as Moderator he assiduously pushed this dearly held issue'.<sup>88</sup> Walker's biographer refers to his subject petitioning the Presbytery of Muskingum as a means of pushing his views.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, during his tenure as Moderator, Walker would

<sup>84</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 111.

<sup>85</sup> Marty points out that George Washington's language for God owes more to the Free Masonic Lodge than to Christianity. He details Washington's language as: Supreme Being, Providence, Heaven, God, Grand Architect, Governor of the Universe, Higher Cause, Great Ruler of Events, Supreme Architect of the Universe, Author of the Heavens, Author of the Universe, Great Creator, Director of Human Events and Supreme Ruler. Additionally fate and fortune were occasionally used, (*Faith*, 151). Clearly, Walker's suspicions were not unfounded.

<sup>86</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 129. According to Beauregard, Americans between 1800 and 1830 consumed twice the number of gallons of alcohol per capita than their compatriots in the late twentieth century.

<sup>87</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 131.

<sup>88</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 129.

<sup>89</sup> 'The Presbytery of Muskingum was organised by the Associate Synod of North America in 1826 from the Presbytery of Chartiers. When the United Presbyterian Church of North America was established in 1858, the Presbytery of Muskingum became the Presbytery of Richland', E-mail from the Presbyterian Historical Society, USA ([www.history.pcusa.org](http://www.history.pcusa.org)).

have been given opportunities to communicate widely with congregations, both orally and in writing.

Another 'dearly held issue', but a more radical one, was female suffrage. Walker formed a friendship with the suffragette author, Elizabeth Wilson, who in 1849, published *A Spiritual View Of Woman's Rights and Duties In All The Important Relations Of Life*. Wilson argued for the equality of women in society and the church. In ecclesiastical circles this would entitle women to preach and teach, Wilson contended. She saw a similarity between the wife and the slave. The former was required to obey her husband, as the latter was his owner, so that she wrote, 'We really cannot see the difference between the wife's duties and the slave's, as to submission and obedience'.<sup>90</sup> However, in her discussion with a certain Dr Wayland, she noted a difference in the ground of their respective duties to obey. The wife's obedience was grounded on the mutual obligations of the spouse, while the slave's obedience was grounded in God. Consequently, the former's obedience was more bilateral and reciprocal, while the latter's was more unilateral.<sup>91</sup>

John Walker's interests stretched as far as becoming a medical practitioner. He developed this competence because many of his congregants could not afford doctors' fees. Walker apprenticed himself to a Scottish Doctor called John McBean for a period of five years. During his time of medical training, the intertwining of the twin aspects of his ministry, physical and spiritual, was impressed upon him. Beauregard reports that occasionally as Walker presided over a funeral he wondered if the corpse might reappear on his dissecting table.<sup>92</sup> Once trained, Walker applied his skill, but not indiscriminately. He was careful only to help those too poor to pay professional medical fees. Inevitably, this led him into disputes, but whatever the anomalies and ambiguities, Walker believed that the study of medicine was 'part of the Divine Plan for his poor soul'.<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> Wilson, *Woman's Rights*, 94.

<sup>91</sup> Wilson, *Woman's Rights*, 94-95.

<sup>92</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 140.

<sup>93</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 139.

John Walker's major interests in advancing education and abolishing slavery also led him into disputes. Throughout his life and ministry, these interests were very much intertwined. However, in 1820, the year of his debate with Alexander Campbell, he was engrossed chiefly in the first of them. In the years before the debate, John Walker had approached various small communities in eastern Ohio with the proposal of obtaining land on which to build an educational establishment, but his idea had been rejected. Not a man to be easily dissuaded, Walker devised an ingenious circumlocution. He was in need of a manse, so he decided to kill two birds with one stone. In 1815 he purchased a farm and on the land built his manse. Then together with a neighbouring farmer, John McConnell, he sold plots for the construction of houses. This was the beginning of a small community, New Athens, which would provide the personnel and finance for an academy. The institution, which arose from this speculative venture, was named Alma Academy. It was staffed by Seceder ministers but administered along non-denominational lines. John Walker was President, but its trustees held executive authority and they consisted of both Seceder and Presbyterian clergy.

On 22 January 1825, the Ohio legislature elevated Alma Academy to collegiate status, changing its name to Alma College. Its new charter stipulated that 'no religious doctrine peculiar to any one sect of Christians shall be inculcated by any professor'.<sup>94</sup> The new Board of Trustees consisted of fourteen members, now including Huguenots as well as Seceders and Presbyterians.

In 1826 the institution's name was again changed, this time from Alma College to Franklin College. It committed itself to the educational philosophy of former President Benjamin Franklin (held office from 1785-1788) which was 'to supply the succeeding age with men qualified to serve the Publick with Honour to themselves and to their Country'.<sup>95</sup> This was a development to which Walker objected, partly because of Benjamin Franklin's failure to introduce the resolution against the slave trade which had been entrusted to him by the Abolition Society during the Constitutional Convention of 1787. It was perhaps diversity within the board's membership that set in motion this move away from

---

<sup>94</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 39.

<sup>95</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 41.

Walker's convictions. Significantly, this quickly developed into a crisis in the life of Franklin College and launched John Walker on a lifelong crusade.

A further development along the way to this crusade took place in March 1837 when Joseph Smith was appointed to the presidency of Franklin College. Smith maintained that the college should be neutral on the slavery question, but Walker, who had allied himself with Jacob Coon, a local Presbyterian minister, was intolerant of all non-immediate abolitionists. Together, Walker and Coon represented the President as a crypto-member of the 'slaveocracy'.<sup>96</sup> This episode concerning Smith's presidency highlights features of Walker's character. Paraphrasing the remarks of A.F. Ross, a faculty member at Franklin during the time of Smith's tenure, Beauregard observes that the president 'laboured diligently' for Franklin, that the faculty grew and the student body increased and that this was the result of renewed life and energy in all of its departments.<sup>97</sup> That Walker was determined to rid Franklin College of Smith, despite his efforts and success, testifies to the strength of Walker's convictions, and perhaps also to the implacable nature of his temperament. These characteristics can also be observed in Beauregard's reference to the 'thunderous orations of Vice-President Walker'.<sup>98</sup>

However, Smith's departure was far from the end of the matter because when his replacement was found in William Bennett, who was a gradual emancipationist, he too failed to pacify the Walker-Coon coalition. Bennett held the position adopted by the Associate Reformed Synod of 1830, which, although advocating abolition, also favoured the repatriation of freed slaves. Bennett had no time for the position represented by the Associate Reformed Synod of the West that in 1831 called for its congregations to demand the immediate and absolute abolition of slavery, but this was the stance taken by Walker.

The conflict over this question resulted in the resignation of Bennett and three of his colleagues. In his resignation letter, Bennett cited his refusal to accept the Walker-Coon immediate abolitionist position as one reason for his departure.

---

<sup>96</sup> That is, those with a vested interest in slavery.

<sup>97</sup> Beauregard, *Academic Freedom*, 27, who cites George Franklin Smythe, *Kenyon College, Its First Century*, 195-197.

<sup>98</sup> Beauregard, *Academic Freedom*, 28.

These resignations were a defining moment in Franklin's history; afterwards, 'without hesitation the bulk of Franklin's Trustees, marshalled by Walker, decided to turn the college into a bastion of uncompromising abolition'.<sup>99</sup> According to Beauregard, 'Franklin now trumpeted the cause of immediate abolitionism throughout eastern Ohio'.<sup>100</sup> This position proved to be Franklin's undoing. The college had fallen into debt, and the lawyers, Wilson Shannon and Robert Alexander acting on behalf of its creditors, took action against the institution. Shannon and Alexander were both opposed to Franklin because of its abolitionist position. Harrison County Court ruled in favour of the creditors, resulting in the closure of Franklin College in August 1842. However, it reopened the following year, this time on a better financial footing but still with an unmodified hostility to slavery and to all who advocated any position other than its immediate termination.<sup>101</sup>

John Walker led the opposition to slavery, not only in his college but also in his denomination. He was successful in petitioning the Presbytery of Muskingum to the extent that in 1830 it recommended to the Associate Synod that it censure members who were slaveholders.<sup>102</sup> In 1831 this petition was accepted by the Synod. However, it was appealed and modified so that slave-owner members could retain their membership if they granted 'moral emancipation' to their slaves, which meant that even if they could not in law free their slaves, they were to treat them as free agents within the plantation.<sup>103</sup> This, in effect, ended slavery as an issue within the Associate Presbyterian Church. However, John Walker continued to 'wage war' out-with his denomination.

<sup>99</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 55.

<sup>100</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 57.

<sup>101</sup> Franklin was able to open on a better financial footing because the Trustees, 'to circumvent the unpaid claims of the creditors, ingeniously erected Franklin College's new two-storey brick building on the New Athens Presbyterian Church lot, "thus vesting their title in the trustees of the Church. Most appropriately and significantly they made it the portal into the Church which they had erected"' (Beauregard, *Walker*, 65).

<sup>102</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 89.

<sup>103</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 90. 'By the moral emancipation of a slave, we mean a solemn act performed by the master, in which he declares to the slave, that he had been wrong in ever holding and treating him as his property, that he now withdraws all such claim, and that so far as his interest is concerned, he regards him as free as himself. This is moral emancipation'. (See Webster, *Religious Monitor and Evangelical Repository*, 29-32, William S. Young, 31).

The slaveholder was also required by the Synod to warn his slave of the dangers of continuing to live in a slave state, facilitate the slave's flight to a free state if he so desired, pay the slave a fair wage for his labour if the slave decided to remain on the plantation and treat the slave as a free agent and an immortal being.

Walker acted as a conductor on the underground railroad, using his manse at New Athens as the station. However, according to Beauregard, Walker was regarded as the odd man out, even within abolitionist circles because he demanded uncompensated abolition and full American citizenship for all races.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, he set himself in opposition to the slavocracy and represented them in the darkest possible way, viewing them as Satanic. He took this to the point of denouncing President Andrew Jackson (held office 1829-1837) and even criticising the American Constitution calling it a 'covenant with death'.<sup>105</sup> All this shows Walker's commitment to principle and also perhaps a hint of fanaticism. It suggests further a mindset that reveals the Seceder character within Walker's character.

The strength of Walker's antislavery convictions stemmed partly from his views about creation and predestination. He maintained that all people, regardless of race, were created in God's image and that the divine image within humanity entailed purity, integrity, and sanctity. In Walker's judgment, these qualities were undermined by slavery: 'The slave masters' lust corrupted the defenceless black women and bred helpless mulattoes'.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, Walker believed that God had gifted freedom to Adam; he argued that this freedom is similarly gifted to all of Adam's succeeding generations, and that slavery denied to the slave that basic right. 'The slaves are veritable puppets, play things of their masters', he wrote.<sup>107</sup> Further, Walker maintained that the slave owners usurped God's place, making deities of themselves, and that in so doing, they defied monotheism and thus the first commandment. Walker asserted that Christians must take responsibility for putting an immediate and complete end to such idolatry. However, Walker's antislavery convictions also stemmed from his understanding of predestination. He insisted that the elect are responsible for performing good works and reforming society, and that slavery prohibited the subjugated person from doing so; rather, it compelled him to do the opposite:

---

<sup>104</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 98.

<sup>105</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 98-99.

<sup>106</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 89.

<sup>107</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 87.

'the slaveocracy ordered slaves to breed in order to have more human cattle on plantations or to have more human cattle for sale on the block'.<sup>108</sup>

## Postscript

We have seen that Alexander Campbell and John Walker came from similar ecclesiastical backgrounds, and that their experiences and interests were remarkably similar. Early in life, they each experienced intimidating episodes; Campbell, during the United Irishmen Rebellion and Walker, during the Whiskey Insurrection. In mature years, they both married twice and knew the death of a spouse and many of their children. Furthermore, the great national issue of slavery impacted on their lives, although in different ways. They were also both keenly concerned with education. We have also observed that they were on a comparable intellectual level which ensured that their debate was no mismatch. That it was an ill-tempered affair may be explained by their similarities and perhaps also by a striking dissimilarity. While Campbell conformed to society's values in questions of slavery and the role of women, Walker rejected them; and while Walker conformed to Presbyterian ecclesiastical tradition in his understanding of baptism, Campbell rejected it. While Alexander Campbell conformed to the national culture of his time, he was willing to break from the ecclesiastical culture of his upbringing and attempt to fashion a Christian community in accordance with his own beliefs and values. In contrast, despite the conservatism of John Walker's upbringing, his relentless opposition to slavery and his espousal of female suffrage shows that he was capable of supporting radical political views, if not theological ones, that were distinct from those of many of his peers.

Having compared and contrasted the lives of our disputants, I now turn to a consideration of the society within which they lived. This will help us to appreciate the wider societal context of their debate and explain their attitudes as well as some of their remarks.

---

<sup>108</sup> Beauregard, *Walker*, 89. Noll details theological arguments for the retention of slavery, (*America's God*, 388-389).

## Section Three: Frontier Society

### Preamble

The debate's societal contextualisation draws on material, which covers the period of the early American republic. The time frame ranges from the Revolutionary conflict to the Civil War (1778-1865). This was a unique period in American history when the young republic was trying to mature by freeing itself of European controlling influences and developing its own understanding of democracy.

It was a period of creativity and uncertainty. It was a time when new ways of doing and thinking were devised. People, because of their frontier environment, were forced to be independent of the State and as Christians, also found themselves functioning independently of the traditional Christian Church. Furthermore, uncertainty arose because America was at war with Great Britain from 1812 to 1815 and there were growing tensions over the issue of slavery.<sup>109</sup>

It was within this context that the Bible interacted with notions of republicanism, as it did with the clash of the older European world and that of the new North American one. Of this encounter, Turner wrote: 'In the settlement of North America we have to observe how European life entered the continent, and how America modified and developed that life and reacted on Europe. ... the Frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanisation'.<sup>110</sup> Turner explained this Americanisation by referring to a 'corporate nationality' as European immigrants met and married on the Frontier.<sup>111</sup>

### The Bible

In their discussions, Noll points out that few Americans of the time distinguished between 'the Bible and the Bible-as-read-in-America'. There were pervasive

---

<sup>109</sup> The uniqueness of the period is highlighted by Paul Johnson who wrote a thousand page history called *The Birth Of The Modern World Society, 1815-1830*. The Campbell-Walker Debate ranged from 1820 to 1824 and therefore fits mid-way within Johnson's history.

<sup>110</sup> Turner, *Significance*, 3-4.

<sup>111</sup> Turner, *Significance*, 21.

assumptions about the Bible within American culture, which Noll sees as three-fold: Firstly, the individual was assumed to have the right to read the Bible. Secondly, the Bible was assumed to reveal God's character. Thirdly, it was also assumed to be relevant for directing people's practical affairs. These assumptions, Noll suggests, amounted to a 'reformed and literal' hermeneutic which emerged from the conviction that Scripture alone was authoritative, against all other perceived religious authorities, such as denominational confessions and hierarchical structures. Noll also observes that this hermeneutic treated the moral law as a blueprint for Christians' lives; 'all of the Bible, but only the Bible, for all of life' as it was popularly put.<sup>112</sup> He sees the deeper origins of this hermeneutic as rooted in two factors: firstly, the revolutionary principle of individualism and secondly, a simplicity motif.<sup>113</sup>

This approach to scripture, Noll argues, found common acceptance because it was widely assumed 'that life's great issues were simple and could be controlled simply by appeal to simple human exertion and to the simple words of Scripture'.<sup>114</sup> Use of this simplicity motif is discernible in Campbell's *Sermon on the Law*.<sup>115</sup> It comes across clearly in his representation of the Reformed three-fold division of the Law as complex and confusing on the one hand and his portrayal of his position as self-evidently Biblical, and therefore simple, on the other. Noll writes: 'in such a climate, religious thinkers tailored the presentation of Christianity to the perceptions of free, personally empowered citizens'.<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>112</sup> Noll, *America's God*, 376-377.

<sup>113</sup> Noll, *America's God*, 381-382.

<sup>114</sup> Noll, *America's God*, 382.

<sup>115</sup> This sermon was preached on Rom. 8:3 in 1816 at the annual meeting of the Redstone Baptist Association in Wellsburg, West Virginia. Young offered an unreference citation from Campbell speaking thirty years after he preached the sermon: 'The intelligent reader will discover in it the elements of things which have characterised all our writings on the subject of modern Christianity from that day to the present' (*Sermon*, 217-218).

<sup>116</sup> Noll, *America's God*, 233. This mentality also had philosophical roots, which reached into 'Scottish Common Sense Realism.' The philosophy maintains that reality can be perceived directly by the senses. Knowing is therefore made a matter of common sense. (See Article *Scottish Realism in D.S.C.H.T.*, 759-760). The philosophy is principally associated with Thomas Reid (1710-1796). However, Lord Shaftesbury (1671-1731), Francis Hutchison (1674-1746), and Gersham Carmichael (1672-1729) all preceded Reid in the tradition, while James Beatty (1735-1802), Dugald Stewart (1753-1828) and James Oswald (d.1793) followed him (Harris, *Fundamentalism*, 101-102).

However, Noll believes that in reading scripture in this way, frontiers people were in some sense creating a fiction to help them to reshape their world, observing that: ‘the convictions of pietist-Enlightenment-biblical simplicity circumscribed the known world for much religious thought’.<sup>117</sup> Life for Campbell’s contemporaries was known to be complex; nevertheless it was expedient (and comforting!) for them to circumscribe its complexity by imagining that it was not so. While this was self-deceptive, the fiction, which it created, enabled them to transcend their educational limitations and provide themselves with a rationale for forming independent judgments about their lives, rather than subordinating themselves to the opinions of experts and distant figures of authority.

These thought processes resulted in attitudes, which allowed individuals to define the truth and to be convinced that it had been revealed to them by God. Consequently, as Noll remarks, ‘the only possible explanation for an opponent’s persistent erroneous use of Scripture was the opponent’s malicious intent to pervert the clear word of God’.<sup>118</sup> It was this mentality, from which and into which Alexander Campbell spoke when he debated with John Walker. Furthermore, these attitudes explain why many of Campbell’s congregants regarded his views an anti-nomian and consequently as an ‘erroneous use of Scripture’.<sup>119</sup> This observation helps to explain the strong reactions against, as well as those for, Campbell, and also the intemperate nature of the proceedings. The disputants in this debate were entirely willing to portray one another, not simply as incorrect, but as wilfully representing a position that was unscriptural. The protagonists’ biblical hermeneutics provided the necessary justification for their vilification of each other.<sup>120</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> Noll, *America’s God*, 382.

<sup>118</sup> Noll, *America’s God*, 379.

<sup>119</sup> Noll, *America’s God*, 379. The debate took place in Walker’s church, Mount Pleasant Anti-Burgher Presbyterian. It is my assumption that many, and perhaps most, of the congregants were therefore Paedo-Baptists.

<sup>120</sup> This popular rationale appeared in many forms. Harris writes that Thomas Reid ‘considers those who dispute the principles of common sense to be unsound, fools, in a delirium or, at best, immoral or misguided due to some defect in educational and cultural nurturing’ (*Fundamentalism*, 110).

Alexander Campbell was the victim of this kind of mentality as a result of preaching what became known as the *Sermon on the Law* (1816).<sup>121</sup> It is this sermon that provides the theological background to the Campbell-Walker disputation. The sermon may well have been written in response to a theological work which prompted one of Scotland's, and so Presbyterianism's, most important ecclesiastical controversies. It was the controversy that spawned the Secession Church, within which Campbell was raised and to which his baptismal opponent belonged. The work is entitled *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645 and 1649).<sup>122</sup>

In his sermon, Campbell argued for a basic discontinuity between the Testaments.<sup>123</sup> He rejected the Reformed three-fold division of the Law into moral, ceremonial and judicial. He also denied that the Law should be deployed as a moral guide for both the believer and the unbeliever alike. Campbell insisted that 'there is an essential difference between Law and Gospel - the old and the new'.<sup>124</sup> He noted that the Law is referred to negatively in the New Testament. It is called the administration of 'death' and 'condemnation' (2 Cor. 3:7,9). The Gospel by contrast, is referred to positively as the administration of 'the Spirit' (Rom. 7:6, 2 Cor. 3:6) and of 'righteousness' (2 Cor. 3:9). Furthermore, he observed that the Law is lacking permanence for it is 'done away' while the Gospel remains.

---

<sup>121</sup> Writing during July 1826 in *The Christian Baptist*, Campbell said of preaching the Sermon on the Law: 'I have been persecuted ever since by a small banditti of the orthodox', (*Christian Baptist*, 268).

<sup>122</sup> The Marrow was signed E.F. and its authorship is traditionally, although rather dubiously, assigned to the Anglican theologian, Edward Fisher (fl. 1601-1655). This work is narrated in the third person, and so a distinction ought to be made between the views of Fisher and that of the Marrow. Furthermore, a distinction should also be observed between the Marrow's theology and that of its exponents, who are collectively known as the Marrowmen. The Marrow's relevance for Campbell is evident, given that it possessed a high profile because of the central place that it occupied in the Marrow Controversy (1718-23). Furthermore, it was used as a standard theological textbook for the training of divines at the time. Crucially, the Marrow presented the Decalogue as an overt rule of life for both the Christian and the non-Christian, to which Campbell's Sermon is opposed. Given also that the volume advocated the universal offer of the gospel to which Campbell's Sermon was also committed, it is not unreasonable to suggest with Richardson that it 'formed the backdrop to Campbell's study (*Role of Grace*, 37). In fact, it is possible to view Campbell's sermon as both a partial correction and affirmation of the Marrow's theology.

<sup>123</sup> Garrison said that this is 'perhaps his most important theological principle' (*Theology*, 204). It was the underlying principle of the Campbell-Walker Debate. Campbell assumed the existence of two covenants, while Walker argued for one.

<sup>124</sup> Campbell, *Sermon*, 250.

However, Campbell's position is nuanced and did not result even in the juxtaposition of Law and Gospel, let alone their mutual opposition. Although he was accused of anti-nomianism, he still adhered to the Law, but not as the Law of Moses, instead as the Law of Christ.<sup>125</sup> According to Campbell's theology, the Law of Christ was represented by the Great Commandments (Matt. 22:37-39), which requires the individual to love God wholly, and his neighbour as himself. The Law of Christ, in Campbell's estimation, was the foundation of the Decalogue and was innate within humanity.

Consequently, this law functioned subliminally as it interacted with the preaching of the Gospel. In Campbell's judgment, this meant there was no need for the preacher to use the Law to berate his sinful congregants, for the Law was already present within them. Rather, the preacher was free to proclaim Christ as Saviour.<sup>126</sup> Campbell used a hearing analogy to illustrate his point. He asked rhetorically: 'Am I to tell a man that has an ear, and explain to him the use of it, before I condescend to speak to him?'<sup>127</sup> Therefore it could be said of Campbell's theology that it envisaged the Law as an active, although subliminal and implicit agent in the work of conversion. Campbell was saying that the Law has a role to play in conversion, but not an overt one. This distinction between Law and Gospel, between the old and the new covenants, was the fundamental theological difference between Campbell and his baptismal disputant, John Walker. It was Campbell's conviction that Old Testament theology was only applicable to modernity if Christ explicitly sanctioned it.<sup>128</sup> It could be that this theology was derived from his use of the Regulative Principle as a general hermeneutical device.<sup>129</sup>

---

<sup>125</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 479.

<sup>126</sup> Campbell's theology could be said to be consistent with the presentation of the gospel that is likely to emerge from one of the propositions for licensing which was drafted by the Presbytery of Auchterarder in 1717 and which led to the beginning of the Marrow Controversy: 'I believe that it is not sound and orthodox to teach that we must forsake sin in order to our coming to Christ, and installing us in covenant with God' (Bell, *Scottish Theology*, 151). It is possible that such preaching would focus more on Christ than on the Law. Concerning the preaching of leading Marrowman, Ebenezer Erskine (1680-1754), H. Watt wrote: 'No single word better describes his preaching than Christocentric,' (Watt, *Fathers*, 109).

<sup>127</sup> Campbell, *Sermon*, 278.

<sup>128</sup> Campbell wrote: 'it is only what Christ says [that] we must observe' (*Sermon*, 256).

<sup>129</sup> The Regulative Principle is drawn from the first and twenty-first chapters of the Westminster Confession of Faith. It admits within public worship whatever is explicitly approved, together with whatever can be deduced from 'good and necessary consequence'. It stands in contrast to

Whatever its origin, Campbell's hermeneutic is less radical than it may appear to be because he incorporated all of the Decalogue within the Law of Christ. While he excluded the command to rest, without explanation, by 1824, he made it clear that the fifth commandment should be celebrated on the first day of the week because, amongst other things, the Resurrection and Pentecost occurred on that day.<sup>130</sup> However, this Law, in Campbell's judgment, should be kept out of reciprocated love,<sup>131</sup> rather than due to fear of punishment.<sup>132</sup> We might question the point of a distinction between the Mosaic Law and Christ's Law, between Reformed Tri-partite Law and the Great Commandments, when it is indistinct. However, for Campbell, the distinction is real because it reflects a discontinuity between the covenants. He illustrated this point by referring to British Colonial Law which, he said, does not bind Americans, even although it is incorporated within American legislation.<sup>133</sup>

It seems clear, therefore, from the totality of Campbell's remarks, that he thought that the Mosaic Law was reinvented, rather than rescinded, by the New Testament.

## The Republic

That the political reasoning of republicans impacted on the ecclesiastical affairs of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America is explicitly evidenced by the denomination which James O'Kelly formed and called 'Republican Methodists'.<sup>134</sup> Schlesinger argues that this amounted to 'a plain assertion that

the Normative Principle which admits to such worship whatever is not prohibited. Campbell may have redeployed the 'explicitly approved' half of the Regulative Principle as a general hermeneutical device.

<sup>130</sup> *Christian Baptist*, Feb. 45. Campbell maintained that no-one is able to keep the command to rest, including Sabbatarians

<sup>131</sup> In the *Christian Baptist* during February 1824 Campbell wrote against Sabbatarianism. As he saw it, Sabbatarians were motivated by a fear of punishment, whereas Campbell was motivated by love. This seems to be a general difference between Campbell's response to the Law and the Reformed response, as Campbell saw it. However, he seems to have misrepresented the Reformed position. *The Marrow*, referring to the Law of Works, remarks that it says: 'Do this and live', but referring to the Law of Christ, it states: 'Live, and do this' (*Marrow*, 185). To the Reformed mind, the Christian is motivated by gratitude to obey the Law.

<sup>132</sup> Hatfield said of him: 'He strictly observed the Lord's Day (but not as the Sabbath of Jewish institution)' (*Campbell and the Disciples*, 351).

<sup>133</sup> Campbell, *Sermon*, 259.

<sup>134</sup> James O'Kelly (1735-1826), an American Methodist Clergyman of the Second Great Awakening. Along with Alexander Campbell, Elias Smith and Barton Stone, O'Kelly was a

the church was as necessary a field of republicanism as society itself.<sup>135</sup> He further suggests that the spirit of this time was ‘virtuously individualistic’ in that the worth of the individual was highly valued.<sup>136</sup> The individual was more than a soul to be saved; he was a person deserving of happiness and worthy of the right to self-determination made through private judgment. In fact, the interests of the individual were regarded as vital for the well being of society as a whole. This high view of the individual collided with Calvinism’s theologies of human depravity and predestination: the former was perceived to offer a negative, and the latter a fatalistic perspective on the individual. The emphasis upon the individual’s right of private judgment also clashed with belief in the importance of subscription to confessions, which were perceived to be restrictive. The new spirit of the age tended to result in a theology, which advocated the individual’s capacity to contribute to his or her salvation. This theology represented a significant departure from Calvinistic orthodoxy.<sup>137</sup>

Although Alexander Campbell did not wholly embrace such secularised religious belief, the fusing of political and theological ideas nonetheless influenced his soteriology. In Schlesinger’s opinion, this can be seen from the similarities between Campbell’s attacks on existing theology and President Jackson’s attacks on the common law.<sup>138</sup> ‘In each case there was a desire to render the subject

central figure in the movement, which sought to restore New Testament Christianity (Hatch, *Democratisation*, 69).

<sup>135</sup> Schlesinger, *Age of Campbell*, 31.

<sup>136</sup> Howe cites Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) who wrote in 1827: ‘It is the age of the first person singular.’ However, Howe insists that the individuality to which Emerson referred was different from the self-centred ‘me generation of the 1980s’ (*Education*, 107). In addition, Howe believes that the American understanding of ‘faculty psychology’ (the study of human powers) differed radically from medieval and Reformation views of the subject, since the American perspective did not regard self-interest as a vice (*American Self*, 65-66). A modern popular expression of this American perspective is John Piper’s book ‘Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist,’ Multnomah, 1986.

<sup>137</sup> Schlesinger describes Calvinistic orthodoxy in the early nineteenth-century as making ‘internal agony a condition precedent to the capacity of faith’ (*Age of Campbell*, 38). This position was the point of departure for the new, more radical and individualistic theology. It was also the point of departure from Alexander Campbell’s boyhood experience and the point from which John Walker did not depart.

<sup>138</sup> In 1815, Jackson was fined for contempt of court. He possessed an ‘image and record, as a hero who stood outside and above the law, [he] typified a strain in American frontier culture that encouraged violence’. Jackson was an Ulster-Scot and Howe attributes his propensity to violence as a Celtic characteristic, (Howe, *Wrought*, 435-437). Howe describes Jackson’s attitude to the Law as cavalier. He insists that it was particularly in evidence in relation to Jackson’s treatment of Indian tribes, which he described as illegal, racist and imperial, (Howe, *Wrought*, 422).

accessible to the common man and thus to cut the ground from under the privileged class, whether of priests or of judges, who had held power through their vested interests in obscurity.<sup>139</sup> Accessibility meant putting certain things within an individual's power and redefining whatever disempowered him. Consequently 'original sin became a chronic human tendency rather than a state of fatal and constitutional depravity'.<sup>140</sup> Salvation became a matter of collaboration between people and God. In all this, there is an irony, because the Jacksonian uprising objected to the intermingling of politics with religion and yet it was partly formative for the general theological outlook of the time. This political and religious interplay helped to form Campbell's soteriology, convincing him that the individual's decision was vital for salvation.<sup>141</sup>

The channel of influence between theology and political philosophy was, however, no one-way street. Noll observes that there is a probable link between Biblical interpretation and Republicanism, with influence travelling in the direction of religious to political. An appreciation of the Bible as an authoritative written document may have contributed to the fact that America moved beyond a notional constitution based on precedent, such as the British possessed, to a written document.<sup>142</sup> He thinks that 'it was certainly the case that widespread reverence for the written Scripture preceded widespread reverence for the written constitution'. However, Noll thinks that there is an even stronger link between theology and American republicanism. He suggests that calls for American independence were shaped by a political philosophy that owed much to the common sense school that had been mediated to American society in part by religious thinkers.<sup>143</sup> Consequently, Noll concludes that the

<sup>139</sup> Schlesinger, *Age of Campbell*, 35

<sup>140</sup> Schlesinger, *Age of Campbell*, 36.

<sup>141</sup> Williams writes of Campbell's mature soteriology: 'Though it denies an overriding divine initiative in human salvation, [it] does not give humans credit for their own salvation, rather, Campbell offers a way of describing the divine initiative in human salvation which recognises the significance of human action and lays the responsibility for sin squarely at the door of humanity, while giving to God, alone, the glory for human salvation' (*Experimental Religion*, 142). Alexander Campbell wrote: ' "All things are of God" in the regeneration of man, is our motto; because our apostle affirmed this as a cardinal truth' (*Christian System*, 222).

<sup>142</sup> Noll, *America's God*, 373.

<sup>143</sup> Noll, *America's God*, 233. The philosophy was mediated to Americans principally by John Witherspoon (1723-1794) who claimed to have expounded it before Thomas Reid, its principle associate. James McCosh (1811-1894) was an important later mediator of the tradition to the United States (Harris, *Fundamentalism*, 126).

speculations of philosophical theologians were ‘anything but a random conceit of the ivory tower’.<sup>144</sup> Scottish common sense gave the individual heightened thoughts about himself, and this produced a state of mind, which helped to foster the demand for self-determination and which also contributed to the tumult which became the American Revolution.<sup>145</sup>

The influence of philosophical theology on politics can also be discerned in the use of the Bible in order to justify public issues. Prior to the closing decade of the eighteenth century, politicians rarely cited the Bible in justification for adopting a particular policy. However, in the first half of the nineteenth century, it was common for advocacy of public issues to be explicitly founded on biblical texts. The Bible became important for public affairs because it had become increasing important for private life. Thus Noll observes that, ‘the religious revival that filled the churches, that generated such powerful ideas for domestic life, and that created a plethora of voluntary societies led in turn to a more explicit deployment of the Bible in the public sphere.’<sup>146</sup>

## The Frontier

If it were true of America generally that it provided the Bible with a public forum, then it was particularly true of the American frontier where Alexander Campbell ministered, and delivered his ‘Sermon on the Law.’ The American frontier may have been a lawless place but it was not without its authorities. The Constitution provided political parameters and the Bible religious ones. These were unquestioned authorities except in the case of the bold or foolish few. The only serious question to be applied to them was this: how should they be interpreted? For Campbell, such a question provided him with an

---

<sup>144</sup> Noll, *America’s God*, 233. In his remarks on faculty psychology, Howe suggested that the American founders wanted to encourage the American people to develop their faculties, that is their powers and so ‘engage in self-improvement’ (*American Self*, 64).

<sup>145</sup> It also resulted in the proliferation of untrained preachers. In fact, there were so many of them that theological educators were compelled to contend for an educated ministry. Hatch cites the prominent Presbyterian Minister, Layman Beecher (1775-1863) who said of the disciples that they were trained personally by Jesus ‘to supply the deficiency of an education’ (*Democratization*, 18). Beecher made this point, Hatch suggests, in order to counter popular arguments used to justify an uneducated ministry. Hatch says of the popular preachers: ‘They explicitly taught that divine insight was reserved for the poor and humble rather than the proud and learned’ (*Democratization*, 35).

<sup>146</sup> Noll, *America’s God*, 370.

opportunity to offer a novel interpretation of the Bible and then to contend for its validity.<sup>147</sup> The question was also useful to Campbell in that it disconnected scriptural interpretation from the past, in particular from Protestant scholasticism, which had made the hermeneutical task the preserve of a professional class, most of whom were members of the clergy. Hatch points out that established denominations, especially the Methodists, were also willing to disconnect themselves from their pasts. He notes that while the Methodists retained a hierarchical structure, Bishop Francis Asbury (1745-1816) used the Methodists' authoritarian polity to build an egalitarian church. However he observes also that America was a new situation, and that 'few Americans had to make the difficult choice of being radical or loyal to the church, as English Methodists did when faced with Luddite discontent.'<sup>148</sup>

Unlike in the eastern cities and towns, the clergy were few in number on the frontier. Although possessing similarities with America generally, the frontier had a number of distinguishing characteristics that set it apart from the eastern areas of the country. Allied to the lack of clergy was the lack of a religious establishment. Increasingly, the new generation of frontier people was not born into a religious culture that imposed its ecclesiastical tradition on them from infancy,<sup>149</sup> and so to belong, they had to opt into it.<sup>150</sup> Those who moved to the frontier as adults, even if they possessed a strong ecclesiastical identity, often found themselves detached from denominational distinctions. Consequently, the general situation, in respect to theological beliefs and the interpretation of the Bible, was fluid.<sup>151</sup>

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, fluidity was a particularly distinguishing characteristic of the frontier, which at this time was located west

---

<sup>147</sup> The degree to which Campbell's Sermon is novel is intriguing. Among its progenitors could have been the Scottish Independent John Glas (1695-1773) and the Irish Puritan Thomas Patient (fl. 1640s).

<sup>148</sup> Hatch, *Democratization*, 8-11.

<sup>149</sup> Tradition, which impacted children, was beginning to emerge through the Sunday School Movement. Howe says that: 'in frontier areas, Sunday Schools were often established in advance of more ambitious, weekly schools' (*Education*, 13).

<sup>150</sup> This may have meant that Presbyterian federal theology, which treats children of the covenant as within the covenantal community, and so baptises them in infancy, found little appeal in some quarters. Federal theology was the theological system, which Alexander Campbell rejected and for which John Walker contended.

<sup>151</sup> Garrison, *Pioneer*, 57.

of the Allegheny Mountain Range. That, at least, was its physical locale. In a more metaphysical sense, the frontier was located in the minds of people. That is, the frontier could reasonably be said to have been a 'state of the mind'.<sup>152</sup> In order to appreciate this point, we need to consider the frontiersperson or pioneer, as a particular type of person. Garrison has helpfully detailed some of the relevant characteristics of pioneers.<sup>153</sup> According to him, they were people of little material possessions and of few family ties with the eastern seaboard of America. Generally, they possessed only a basic education, and often lacked settled employment that offered them and their dependents a prosperous long-term future.<sup>154</sup> They were also relatively young, having most of their future ahead of them. These rootless aspects of life meant that they were willing and able to leave what little they had in order to search for a better future. In time, pioneers developed many qualities, as they became, of necessity, self-reliant. They had to clear the land, build houses, hunt and grow their food. They had to spin and weave their cloth from which they would make their clothes. Frontier people were therefore self-reliant but simultaneously dependent on their fellows for the completion of larger tasks, such as harvesting crops and constructing barns.

These frontier qualities of independence and interdependence produced an attitude, which was suspicious of experts: 'the plain man's common sense was a more trustworthy guide to truth than the opinion of any expert.'<sup>155</sup> The plain man had achieved a standard of Omni-competence, which filled him with a sense of self-worth.<sup>156</sup> This reality combined with attitudes, which tended to despise the professional classes, to produce contempt for authority.<sup>157</sup>

---

<sup>152</sup> Garrison, *Pioneer*, 55.

<sup>153</sup> Garrison, *Pioneer*, 48-49.

<sup>154</sup> Although frontiers people possessed only a basic education, nevertheless they appreciated education's value to the extent that, after a day's labour, they taught their children at home (Howe, *Education*, 18).

<sup>155</sup> Garrison, *Pioneer*, 51.

<sup>156</sup> Davis said of the pioneer preacher that: 'Modern Biblical Critics may speak of him with undisguised contempt' (*Pioneer*, 9). This was the demeaning attitude of North Americans living on the continent's eastern seaboard that was exhibited towards frontiers people. Such an attitude could partly explain the pioneer's drive to succeed.

<sup>157</sup> According to Hatch, this contempt extended beyond the clerical profession to include the medical and legal ones. There was a popular drive for self-legal representation and even self-healing by utilising Native American herbal remedies (*Democratization*, 28-29). The attitude is

However, by the time Campbell preached the ‘Sermon on the Law,’ the West was beginning to produce green shoots of civilisation.<sup>158</sup> In some frontier areas, there were concentrations of established civilisation and in others, an absence even of emerging civilisation and many stages in between, across the frontier.<sup>159</sup> The societal diversity was a consequence of America’s remarkable growth rate.<sup>160</sup> Furthermore, as a result of the second Great Awakening, the frontier also experienced considerable ecclesiastical growth. This period raised the issue of the soul’s salvation: ‘the great question of the revivalist frontier was: how can I know that I am saved?’<sup>161</sup> The frontiers-people were looking not only for a physical belonging, but for a spiritual one too. This may well explain why it was possible to have a public ecclesiastical oral debate followed by its popular publication.

## Postscript

The study of frontier society has helped clarify the likely composition of the audience, which witnessed the Campbell-Walker oral debate. That people attended the debate clearly indicates that the audience consisted of those who had an interest in the Bible and who thought that its correct interpretation was important and relevant for their lives. They may well also have been inclined to vilify those with whom they had a difference of opinion. These factors probably inclined the members of the audience on the one hand to hold so strongly to

associated with the Jeffersonian Revolution. Wood argues that the Jeffersonian election of 1800 amounted to a second revolution, which secured the gains of the 1776 one (*Empire*, 276). In Wood’s estimation, it brought ‘ordinary men with humble occupations’ into government (*Empire*, 289).

<sup>158</sup> According to Hatch, by 1840, populist dissent had diminished because ‘cultural alienation gave way to a pilgrimage towards respectability’ (*Democratization*, 6).

<sup>159</sup> Garrison, *Pioneer*, 52-53. Turner referred to ‘frontier conditions in permitting lax business honour, inflated paper currency and wild-cat banking’. He also referred to ‘the lawless characteristics of the frontier’ (*Significance*, 32-3).

<sup>160</sup> According to Paul Johnson, the State of Ohio where the Campbell-Walker Debate was conducted was populated by 230,760 people in 1810, by 1820 the population had risen to 581,434 and then to 937,903 by 1830 (*Birth*, 218, see also Longman, *History*, 256). The green shoots of civilisation may also have been a consequence of education. According to Howe, the religious awakening ‘proved to be an epoch in the history of American education’ (*Education*, 13). This was true of primary education: ‘In New England, no state had less than ninety-eight per cent literacy, which equalled Scotland and Sweden, the two countries where energetic programmes sponsored by Protestant Established Churches had forged the world’s largest literacy (*Education*, 22). It was also true of post-primary education: ‘All told, by 1815, there were thirty-three colleges in the United States; by 1835, sixty-eight; and by 1848, there were 113’ (*Education*, 15).

<sup>161</sup> Hicks, *Sensible Pledge*, 17.

their views that it made a change of mind unlikely. Alternatively, on the other hand, the audience was probably confident and of an independent turn of mind. They were sufficiently confident to have forged an independent lifestyle, rejected authority and with it, a degree of ecclesiastical tradition. Perhaps contradictorily, this may have meant that although they were not the type of people to quickly change their minds, there were, nevertheless willing to think for themselves and alter their views, if they became convinced of an opinion which was contrary to their initial perception.

If these perceptions of Campbell and Walker's audience are correct, it follows that the environment into which the disputants went for debate was no easy one, especially for Campbell, given that the occasion was hosted in Walker's church. However, although it would have presented challenges, it was not a hopeless situation for either of the disputants. This was so because the composition of their audience was such that there was at least a reasonable prospect of persuading some of its members.

## PART TWO: DISPUTATION

### Chapter One: Day One – Baptise Who?

#### Preamble

The topic of discussion on the first day of the debate was the appropriate subject for baptism: who should be baptised? This topic was divided into two subtopics: a comparison between circumcision and baptism, and a comparative study of the church in the Old Testament era with that in the New Testament. This chapter looks at the first subdivision and seeks to describe and discuss the various points raised during the dispute.

#### The Debate Begins: Pointers for Discussion

According to the account in Campbell's volume, Walker set out in his opening salvo the agenda for discussion as follows:

My friends ... I maintain that Baptism came in the room of Circumcision.<sup>162</sup>

The question that Walker flagged up for discussion was that of the relationship, or lack of it, between circumcision and baptism. According to him, if an ontological relationship could be established between the covenant as it was administered before and after the Christ event, then by analogy children would have the same place within the new covenant as they did within the old. This means that as the children within the old covenant received the sign of circumcision, the children of the new covenant would be entitled to receive its sign of baptism. His was an inductive argument, which sought to establish probability rather than certainty.<sup>163</sup>

That is not to suggest that Walker conceded anything by taking this approach, for he evidently regarded his argument as a strength. In his own volume, he described his approach as 'natural inference' and thereby indicated that his

---

<sup>162</sup> Campbell, *Baptism*, 9.

<sup>163</sup> 'Inductive' is a logician's term for inferential. Something that is inferred from verifiable evidence, can reach conclusions that are hypothetical and provisional.

argument was from analogy.<sup>164</sup> Walker suggested that Baptists 'will admit that circumcision was anything but a seal of the covenant of grace,'<sup>165</sup> for if they did see it as a seal of grace, he argued, they would have to concede victory to Paedo-Baptists due to the 'natural inference' which would give to baptism the same function within the new covenant as circumcision had within the old. In Walker's view, 'When we say that baptism came in the room of circumcision, we mean no more than that baptism occupied the same place in the order of its administration, and the blessings it sealed, that circumcision did; and as circumcision was first in order, so is baptism.'<sup>166</sup>

Campbell began his remarks by attempting to refute Walker's point that baptism came in the 'room of circumcision'. That is, baptism replaced circumcision as the seal of the Covenant of Grace. He did so by offering five points intended to highlight the problems of the analogy between circumcision and baptism. He began by charging Walker and the Paedo-Baptists with inconsistency. If Paedo-Baptists really believed their own theology then, he claimed:

[1] they would baptise none but males, the Jews circumcised none but males; [2] they would baptise precisely upon the eighth day; for the Jews circumcised on the eighth day. [3] They would baptize all the slaves or servants that the master of a household possessed, upon his faith, for the Jews circumcised all their slaves, all born in their house or bought with their money, on the footing of their covenant to Abraham. [4] They would not confine the administration of baptism to the clerical order, for men and women circumcise their own children. [5] They would not confine baptism to the infants of professed believers only, for the most wicked of the Jews had the same privileges with regard to circumcision, that the most faithful of their nation had.<sup>167</sup>

After setting out these five points where, as Campbell saw it, the analogy between baptism and circumcision breaks down, he rather curiously offered a recapitulation of his points in 'seven respects' - that is, seven points - to give his

<sup>164</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 135.

<sup>165</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 136.

<sup>166</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 136.

<sup>167</sup> Campbell, *Baptism*, 12. Campbell's concluding comment may have been a reference to Seceder theology that administered baptism in a more restricted way than the Jews administered circumcision (see footnotes 169-170).

'opponent an opportunity of replying altogether'.<sup>168</sup> However, this was not really a summary of his earlier points because the third one, referring to slaves and servants, and fifth, referring to the children of the godly and godless, were not included in the seven. This is odd, since Campbell could have used the question of the baptism of slaves to his advantage, for many Paedo-Baptists - although not John Walker - were members of the slaveocracy. His fifth point could also have been used to gain advantage; because covenantal Paedo-Baptists have no consistent position regarding the baptism or non-baptism of the infants of 'godless' parents. John Calvin, for example, advocated the baptism of infants, even of excommunicated parents and understood the rite to relate to the covenant community, rather than the conduct of parents.<sup>169</sup> The Seceders, by contrast, did not administer the sacrament unless parents were free from censure. Furthermore, they regarded a less disciplined administrative approach as amounting to the 'prostitution' of the sacrament.<sup>170</sup>

Campbell's recapitulation of the dissimilarities between circumcision and baptism also offered a development of the theme. He suggested four further dissimilarities between the two rites: Firstly, there were the prerequisites for the administration of the sacraments: 'Circumcision required only carnal descent from Abraham, or covenantal relation to Abraham, but baptism requires no carnal relation to Abraham; it requires simply faith in Christ as its sole prerequisite'.<sup>171</sup> Secondly, there was the emblematic import of the sacraments. Circumcision, Campbell said:

was a sign of the separation of the Jews from all the human family, and it was a type of the death or circumcision of Christ whereas baptism was emblematic of the believer's death to sin, burial with Christ, and resurrection to new life.<sup>172</sup>

---

<sup>168</sup> Campbell, *Baptism*, 12.

<sup>169</sup> Calvin, *Letters*, 214-218.

<sup>170</sup> Holmes, *Presbyterian*, 204-8.

<sup>171</sup> Campbell, *Baptism*, 12.

<sup>172</sup> Campbell, *Baptism*, 13. 'Emblem' was a term used by both of the disputants. It can involve a combination of images and of words and is used as a didactic device. The 'emblem' is associated with Andrea Alciato (1492-1550): See [www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk](http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk). It is likely that the disputants used emblem simply to suggest similarity.

Thirdly, there was the matter of the body parts to which the sacraments were applied. On this point, Campbell wrote: 'Neither Baptists nor Paedo-Baptists apply baptism to the precise part affected in the rite of circumcision'.<sup>173</sup> His fourth and final additional prerequisite concerned the blessings, which resulted from the sacraments. In Campbell's judgment:

circumcision conveyed no spiritual blessings; baptism conveys no temporal, but spiritual blessings. Baptism is connected with the promise of the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit; circumcision had the promise of Canaan's land, and a numerous family, as its peculiar blessings.<sup>174</sup>

The seven issues raised by Campbell in the order in which they appear in his published work are gender, age, prerequisites, administrators, emblematical import, body parts, and blessings.

Campbell closed his initial speech with a challenge and a promise. He challenged Walker to explain how it is that these differences can exist between the rites of baptism and circumcision, and yet the two rites can be said to be of the same covenant, so that one could replace the other. However, he promised that even if Walker were able to show this to his satisfaction, then he could supply additional differences between the two.

According to Campbell's representation of Walker's reply, the latter was somewhat dismissive and perhaps even contemptuous, because he did not even attempt to address some of Campbell's points. Campbell reports Walker as saying: 'These I consider of little consequence'.<sup>175</sup> In fact, Walker sandwiched his reply to Campbell's comments with this type of remark, for in closing he remarked: 'I consider these objections of my opponent of no consequence, nor do they invalidate what I have already said.'<sup>176</sup> According to Campbell's record of what was said between these two dismissive remarks, Walker responded to only three of Campbell's points; gender, age and blessings.

<sup>173</sup> Campbell, *Baptism*, 13.

<sup>174</sup> Campbell, *Baptism*, 13.

<sup>175</sup> Campbell, *Baptism*, 14.

<sup>176</sup> Campbell, *Baptism*, 15.

Although in Campbell's account, Walker offers no explanation as to why he saw little significance in Campbell's points, he made it perfectly clear in his own volume that in his opinion they were rather tangential in that they did not deal with the substance of the issue. There is, however, more to the reason for Walker's lack of discussion.

It may have been that Walker felt entirely unthreatened even by Campbell's more challenging points.<sup>177</sup> Judging from an analogy, which Walker used to explain his position regarding the church, it seems that he was perfectly comfortable with dissimilarities existing between the old and new churches. In fact, Walker's position actually required dissimilarity. He wrote: 'A man cannot be the same now [as] he was ten years ago, for this unanswerable reason, he was then poor and he is now rich. So the church ... she cannot be the same now [as] she was in former times'.<sup>178</sup> Consequently, it could be that as Walker expected dissimilarity within the church, he also expected it within the covenant. If this were Walker's view, it would have helped his case if he had explicitly stated it at this point in the discussion. Certainly, Walker's comments contained in his discussions over administrators, gender, and age strongly suggest that a sense of progression was key to his thinking, and that dissimilarity was therefore to be expected.

However, this said, Walker appears to have avoided two of Campbell's most challenging arguments for the dissimilarity between baptism and circumcision. These were his discussion of prerequisites and his reference to the emblematic import of the rites in question. Perhaps Walker thought that these points were more challenging than he cared to admit and so he preferred to avoid them during the oral debate. That he later chose to take them on in his published work suggests that he had allowed himself time for consideration. In his opening remarks he told his readers that he would 'attend to all the observations of Mr. C. worthy of notice'; in discussing them in his published work, he must

---

<sup>177</sup> A possible exception is Campbell's final point regarding blessings, (Walker, *Treatise*, 158).

<sup>178</sup> Campbell, *Baptism*, 25. Moreover, it seems the covenant and the church were, in Walker's judgment, viewed as one, in that both were assimilated to a bond, (Campbell, *Baptism*, 14).

therefore, in retrospect, have thought that they were indeed worthy of discussion.<sup>179</sup>

## The Debate Continues: Points of Dissimilarity

### Gender

As the debate continued, Walker challenged Campbell's comment concerning gender. Campbell had insisted that because only males were circumcised, then for baptism to replace circumcision, only males ought to be baptised. Walker responded that Christ has the right to incorporate females within his covenant and that he can alter or add to his church as he pleases. For us to question this rite is presumptuous and inappropriate. Moreover, he added that Christ's enlargement of our privileges within the New Testament dispensation is not problematic because, 'the addition of a rite does not destroy the nature of that rite'.<sup>180</sup> Walker's argument for maintaining this position, according to Campbell, was to assimilate the Jewish and Christian churches to a bond.<sup>181</sup> Walker insisted: 'If there are thousands of names added to a bond, it does not destroy the nature of the bond.'<sup>182</sup>

Campbell was unconvinced by Walker's bond argument and promptly exposed a number of its deficiencies. However, he missed its initial weakness. Walker's argument is weak, firstly because it attempts to deny to the enquirer the right to enquire. He wrote: 'We are not to suggest to him [Christ] who is, or who is not, to be added to his church.'<sup>183</sup> It is as if Walker said to Campbell, 'I am correct and you have no right to question me.' The second reason why Walker's argument is weak, and Campbell did identify this one, that is it is based on an imprecise analogy. If Walker is going to use a bond as an analogy, he needs to refer to a specific example in order to be convincing, otherwise the reader is forced to supply his own example and this may not further Walker's case. If, for

---

<sup>179</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 21.

<sup>180</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 14.

<sup>181</sup> It appears that Walker is equating bond with covenant at this point. In doing so, he makes a contract of covenant.

<sup>182</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 14.

<sup>183</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 14.

instance, Walker's bond is illustrated with reference to a bond of inheritance, his argument is undermined. If thousands of names are added to a will, it would have the effect of diluting the benefits to the point of nullification.

As Campbell saw it, by failing to be restrictive, Walker was incorporating everything and therefore nothing into his bond:

To tell us that our privileges are now enlarged is poor logic to prove any proposition; it proves too much. If there be no specification of those items in which our privileges are enlarged, upon this principle, we might innovate without end; and if any person asked us why, we might tell them, our privileges are now enlarged.<sup>184</sup>

The weakness of this argument was also noted by Walker's commentator who provided two specific examples of a bond, the first drawn from history and the second from domesticity. He wrote:

England and America made a national covenant sixty years ago; to this covenant there is an addition of millions, on each side, by birth, immigration etc. query is there any alteration in the bond? Though every individual is bound in the same sense, as they would be, if their names were subscribed and their seals affixed.<sup>185</sup>

This first illustration is particularly good because it easily copes with very large additions. His second illustration is less so because it cannot cope with unlimited growth and so there is no proper analogy.

A father made a will: eight months after he died, his wife was delivered of another heir to the estate, query, would not this child, be bound by the obligation of the father's will, or covenant, or entitled to the privileges of it?<sup>186</sup>

The problem here is as follows: if very large numbers were added to the will, it would be diluted to the point of invalidation. If, however, the father's estate was of infinite value, as God's is, then the problem disappears. For the analogy to be analogous with the Jewish church opening its doors to the Gentile world and the subsequent gargantuan addition to its membership, the point has to be made that the father's will is of infinite value.

---

<sup>184</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 16.

<sup>185</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 139.

<sup>186</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 139.

Although Walker's position has been apparently strengthened by the provision of specific examples of a bond, nevertheless it remains weak because no reason has been supplied as to why women should be baptised, when they were not circumcised. Walker seems to have noticed this weakness in his comments and so he discussed the issue when he published on the subject. He argued that 'Women were never excluded, in consequence of the difference of sex, from enjoying the benefits of this covenant; they were only excluded from affirming a visible seal; they are now admitted, not by changing the seal, but by extending the privilege'.<sup>187</sup> Here, Walker began to move beyond the unsatisfactory assertion of divine sovereignty to providing a partial explanation for the exclusion and subsequent inclusion of females. He developed his argument by alluding to Galatians 3:20 in order to indicate both why the privileges of the covenant were enlarged and to indicate that they were enlarged not only to include women but also Gentiles and in fact all types of people.

Women were never excluded, in consequence of the difference of sex, from enjoying the benefits of this covenant; they were only excluded from affixing a visible seal, they are now admitted; not by changing the seal, but by extending the privilege. ... The dispensation, under which, it is our privilege to live, knows no difference between Jew, or Greek; bond, or free; male, or female. In all these respects the former dispensation did distinguish, the special exercise of grace, under that dispensation, was confined chiefly to the Jews.<sup>188</sup>

Walker then changed direction. Instead of trying to defend his case against Campbell's attacks, he took to the offensive and sought to invalidate Campbell's position by setting out a deductive argument. A deductive argument does not allow a false conclusion if the premises are accepted to be true. If, however, the premises are false, it is impossible for the conclusion to be correct. Walker deployed this latter type of argumentation, although in a negative form, by using a premise which his readers accepted to be false in order to demonstrate that they must, by logical necessity, accept the conclusion also to be false.

---

<sup>187</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 139.

<sup>188</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 139-140. Although Walker does not state so explicitly, his allusion to Galatians 3:20 suggests a missiological reason for the extension of the covenant's privileges to include women.

Walker took 'saving grace' as an example of a quality, which was accepted by his readers as a constant and could not therefore be changed by circumstances. He applied his argument to Campbell's reasoning, by arguing, as follows:

If saving grace, under the Old Testament, was chiefly confined to the Jewish nation, then saving grace is not the same nature under the present dispensation, as it was, under the former. 'But the former is true, and therefore the latter.'<sup>189</sup>

This is exactly Campbell's position but with circumcision and baptism replaced by saving grace. For clarity, Walker set Campbell's argument alongside it:

if circumcision under the Old Testament was confined to the male posterity of Abraham, then baptism, the present seal of the covenant of grace, is not of the same nature of circumcision, a seal under the former dispensation. 'But the former is true, and therefore the latter.'<sup>190</sup>

In this way, Walker sought to demonstrate the logical inconsistency, which he perceived to lie at the heart of Campbell's argumentation.<sup>191</sup> Saving grace was, after all, a known constant and therefore it was accepted by Walker's readership to be the same under both testaments.<sup>192</sup> He wrote, 'Every reason Mr. C. can offer, to prove the truth of the last syllogism, will bear with equal force upon the separate terms of the first; but the first is known by every person to be false, and as the second is established in the same manner, it must of necessity be also false'.<sup>193</sup>

Walker's deductive argument does not seek to demonstrate the certain truth of his own conclusion, but rather the certain falsity of his opponents'. This leaves us with the following, according to Walker's reasoning. His position was established as being probably correct and Campbell's as certainly wrong.

<sup>189</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 140.

<sup>190</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 140.

<sup>191</sup> Walker's argument would have been strengthened if he had spent time explaining the relationship between grace and circumcision on the one hand, and grace and baptism on the other. It would have been clearer if he had shown that both circumcision and baptism are sacraments, that they are therefore efficacious and so are a means of conferring God's grace.

<sup>192</sup> The Westminster Confession of Faith, XI.6 reads: 'The justification of believers under the Old Testament was ... one and the same with the justification of the believer under the New Testament'.

<sup>193</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 140.

However, considering that we are dealing with alternatives that do not admit to the possibility of a third option, then it is reasonable to assume that if one is wrong, the other must be correct and so Walker's argument is established by default. That Walker used saving grace in his argument is an indication that he perceived the stakes to be high. Although Walker did not develop the issue, he was hinting at the way of salvation, which, in his theology, was a constant through both the Old and New Testament eras, while in Campbell's theology, as Walker perceived it, its nature changed.

It is certainly the case that Walker, after publication, achieved a higher standard of argument than he did within Campbell's representation of their debate. In Campbell's representation, which may of course be inaccurate, Walker could only refer to an imprecise bond and retreat into an appeal to divine sovereignty. This could hardly have impressed the audience. In his own writings, however, Walker provided a reasoned case for his position and presented arguments that at least undermined those of his opponent, and at best, comprehensively refuted them.

## Age

Walker began his refutation of Campbell's assertion by arguing from purity legislation. Campbell maintained that baptism could not have replaced circumcision because, unlike circumcision, it is not administered on the eighth day. Interestingly, Walker omitted any reference to purity law in his own presentation of his position. However, Campbell presents Walker as arguing that the eighth day rule was introduced because: 'the Jewish mother was unclean seven days after the child was born and could not accompany it to the sanctuary, until she was considered clean according to the law.'<sup>194</sup>

Campbell did not show Walker citing scripture in support of this position. He did however, cite scripture himself to refute it. He quoted from Leviticus 12:2-4, including the reference to the seven days for which a woman is unclean after the birth of a male child but extending the quote to include verse 4:

---

<sup>194</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 14.

She shall then continue in the blood of her purification thirty-three days, she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor shall she come into the sanctuary until the days of her purifying be ended.<sup>195</sup>

In Campbell's judgment, the reference from Leviticus, far from supporting Walker's position, instead amounted to 'a flat contradiction' of it.<sup>196</sup> Campbell added the observation 'that circumcision was fixed upon the eighth day, four hundred years before legal uncleanness was instituted.'<sup>197</sup> Perhaps Walker chose to omit any reference to purity law in his own work because he thought that Campbell had comprehensively refuted his position during their oral debate.

In his publication, Walker found a way to circumvent Campbell's argument. He maintained that the timing of circumcision's administration 'was not essential to the *being* of the ordinance'.<sup>198</sup> This is the first occasion in which Walker raised the issue of ontology and thereby shifted his argumentation to metaphysics. In this way, Walker implied that Campbell's dissimilarities are peripheral, not central, and therefore that his argument is invalid.

The evidence that Walker presents to show that chronology was 'a mere circumstance attending' circumcision is drawn from Israel's wilderness wanderings.<sup>199</sup> Joshua 5:3-7 tells us that the practice was discontinued during those years, he writes; therefore it was clearly not essential to circumcise on the eighth day. However, while this point certainly does convey the impression that it could not have been essential to circumcise on the eighth day. Campbell commented on this issue:

During their peregrinations, they could not, in consequence of the pain attending this rite, attend to it. But this does not prove that they might, with impunity, have at any time postponed it to the

<sup>195</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 16.

<sup>196</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 16.

<sup>197</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 16. No scriptural citation was offered in support of this historical argument. However, Genesis chapter twenty-one is the probable point of reference.

<sup>198</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 141. My emphasis.

<sup>199</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 141.

sixteenth, twentieth, or sixtieth day. We find that, in the most corrupt state of the Jews, they kept this ordinance pure.<sup>200</sup>

In Campbell's judgment, the fact that they had to travel, and that movement would have caused the newly circumcised excruciating pain, explains the suspension of the rite; otherwise the rite continued, as did the circumstances attending it.

It seems that Walker thought that the timing of circumcision was important to ensure that the rite was speedily administered, but he also thought that it was a non-essential part of the rite and that consequently the eight days should not be cited in a comparison with baptism. Rather, Walker maintained that: 'The divine law never did attach that importance [i.e. essential] to the eighth day'.<sup>201</sup> In Walker's judgment, the importance to be attached to the timing of circumcision concerned the prevention of undue delay. He concluded: 'Had no time been specified, under one pretext or another, the rite would have been neglected, and in many cases, entirely omitted'.<sup>202</sup>

Finally, Walker maintained that 'the only argument that should be drawn from this circumstance by the Baptist or Paedo-Baptist is that under the former dispensation, persons were admitted members of the visible church when infants'.<sup>203</sup> Walker apparently did not think it appropriate to draw any lessons from the administration of circumcision and apply them to baptism. This may

---

<sup>200</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 16-17. In this section, the disputants' arguments are taken from Jewish history and religious culture and seek to provide evidence from the Bible in support of their positions. Both of the disputants used the Bible as an unquestioned historical source. On this occasion, Campbell's use of it is particularly naïve because it assumes continuous movement, as if the Jews were constantly walking. However, given that Israelite tradition presents a forty-year timeframe for the journey from Egypt to Mesopotamia, a semi-nomadic existence is implied, and Campbell's point is consequently undermined. The disputants used Scripture as an inerrant source of information which provided them with propositions for the formulation of theology. This methodology is consistent with a scholastic use of Scripture. (See Scholastic Theology, Scripture as Doctrine in *The Bible in Theology and Preaching*, Donald K. McKim, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1985, Second Edition 1993).

<sup>201</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 141.

<sup>202</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 143. This chronological issue finds relevance in baptism's administration, which, in the New Testament, was applied immediately, as Jews and Pagans converted to Christianity (Acts 8:35-37, Acts 16:25-34).

<sup>203</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 142. This is a theological argument, which implies a Christological and ecclesiological reading of the Hebrew Scriptures.

explain why Walker did not construct his own counter-list of similarities between the rites against Campbell.<sup>204</sup>

In the second part of his attempted refutation, Walker took to the offensive. As in his discussion of gender, Walker attempted to invalidate Campbell's position by challenging its logical consistency. His representation of Campbell's perspective ran as follows: 'if circumcision was performed on the eighth day, then baptism could not come in the room of circumcision. But the former is true, and therefore the latter'.<sup>205</sup> Of this, Walker said, 'We refuse to admit the conclusion, from the importance attached by the argument to the eighth day; let us therefore amend the argument, by the facts, as established by Scripture.'<sup>206</sup>

It was Walker's contention that Campbell's first premise is incorrect and that consequently his conclusion cannot be correct.<sup>207</sup> Walker then offered a correction to Campbell's flawed argument: 'Circumcision, as a seal of the righteousness of Christ, was administered to persons in a state of infancy, then baptism may also be administered to persons of that age. But the former is true and therefore the latter'.<sup>208</sup> In this way, Walker set out a deductive argument in two premises. He followed it up by stating three supportive points.<sup>209</sup> These points were that it is not essential to circumcision that it be administered on the eighth day, that baptism be administered on the eighth day. Lastly, that the timing of baptism's application was not therefore essentially different from that of circumcision.

The above discussion reveals Campbell's argument as highly literal and flexible. It may therefore have appealed to those of the congregants who looked for explicit biblical references in order to support a position. Walker, however

<sup>204</sup> He came close to doing so on page 54 of his *Treatise* where he suggested an inner and outer spiritual cleansing, which amounted to regeneration.

<sup>205</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 143.

<sup>206</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 143.

<sup>207</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 143.

<sup>208</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 143.

<sup>209</sup> Walker's supportive points should have been unnecessary because a deductive argument contains sufficient evidence within the premises for the conclusion to be compelling.

showed a better engagement with the probable reasons that lay behind the eight day rule and, as a result, was able to put together a more reasoned case.

## Prerequisites

The next point raised for discussion was the question of requirements or prerequisites for baptism to be administered. In Campbell's judgment, circumcision required either biological descent from Abraham or covenantal relationship to him, while the latter demanded only faith in Christ. In Campbell's judgment, 'no faith was required as a sine qua non to circumcision - but the New Testament presents faith, as a sine qua non to baptism' he cited Acts 8:36-37 in support of his case.<sup>210</sup> 'The eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.'

According to Campbell, Walker made no attempt to deal with this objection:

The following are four of the embarrassments I proposed that Mr. Walker has not attempted to remove: the difference of the administrators, the difference of the prerequisites to these ordinances, the difference in the part of the body affected by the rite, and the difference in their emblematical import.<sup>211</sup>

However, Walker did deal with the objections when he published. In Walker's judgment, his opponent was not comparing like with like:

In the contrast here made, he should either have left out "covenant relation to Abraham" when speaking of circumcision, or else continued it, when speaking of baptism, for otherwise the contrast is not fair.<sup>212</sup>

Walker then offered a twofold explanation of the 'why' of Campbell's alleged sophistry. Firstly, Campbell had to include the phrase 'covenant relation to

<sup>210</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 12. Both circumcision and baptism could be understood as a call to faith. (Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.15,17).

<sup>211</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 13, 17. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the first definition, (b), used between 1774 and 1874, 'embarrassment' meant: 'perplexity, sense of difficulty or hesitation with regard to judgment or action; constrained feeling or manner arising from bashfulness or timidity'. The second definition, used between 1726 and 1873 meant: 'an impediment, obstruction, encumbrance' (*OED, Internet edition*).

<sup>212</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 144.

Abraham' when speaking of circumcision for otherwise he would have possessed no mandate 'to circumcise Jewish proselytes that had no carnal relation to Abraham.'<sup>213</sup> Secondly, Walker insisted that if Campbell had omitted the prerequisite of 'covenant relation to Abraham' when speaking of baptism then Campbell would have been forced to concede defeat to the Paedo-Baptists on the basis of the evidence provided by Acts 2:39.<sup>214</sup> This verse was evidently interpreted by Walker to refer to Gentile inclusion within the covenant on the basis of the Abrahamic promise of blessing.

In Walker's judgment, Campbell had to choose between two options if he was to achieve consistency in presenting a comparison between circumcision and baptism that was convincingly discontinuous. The options from which Campbell had to choose, in Walker's estimation, was either to focus on biological descent from Abraham, or concentrate on simple faith in Christ.

With regard to option one, Biological Descent from Abraham, according to Walker, Campbell argued that:

Baptism differs from circumcision in the prerequisite required to participation in the ordinance: circumcision required only carnal descent from Abraham but baptism requires no carnal descent from Abraham; it requires simply faith in Christ as its sole prerequisite.

In Walker's judgment, this position is wrong because it is not a fact;<sup>215</sup> circumcision was not racially exclusive. In rejecting Campbell's premise, Walker denied its validity as part of a cumulative argument.<sup>216</sup> If not a fact, then it possesses no merit. Walker supported his contention by citing examples of those who were not biologically related to Abraham, but who were nevertheless circumcised, namely, Abraham's servants and proselyte converts to Judaism, remarking: 'It was but a small share of Abraham's natural seed, who were to be circumcised. This rite was bound to perform on his servants and on his children,

<sup>213</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 144.

<sup>214</sup> The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

<sup>215</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 145.

<sup>216</sup> The cumulative argument combines various meritorious but inconclusive statements to suggest the probability, rather than demonstrate the certainty, of a given position. (See Pailin, *Ground Work*, 178-180).

but there is no hint given that this was to be continued to their posterity.<sup>217</sup> He also cited Baalam and the Arabs as examples of uncircumcised Abrahamic descendants, and as further examples of the dislocation of the rite from race.<sup>218</sup> It is for these reasons, in Walker's judgment, that Campbell had to refer to covenant relation: 'he found something else necessary, than merely carnal descent.'<sup>219</sup>

On the question of Simple Faith in Christ, Campbell's position, again according to Walker was:

Baptism differs from circumcision in the prerequisites required to a participation in the ordinance: circumcision required carnal descent from Abraham, or covenant relation to Abraham, but baptism requires no carnal descent from Abraham; it requires only covenant relation to Abraham, that is, faith in Christ as its sole prerequisite.<sup>220</sup>

In Walker's judgment, this argument is wrong because it is *not proportional*. He argued that it is absurd to say that gospel ordinances should extend beyond gospel promise; this would be to give ordinances to those who had no warrant to receive them.<sup>221</sup> In Walker's opinion, it is the inevitable outcome of Campbell's position that circumcision would be administered to those who had no entitlement to the ordinance. 'Circumcision, precisely like baptism, must extend only to its proper subjects; it belonged to the promise to point these out.'<sup>222</sup> Historically, according to Walker, 'for a long period, the gospel was, in a great measure, confined to the natural posterity of Abraham. The promise was addressed to them and not to the other nations of the world.'<sup>223</sup> And in Walker's

---

<sup>217</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 145-6. Presumably, Walker meant continued to all their posterity without exception.

<sup>218</sup> In referring to Baalam, Walker probably meant the Mesopotamian Soothsayer mentioned throughout Numbers chapter 22 and in chapter 31:16.

<sup>219</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 146.

<sup>220</sup> This argument follows the Reformation presentation of Abraham as the prototype of faith. Susan E. Schreiner writes: 'According to Luther, Abraham was the absolute believer because he consistently believed God's promises, no matter how much they contradicted imperical reality, reason, and common sense' (*Encyclopaedia*, 90).

<sup>221</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 145.

<sup>222</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 145.

<sup>223</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 145.

view, 'as the promises for that time were chiefly confined to that people, so must the ordinances also.'<sup>224</sup>

Walker then turned to the expectations of gentiles who converted to Judaism:

A Jewish proselyte testified [to] his assent to the gospel, by his submitting to the rite of circumcision, in the same manner as a heathen would now, by his receiving the ordinance of baptism. Members of both dispensations were equally bound to be believed because, without faith, it was ever impossible to please God. By what authority then does Mr. C. require it as a prerequisite to baptism and not to circumcision?<sup>225</sup>

Walker insisted that Campbell must recognise that Jewish proselytes were required to believe, as a precondition for their reception of circumcision.

Mr. C. will grant this in some sense. He [the proselyte] was bound to believe the promises of God made in the covenant of circumcision respecting temporal blessings, because circumcision sealed these. No matter, this faith was as real a prerequisite to his admission to the ordinance of circumcision, as saving faith is in order to our admission to the sacrament of baptism.<sup>226</sup>

Walker clearly regarded it as a given, and therefore thought that Campbell would be forced to agree, that faith commitment to God within the old covenant was mirrored by faith commitment to Christ within the new covenant.

Walker concluded by suggesting that Campbell's position is untenable because it suggests that people could at once place their trust in God for temporal affairs and simultaneously exercise no faith for spiritual matters, 'and that the former

<sup>224</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 145.

<sup>225</sup> Walker may have read his own culture of conversion into the experience of the Jewish proselyte when he referred to the proselyte's 'assent to the Gospel'. Certainly, during the Maccabean period of Israel's history, Gentiles were forced into Judaism, they did not freely assent to its tenants and then freely enter its confines. Levison wrote: 'Both Judas Maccabeas and Aristobulus (104 B.C.) forced many of the Gentiles, the former in the south, the latter in Lower Galilee and Ituraea, into Judaism' (*Proselyte*, 49). However, modern scholars confirm Walker's statement that the proselyte was circumcised. Again, Levison wrote: 'The proselyte, after his circumcision, became subject in all things to the Torah, like any Israelite' (*Proselyte*, 47). Furthermore, Taylor remarked that circumcision was a requirement made of proselytes (*Jewish Proselyte*, 195; Walker, *Treatise*, 147).

<sup>226</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 147.

is acceptable to God without the latter.<sup>227</sup> In Walker's judgment, simply stating Campbell's position 'is a sufficient refutation.'<sup>228</sup>

However, it is not a simple matter of stating Walker's position in order to comprehend it, because it is rather complex.<sup>229</sup> Nevertheless, putting together all that he said seems to amount to the following: for the length of the old covenant, circumcision was mostly applied to Abraham's biological descendants, but not exclusively so because Jewish proselytes were also circumcised. Nor was it universally the case that Abraham's biological descendants were circumcised, because in fact the majority of them were uncircumcised. In Walker's judgment, 'covenant relation makes the difference.' He seems to have taken 'covenant relation' as the old covenant's equivalent to the new covenant's faith in Christ, presumably because it was enjoined, not by biological descent from Abraham, but by sharing his religious convictions. This he deemed to be essential if a like for like comparison is to be made between circumcision and baptism. It is on this standard of consistency that, in Walker's judgment, Campbell failed.

## Administrators

Campbell pointed out that, under the Old Covenant, circumcision was administered by members of the circumcisee's family. In his judgment, this means that the administration of baptism would not exclude the baptisand's family members, if it were to be credibly argued that circumcision had been replaced by baptism. Walker seems to have thought that this was a spurious argument: 'Mr. C. is evidently at a great loss to invent differences between these ordinances; or he would never have tried this difference.'<sup>230</sup> Walker insisted that this was a statement of the obvious, but one which had no bearing on the issue. He explained his point by referring to the sacrificial system as it was before the Aaronic priesthood was instituted. In those early times,

---

<sup>227</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 148.

<sup>228</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 148.

<sup>229</sup> Both Campbell and Walker lack the clarity that a professional theologian would have provided. This adds to the difficulty of interpreting their comments.

<sup>230</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 147. We note that Walker seems to use the terms 'sacrament' and 'ordinance' interchangeably.

worshippers offered their own sacrifices, but later this was outlawed. Walker's point is that the difference to which Campbell points is one of multiple differences, which merely reflect chronological developments in the church's administration. However, Walker did not deny that this was a genuine difference between the administration of circumcision and baptism; he simply thought that the point was not worth making in the context of the significant changes in practice found within the Old Testament.

## Emblematical Import

Walker began his rebuttal of Campbell's point about the deeper symbolism of circumcision and baptism, firstly, by attacking the internal consistency of his opponent's arguments and secondly, by challenging the theological accuracy of their content. It was Campbell's contention that circumcision was an emblem of nationhood and a type of Christ's crucifixion, while baptism was symbolic of the believer's union with Christ.<sup>231</sup> Walker explained his difficulty in seeing Campbell's point:

If we be delivered from sin, and united to Christ as he says baptism imparts, and by circumcision separated and distinguished from the world, and directed by faith to the death of Christ, which he says is its typical import, why then distinguish it from baptism, which he declares to be emblematical of our burial with Christ?<sup>232</sup>

In Walker's judgment, Campbell not only fails to articulate a clear distinction between baptism and circumcision, but in fact 'concedes the two ordinances to be one in import.'<sup>233</sup> Walker had earlier attempted to create the impression that Campbell knew nothing of his subject and he here continues in this vein, by presenting his opponent as in such a state of confusion that he is in fact contending for the very position that he was attempting to refute.

Walker continued by attempting to expose the theological weakness of Campbell's argument. He took issue with Campbell's point that circumcision was a type of Christ's death, on the ground that such a position is not Pauline.

---

<sup>231</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 150.

<sup>232</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 150; Campbell, *Baptism*, 13.

<sup>233</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 150. Calvin evidently regarded circumcision to be a sacrament because he referred to it and baptism as if they were equivalents (*Inst*, IV, 16, 4).

If circumcision were a type of Christ's death, Walker argued, then Paul would have said so when debating with Peter over the judaising of Gentile converts to Christianity and would have insisted that circumcision disappeared with 'the coming of the substance'.<sup>234</sup> That Paul did not refer to circumcision as a type of Christ's death, in Walker's judgment, is because he 'was more fond of truth than of novelty'.<sup>235</sup> Consequently, Walker concluded that Paul instead 'takes the Paedo-Baptist ground' by arguing that circumcision was 'a seal of the covenant of grace'.<sup>236</sup> Walker also remarked that while circumcision emerged at a time when types were numerous, nevertheless circumcision was not 'a typical rite'.<sup>237</sup> Moreover, 'there is a difference between that which is typical and that which is emblematical'.<sup>238</sup> In Walker's judgment, circumcision was an emblem, not a type, although he did not explain the difference.<sup>239</sup>

Walker proceeded by explaining in three respects what he understood to be the emblematic import of circumcision: regeneration, outer cleansing and inner holiness.<sup>240</sup> All three aspects of the emblematic import of circumcision were supported by biblical references. He saw these points as forming a crucial difference between the Paedo-Baptist and the Baptist, for the latter related the signification of circumcision to matters of less importance.<sup>241</sup>

---

<sup>234</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 151.

<sup>235</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 151.

<sup>236</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 151.

<sup>237</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 151. The Oxford English Dictionary, the first definition (a), defines 'type' between 1470 and 1875 as: 'specifically in theology a person, object or event of Old Testament history, prefiguring some person or thing revealed in the new dispensation' (*OED, Internet Edition*).

<sup>238</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 151.

<sup>239</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary, first definition (a) defines 'type' as: 'that by which something is symbolised or figured; anything having a symbolical signification, a symbol, emblem', (*OED Internet Edition*). The fifteenth edition of the Dictionary, third definition, defines 'emblem' in its wider sense as: 'a symbol, typical representation, something applied to a person: The "type", personification (of some virtue or quality)' (*OED, Fifteenth Edition*, vol. 5, 163). Clearly, that the Dictionary uses the word 'type' in its definition of 'emblem' suggests that there is a closeness in their meanings. However, 'type' seems to possess an essential reference to the future that 'emblem' lacks.

<sup>240</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 154.

<sup>241</sup> During these discussions within Walker's volume, Walker's commentator interjected by accusing Campbell of misrepresentation. He wrote: 'It was not introduced by Mr. W. as Mr. C. has it, to prove that the import of the two covenants were the same, but to prove that the import of the two ordinances, circumcision and baptism, was the same' (*Treatise*, 153). By this, the

Both Campbell and Walker bring their remarks to a close with a suggestion that their opponent is in denial of what he must surely know to be true. Campbell waxed lyrical: 'O human tradition, how hast thou biased the judgment and blinded the eyes of them that should know - under thy influence we can strain at a gnat and swallow a camel'.<sup>242</sup> Walker retorted by challenging Campbell's Christian credentials: 'Why should any, declaring the scriptures to be the Word of God, dispute this point?' he asked.<sup>243</sup>

## Body Parts

Campbell referred to the parts of the body to which the rites were applied and concluded: 'Neither Baptist nor Paedo-Baptist applies water to the precise part effected in the rite of circumcision.'<sup>244</sup> As a result, Campbell concluded that there is a lack of continuity between circumcision and baptism. In making this point, he may not have seen it as a stand-alone observation, but as part of a cumulative argument.

However, Walker saw no merit in Campbell's point. In fact, he found it difficult to take it seriously. 'It is difficult for me to discover any other design in this difference than a little profane sport.'<sup>245</sup> Nevertheless, Walker was willing to offer Campbell's point the dignity of discussion. He stated that his purpose in doing so was to 'undress' Campbell's sophism. This was to be done, he said, for the sake of people who might otherwise miss his opponent's subtlety. Walker began his attempt to denude Campbell's argument by deploying an illustration from 'last season' (approximately 1819) when the United States Congress repealed a statute. Forty years earlier, Congress required people, who issued bonds, to sign their names and seal the contract with a cross. However, the seal was, very recent to the publication date of Walker's volume, changed from a cross to a circle. In Walker's judgment, Campbell's reasoning would lead him to conclude that the circular seal has no legitimacy because it is a different shape

editor seemed to be suggesting that Walker was concerned with the function of the covenants' signs, rather than the covenants themselves.

<sup>242</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 76.

<sup>243</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 153.

<sup>244</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 13.

<sup>245</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 156.

from the cross seal. Similarly, if the position on the paper had been changed to some other place than after the signature, then Campbell's reasoning would force him to conclude that 'the cross mark cannot come in the room of the circular mark because the seal was to be found on a different part of the paper, on which the bond was written.'<sup>246</sup> Consequently, Walker insisted that even if Campbell was willing to accept that circumcision was a seal of the covenant of grace, he could not accept the possibility of a change to the seal because his reasoning prejudiced him against any change. Walker then referred to a decision taken by a higher authority than the U.S. Congress and said that Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, ordained such a change within the covenant of grace. In referring to authority, Walker, attempted to alienate Campbell from his audience by persuading it that he was outside of God's law. The point, Walker argued, is not the content of the legislation but the fact that the legislator has authority to legislate.

In conclusion, it seems that Campbell's point was never particularly strong, and could only ever have been deployed as part of a cumulative argument. However, Walker destroyed any merit that it may seem to have possessed. Undoubtedly, the effectiveness of Walker's remarks was aided by his use of an analogy drawn from current affairs. At this point, Walker displayed considerable debating skill.

## Blessings Conveyed<sup>247</sup>

In Campbell's judgment, circumcision conveyed no spiritual blessings, but mediated only temporal ones, while baptism is related exclusively to spiritual benefits. Walker saw this difference as more substantial than Campbell's earlier ones. Walker wrote: 'He superficially calls the attention of his readers to those external points of difference, which, although they had been true, would not

---

<sup>246</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 156-7.

<sup>247</sup> This section of the debate focuses on a discussion of Romans 4:11, '[Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised.'

have affected the point in question; this last difference is the only exception, and its assertion, upon investigation, is found not true.<sup>248</sup>

In Campbell's volume, Walker is reported to have contradicted this claim, by saying that both rites convey both blessings. Walker cited Romans 4:11 as evidence that 'circumcision sealed spiritual blessings to Abraham.'<sup>249</sup> Walker's citation was dismissed by Campbell on the grounds that Walker ignored Paul's context. In Campbell's estimation, the Apostle's assertion was made to demonstrate that justification was a consequence of faith, not works, and that Abraham's circumcision signified a faith already possessed by him. Campbell then tried to use Walker's evidence against him by insisting that Romans 4:11 supports his own position against Walker: 'Now I know of no passage more obviously against my opponent, for it goes to show, that circumcision was to Abraham what it never was, nor could be, to any of his posterity.'<sup>250</sup>

Both Walker and Campbell maintained that Romans 4:11 supported their positions. Walker was represented by Campbell to have prefaced his citation of the text by stating: 'It is obvious that circumcision sealed spiritual blessings to Abraham.'<sup>251</sup> It was a good debating ploy by Campbell to turn what Walker perceived to be strength into a weakness. Campbell agreed with Walker that circumcision, in Abraham's case, sealed spiritual blessings. However, he then argued that Abraham was an exception and accused Walker of trying to make a rule out of this particular example:

It is drawing a general conclusion from a particular premise', he retorted.<sup>252</sup> Campbell then asked: 'Was circumcision a seal of spiritual blessings to Ishmael, to Karah, Dathan, and Abiram? Was it to Nadab and Abihu? Was it to Saul? Was it to the Jews that crucified the Messiah? - Yet they were all the apparent and the proper subjects of it.<sup>253</sup>

---

<sup>248</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 158.

<sup>249</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 15. '[Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised.' Romans 4:11.

<sup>250</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 17.

<sup>251</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 15.

<sup>252</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 18.

<sup>253</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 18.

During this discussion, Campbell made two assertions. First, circumcision meant something to Abraham that was unique—a positive confirmation that his descendants would receive temporal blessings; and second, circumcision meant the same thing to all of Abraham's descendants—a provisional seal of inheriting temporal blessings. Although Walker did not exploit the point, it seems that there is a logical deficiency in Campbell's argument because it makes blessing certain in the first case, and then in the second case makes the same blessing doubtful. How can Abraham receive a promise that something will certainly take place when doubt is then expressed about it taking place?

According to Campbell, Walker concludes with a comparison of the efficacy and limitations of baptism and circumcision. Walker insisted that Romans 4:1-12 deals not with spiritual blessings sealed through circumcision to Abraham alone, but also to David. 'It was a seal to David of the forgiveness of his sins as well as to Abraham of the righteousness of his faith.'<sup>254</sup> Furthermore, Walker added: 'It is no objection to my system that circumcision did not seal spiritual blessings to all the subjects of it, for baptism did not seal spiritual blessings to all subjects.'<sup>255</sup> What spiritual blessings did baptism seal to Simon Magus, who was a member of the visible church, and a proper subject of Baptism, according to my opponent?<sup>256</sup>

## Postscript

The general difference between Campbell and Walker is that Campbell focused on the external differences between circumcision and baptism, while Walker focused more on the similarity of their functions within their respective covenants. The nub of the difference between their approaches in chapter one is sacramental efficacy. If circumcision is efficacious and so conveys spiritual blessings, then why were so many Jewish people profligate, is Campbell's question. His answer is to deny that circumcision mediated spiritual blessings, while Walker's response is to throw the question back at Campbell by insisting

---

<sup>254</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 22.

<sup>255</sup> At this point, Walker seems to have been in denial. Clearly, baptism's limited efficacy presents a challenge for his later inference that children who receive the sacrament will be spiritually blessed, while those who do not receive it will miss out on its spiritual benefits. (Campbell, *Debate*, 134; see footnote 354).

<sup>256</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 22.

that believer's baptism raises the same problem. Related to this question is the chronology of faith. Is it solely retrospective, as Campbell maintained, or is it also prospective, as Walker assumed?

## Chapter Two: Day Two – Baptise How?

### Preamble

According to Campbell's account, proceedings were suspended at 2.00 p.m. for thirty minutes on the second day. After this interval, the dialogue recommenced, but the topic was changed from that of *who* should be baptised to *how* they should be baptised.<sup>257</sup> At this juncture in the proceedings, an issue emerged over the number of times that the disputants would speak. It was agreed to proceed by limiting both participants to two speeches each. Campbell tells us that it was 'at the insistence of Mr. Walker' that the number of speeches was restricted.<sup>258</sup> In fact, according to Campbell, his opponent wished for them to speak only once each. Campbell informs us of his surprise at this desire because Walker's party had earlier proposed a full discussion of every topic. Walker would undoubtedly have perceived the topic to be of lesser importance than Campbell is likely to have viewed it.<sup>259</sup> However, this does not adequately explain Walker's concern to limit their discussions, because the topic presented an opportunity for him to explain its relative unimportance and so embarrass his opponent for assigning disproportionate priority to it. Whatever the reason for Walker's reluctance to fully discuss the action of baptism, Campbell's reason for highlighting it was probably to create the impression that his opponent was beginning to concede defeat.

---

<sup>257</sup> The word 'action' was used by the disputants to refer to the mode or method of baptising.

<sup>258</sup> Walker, *Thesis*, 121.

<sup>259</sup> Walker accused Campbell of an over-propensity to discuss this topic. He wrote: 'When, at any time, he either was exhausted himself, or had not filled up his time, he would fly to this subject', (Walker, *Thesis*, 220).

## Walker's First Speech

### Preliminary Remarks

According to Campbell, Walker began his speech by setting out his thesis as follows:

I contend that pouring or sprinkling are scriptural modes of baptism; as much so as immersion or dipping but the Baptists maintain that nothing is baptism but dipping, and that if a person is not completely plunged in water, he is not baptised; nay, if one hair of his head is out of the water, he is not baptised.<sup>260</sup>

In responding to this opening salvo, it could be suggested that it is weakened by the way Walker chose to phrase his point, in that he inadvertently conceded ground to his opponent. He did so by presenting immersion, or dipping, as the standard against which the other modes are measured. This, however, is not Walker's consistent line of argumentation because, as the debate continued, he portrayed immersion as anti-gospel. However, we could also speak more positively of the discussion starter and say that it has the strength of hinting at Baptist paranoia, as Walker perceived it, by referring to one hair out of the water.

### Theological Arguments

Following his initial statement Walker, according to his opponent's account, offered a narrative which, not only provides four reasons in support of his thesis, but asserts the superiority of his position over that of Campbell.

Walker began with an attempt to scale the moral high ground. He did so by insisting that the Paedo-Baptist position is more generous and therefore, by implication, more virtuous than that of the Baptist. Walker remarked: 'We admit that their baptism by immersion is right; but they have no charity for us, for they declare that sprinkling or pouring is no baptism'.<sup>261</sup> It may be that in addition to convincing his congregants of the superior virtue of his position, he

---

<sup>260</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 121.

<sup>261</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 121.

was also aiming at persuading them that he is more moderate than his opponent.<sup>262</sup>

Secondly, Walker again attempted to scale elevated ground, this time the high ground of scripture's perspicuity. Referring to the Greek lexicons which Campbell had brought with him, he commented: 'He may require all this Greek to prove his point; but I will stick to my Bible - I find in it that evidence which is sufficient to justify my conduct.'<sup>263</sup> This was a rather unscrupulous debating tactic for Walker to adopt, because he would have known full well that the purpose of referring to the Greek text of scripture is to enable the interpreter to get closer to its meaning than is possible in translation. That Walker knew the importance of the Bible's vernacular for its interpretation is evident from the priority assigned to Greek and Hebrew language study within the Seceder Seminaries.<sup>264</sup> Indeed, Walker himself displays a working knowledge of the Greek text.

Walker's tactic was also unscrupulous because it amounted to an appeal to the prejudices of his audience. He was addressing frontiers-people who would have known nothing of New Testament Greek and who were instinctively suspicious of learned experts. It is likely to have been their estimation that the sort of person who would argue from Greek was precisely such an individual. By representing himself as sticking closely to the English translation of the Bible, Walker was presenting himself as an advocate of the plain person's reading of Scripture.

This observation points us to a difficulty peculiar to debate in this type of context. The disputants were scholars, and had to marshal scholarly evidence in

---

<sup>262</sup> Peter Edwards to whom both disputants refer (fl. end eighteenth century, Baptist Minister who became convinced of paedo-baptism and published *Candid Reasons for Renouncing the Principles of anti-Paedo Baptism* in 1795) rejected any suggestion of Baptist belligerence on this topic: 'Baptists are not so tenacious of the mode as of the subject of baptism'. Referring to his interaction with Baptists, Edwards continued: 'though I preached ... several baptising sermons without a word about the mode, I never heard of any of our Baptist friends that ever observed that omission; whereas, on the contrary, had I insisted on the mode, and omitted the subject, I have not a doubt but they would have noticed it in the first sermon', (Edwards, *Candid*, ch. 7, 1).

<sup>263</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 121.

<sup>264</sup> Walker was classically trained in the study of Greek, Hebrew and Latin as part of his theological education at Service Seminary. Johannes Marck's Latin work, *Medulla Theologiae* was the standard theological text used in Walker's systematics class. (See Jamison, *Ever a Frontier*, 69-96. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.).

an attempt to achieve the upper hand. Yet, their objective was not only to win the debate, but also to convince their unscholarly congregants that they had done so. Consequently, both Campbell and Walker were required by the occasion to be simultaneously scholarly and unscholarly. This led them both to discuss the Greek text while attempting to distance them from it by affirming the sufficiency of the English text.

In his third point, Walker proceeded by moving from general comments to addressing the issue directly. Walker explained, according to Campbell: 'The scriptures teach me that baptism has a respect to the blood of sprinkling that justifies us, and it is very suitable to administer baptism in such a way as that this reference may be seen.'<sup>265</sup> He then asked, apparently rhetorically: 'Were not almost all of the uses of the blood under the Law by means of sprinkling?'<sup>266</sup> In support he cited Moses' sprinkling of the people, the Book of the Law and the sanctuary's vessels, without giving references.<sup>267</sup> He concluded: 'In view of this, the ancient prophets said; "So shall he sprinkle many nations" thereby intimating, that the Gentiles, converts by the Gospel, would be sprinkled not dipped.'<sup>268</sup>

Walker's position is inadequately presented because he failed to explain the relationship between water and blood. His comments were of course filtered through Campbell's redaction, and so perhaps he did explain to his audience that purification is the idea that links the metaphorical meanings of water and blood. However, if this was not the case, then simply to say that 'baptism has a respect to the blood of sprinkling' is inadequate. Such an explanatory deficiency does not invalidate Walker's point, but it may have inhibited his audience's persuasion.

Walker's fourth argument, as provided by Campbell, is a development of his third. He maintained that to deny the validity of sprinkling and to assert that

<sup>265</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 121.

<sup>266</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 121.

<sup>267</sup> The reference may be to Ex. 24:6-8.

<sup>268</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 121-2. The reference from the prophets is probably Isa. 52:15.

only immersion is scriptural is to imply that quantity is prior to quality.<sup>269</sup> Campbell had picked up exactly this point when he insisted that the atonement's quantity is limited but that its quality is not.<sup>270</sup> Walker's point therefore suggests - probably inadvertently - that Campbell's baptismal practice is a denial of his theology. Furthermore, Walker suggests that to immerse is to act contrary to faith, which trusts that a single drop of Christ's blood is sufficient for humanity's purification:

Again, we profess to believe that a few drops of Christ's blood, nay, that one drop of it, is sufficient to purify us. Why, then, should we act in any way contrary to our faith, in baptising so as to indicate that it was the quantity, that relieved our souls, or affected our state?<sup>271</sup>

Here, Walker could be charged with inconsistency. He had said, rather imperialistically, of Paedo-Baptists that they accept immersion as a valid mode of baptism. However, here he repudiates that acceptance by representing immersion as a denial of Christ's atonement. However, it is possible to turn the table on Walker. This could be done by retorting that it is his position that amounts to a denial of the gospel. It could be maintained that Walker's position implicitly denies the penal nature of the Atonement, given that a single drop of blood is an insufficient quantity to effect suffering, and therefore for punishment to have occurred.<sup>272</sup> It would certainly have been the conclusion of many of Walker's reformed colleagues that the Atonement was essentially penal in nature. John Dick (1764-1833), for example, whose *Lectures in Theology*

<sup>269</sup> Walker failed to cite any biblical reference to support his argument. He could have referred to John 13:10. (See Thomas, J. C. (1991). *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 97-106).

<sup>270</sup> See Campbell's 'Sermon on the Law', '...if more [of humanity] were to have been saved than what will eventually be saved, the quantity and not the quality of his [Christ's] sufferings would have been augmented' (Young, *Documents*, 245). In this section, Campbell was arguing for the superiority of quality over quantity. Ten years later, Campbell described his remarks as 'quite metaphysical' (*Christian Baptist*, July 1826).

<sup>271</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 122.

<sup>272</sup> Campbell argued against the one drop of Christ's blood point in the Sermon on the Law. He referred to it as if it was a piece of popular theology: 'We sometimes in the vanity of our minds, talk lightly of the demerit of sin, and irreverently of the Atonement. In this age of novelty, it is said ... "one drop of his blood is sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world" ' (Sermon, 243). Campbell argued against this position because, in his opinion, it would amount to a waste of divine effort. 'If the merits of his [Christ's] sufferings transcends the demerit of his people's sins, then some of his sufferings were in vain, and some of his merits unrewarded' (Sermon, 243-4). However, it could be maintained that Campbell's argument no more follows than it does to argue that there is a loss of justice because an amnesty 'transcends' the number of people who accept it (Marshall, *Aspects*, 63).

were published in 1834 and were widely read in America<sup>273</sup> affirmed that: '[Christ's] death was accompanied with such circumstances as showed it was a penal act.'<sup>274</sup> Similarly, Charles Hodge (1797-1878), the doyen of nineteenth century reformed systematic theologians, described the theory of satisfaction, which requires penal substitution, as the orthodox view, suggesting that: 'This theory involves the vindictory justice of God.'<sup>275</sup>

Walker's final theological argument, which again contradicts his opening thesis, was that sprinkling better illustrates the outpouring of God's Spirit than immersion. At this point, Walker seemed to confuse sprinkling with effusion, or perhaps he deliberately treated them as one.<sup>276</sup> His argument was for the superiority of sprinkling over immersion: he said of 'the conferring of the Spirit of God', that 'pouring is very expressive of it', whereas 'immersion is not a suitable emblem of it'.<sup>277</sup> While this is not an unreasonable argument it is, however, the case that there is a difference between effusion and sprinkling and that the latter is not particularly expressive of the Spirit's outpouring. Furthermore, it could be argued that immersion better illustrates the multi-faceted nature of the Atonement because it connects Christ's death to his resurrection.

## Textual Arguments

Walker then moved to a consideration of textual arguments. In his theological discussion there was a lack of textual references but in this part of the argument he discussed Greek words and provided their references. To begin with, he referred to the particle 'en' which he correctly said could mean 'with'. He did not explain that it assumes an instrumental meaning when used in the dative case, but he correctly pointed out that 'en' can be translated variously as 'by', 'with' or 'towards', as well as 'in', its more common meaning. Walker also

<sup>273</sup> Van Doodewaard, *Marrow Controversy*, 247.

<sup>274</sup> Dick, John (republished 2004). *Lectures on Theology*, (vol. II). Stoke-on-Trent : Tentmaker Publications, 70-71.

<sup>275</sup> Hodge C., (1872). *Systematic Theology*, (Vol. II). London and Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 563.

<sup>276</sup> In the 1536 edition of *The Institutes*, Calvin treated sprinkling and effusion as the same action of baptism, 122.

<sup>277</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 122.

made the significance of the particle's variable meaning clear for the action of baptism: 'Even where it is translated 'in', it does not always signify immersed or enveloped with that, in relation to which it is used.'<sup>278</sup> He supported these comments by citing the particle's deployment in Luke 14:31.<sup>279</sup> He also referred to John 1:23,28 where John was said to be 'in' the wilderness and where certain miracles were performed in Bethabara. Walker commented: 'Now we are not to suppose that John was immersed in the wilderness, or that those miracles were enveloped in Bethabara.'<sup>280</sup>

Walker then progressed to a discussion of the verb *baptidzo*, which he argued 'does not necessarily signify to dip, but to sprinkle or pour.'<sup>281</sup> He supported this assertion by citing Luke 11:37-38<sup>282</sup> which refers to actual washing; this, Walker suggested, was done by sprinkling or pouring water on the head and not by immersing the body. He also referred to Jewish purification rites and to Hebrews 9:10,<sup>283</sup> which he suggested had often been referred to as 'baptisms' and which involved the sprinkling of water.

Walker also turned to the Septuagint in support of his case. He pointed out that in Daniel 4:33<sup>284</sup> *bapto* is used to designate sprinkling. The reference to Nebuchadnezzar's body becoming wet with dew, he thought, necessarily excludes immersion as a possible translation of the Greek verb: 'Only sprinkling could be intended.'<sup>285</sup>

---

<sup>278</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 122.

<sup>279</sup> Walker seems to have consulted the Greek text of Luke 14:31 which reads: 'dunatos estin en deka chiliasin' and translates literally as: 'is able in ten thousand'. The Authorised Version renders 'en' instrumentally and so reads: 'be able with ten thousand'.

<sup>280</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 122.

<sup>281</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 122.

<sup>282</sup> 'The Pharisee ... marvelled that he [Jesus] had not first washed before dinner', Luke 11:38.

<sup>283</sup> 'Which stood only in meats and drinks, and diverse washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation', Heb. 9:10.

<sup>284</sup> 'Wet with the dew of heaven', Daniel 4:23; 'His [Nebuchadnezzar's] body was wet with the dew of heaven', 4:33. The Septuagint literally reads: 'kai apo tes drosou tou touranou to soma autou ebathe (bapto). This literally reads 'and from the dew of the heaven the body of him was washed' (Henry Barclay Swete, Ed., The Old Testament in Greek, vol. 3, Cambridge University Press, 533)

<sup>285</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 123. However, it could be argued, as with sick-bed baptism, that the dew imitates immersion, because it is applied not just on, but also around the body (see Ferguson, *Baptism*, 382). Peter Edwards dismissed the use of *bapto* because 'it is never used in scripture,

Walker concluded by suggesting that there is general agreement that *bapto* and *baptidzo* refer to washing, but disagreement over the means of doing so.<sup>286</sup> However, as far as he was concerned, it was perfectly clear that: ‘the above texts show that it was sprinkling, and not by dipping’ that baptism was administered in the New Testament.<sup>287</sup> He insisted that this conclusion is supported by the metaphorical language that is used to describe spiritual washing, such as: ‘by the blood of sprinkling’, or ‘heart sprinkled from the guilt of conscience’. For Walker, the conclusion was obvious: ‘the meaning of the word, and the meaning of the ordinance concur in establishing the point, that sprinkling is the true mode of baptism.’<sup>288</sup> Walker closed his speech with a mocking sneer directed at Campbell for his use of lexicons,<sup>289</sup> describing them as a ‘huge pile of Greek’ and suggesting to the audience that they would ‘no doubt be entertained by it.’<sup>290</sup> He did so doubtless with the intention of inducing similar disdain within the congregation for his opponent.

## Campbell’s First Speech

### Preliminary Remarks

It is clear from Campbell’s reply that he argued in the same tripartite way as his opponent had done. He did so initially by insisting that it is unnecessary to appeal to Scripture’s vernacular to justify his position. He then adopted a moral tone and thirdly, took an exclusive stand.

Campbell’s first point concerned language:

---

respecting this ordnance [baptism]; and this being the fact, I see no great propriety in bringing it into the debate at all (*Candid*, ch. 7, 17).

<sup>286</sup> Walker repeated this position in his own volume: ‘The only matter in dispute, is, how much water is necessary in the administration of the ordnance of baptism?’ (*Treatise*, 221)

<sup>287</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 123.

<sup>288</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 123.

<sup>289</sup> The sneer came from Walker’s perception of Campbell’s self-assessment. That is, in Walker’s estimation, Campbell thought a great deal of his linguistic and scholarly competence. However, Walker seems not to have shared this assessment.

<sup>290</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 123.

Who has rendered an appeal to the original languages necessary? Most assuredly not the Baptists: they are content with the present version.'<sup>291</sup>

Campbell's point is this: the Paedo-Baptist position is not self-evident, while the Baptist one is. This is an implicit appeal to the 'straightforward' culture of his congregants.

Campbell's second point concerned morality because he inferred Baptist honesty and Paedo-Baptist dishonesty. The implied honesty, together with its opposite, within Campbell's discussion emerges from what he regarded as the perspicuity of the English text. The Baptist is honest enough 'to abide by it alone', he contested, but the Paedo-Baptists 'have not hitherto done, and it is feared that they will not consent to it'.<sup>292</sup> Clearly the problem, as Campbell saw it, was not a lack of understanding resulting from a mistaken exegesis of difficult texts, but a lack of honesty which prevented the clear meaning of scripture from being accepted. He then followed this up by making a personal attack on Walker: 'it comes with so bad a grace from Mr. W. to speak against an appeal, which his own cause and party have rendered necessary.'<sup>293</sup> The appeal to which Campbell referred is to the Greek text. It is as if Campbell said to Walker: 'Who are you to deny the necessity of such study, when your tradition holds it to be essential?'

In addition to the perspicuity of the English text Campbell sounds a further note of Baptist honesty over against Paedo-Baptist dishonesty. On this occasion, the former is presented as 'plain' and 'unlettered', while the latter is sarcastically referred to as a 'learned divine' or as a 'wise layman' who bullies the sincere Baptist with an alleged erudite presentation of the Greek text.<sup>294</sup> These remarks could be represented as a direct appeal to his congregants' emotions. However, it could also be that Campbell was addressing what he believed to be a genuine issue. Theological education had, at this point in time, reached a much higher

---

<sup>291</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 123-4. In making this assertion, Campbell confirmed that Walker's representation of his position was correct as the final part of the quotation makes clear: 'A believer is the only proper subject for baptism and the only baptism that is of divine authority is immersion'. However, it is questionable if either Walker or Campbell accurately represented all Baptists, given Peter Edwards' comment (see footnote 262).

<sup>292</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 123.

<sup>293</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 124.

<sup>294</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 123.

standard amongst Presbyterians than it had amongst Baptists. Therefore, it may be that Campbell was aware of Baptists who were being intellectually intimidated by members of the Presbyterian clergy. Certainly, Campbell's next two points could be represented as addressing an educational gulf. To begin with, he attempted to reassure the Baptist community by arguing that an appeal to the original text of the New Testament strengthens their position: 'for in fact our faith and practice on this subject, is much more plainly sanctioned from the Greek New Testament than from the English version of it.'<sup>295</sup> He also attempted to undermine the erudition of the Paedo-Baptist: 'I am always led to suspect a man's acquaintance with Greek is very superficial, or his prejudices very strong, when he attempts to justify the custom of sprinkling infants by Greek criticism.'<sup>296</sup> Campbell could be represented as making a third point, this time concerning exclusivity: 'A believer is the only proper subject, and that the only baptism of divine authority is immersion.'<sup>297</sup>

In assessing Campbell's comments it is evident that they run into difficulty at the level of consistency. It was he, after all, who brought lexicons to the debate and who therefore prompted discussion of the Greek text. This was a strange initiative to have taken, given his insistence that the English translation was sufficient. There is also a question of consistency raised by Campbell's comment about linguistic competence and strong prejudice, which hardly squares with his earlier reference to 'the Goliath of Paedo-Baptists, the great Peter Edwards.'<sup>298</sup> Surely, if Edwards' 'acquaintance with Greek was very superficial, or his prejudices very strong', he could hardly be accurately described as 'great?'<sup>299</sup>

## Authorities

Tellingly, Campbell then went on to offer an apologetic for the use of the Bible's vernacular in a discussion of baptism, and so contended for his amended thesis that sprinkling or pouring are more appropriate actions of baptism than

---

<sup>295</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 124.

<sup>296</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 124.

<sup>297</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 124.

<sup>298</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 40. He may be using irony here, and there could be an implied suggestion that David represented the Baptists.

<sup>299</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 124. It is difficult to discern if Campbell's comments are sincere or ironic. He also said of Peter Edwards that he was 'distinguished amongst sophists', (*Debate*, 13).

immersion. Rather ironically, given his aversion to authority, he did so by referring to authoritative sources: George Campbell, the Greek Church and the Latin Fathers.<sup>300</sup> Campbell presented his namesake, George Campbell, as not only an authority but also as a saintly divine.<sup>301</sup> He also offered an explanation as to why his own conclusion is at variance with two authorities, the Authorised Version and the Westminster Assembly.<sup>302</sup>

## George Campbell

Alexander Campbell then referred to the writings of George Campbell (1719-96), who was at the time professor of theology at Marischal University in Aberdeen.<sup>303</sup> He described his fellow clansmen as: 'the boast of the Athens of Europe, and the most distinguished of the Greek tongue, in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.'<sup>304</sup> He also said that he was 'a Paedo-Baptist, because he considered the sprinkling of infants a matter of indifference.'<sup>305</sup> In Alexander Campbell's estimation, George Campbell thought that sprinkling lacked scriptural authority, but supported it on the grounds of personal expediency. At the same time, Alexander Campbell insisted that George Campbell was 'so candid as to tell them [members of the Church of Scotland] the plain truth' about this matter.<sup>306</sup> Then, as if to reinforce the point, he referred to George Campbell's views on church government which he said were independent and not Presbyterian: 'I mention this as an evidence of his candour and impartiality.'<sup>307</sup>

Evidently, George Campbell was a risky authority for Alexander Campbell to cite, given that the former practised what the latter denied to be true.

<sup>300</sup> Appeal to authorities was typical of scholasticism.

<sup>301</sup> On a tour of north-east Scotland in 1847, he visited the grave of George Campbell in Aberdeen (Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 554).

<sup>302</sup> Campbell had the added challenge of explaining why George Campbell's conclusion was at odds with the Authorised Version and the Westminster Assembly.

<sup>303</sup> Founded in 1593 by George Keith, Fifth Earl Marischal of Scotland.

<sup>304</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 124.

<sup>305</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 124. It appears that A. Campbell conflated the action with the subjects of baptism, at this point. It is, however, quite possible to be both an immersionist and a Paedo-Baptist. Writing of sixteenth century Anglicanism, Gordon Jeanes remarks: 'The plunging of a child into the water, total immersion, was still common in Britain, though it had been replaced in some other countries by the custom of pouring water over the head', (*Signs*, 24).

<sup>306</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 124.

<sup>307</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 125.

However, Alexander Campbell seems to have considered that this risk was worth taking, because of George Campbell's reputation for erudition. Nevertheless, Alexander Campbell was cautious enough to spread the risk somewhat by using George Campbell's ideas to raise questions about the impartiality of the proponents of sprinkling: 'I am sorry to say that the popish translators from the Vulgate, have shown greater veneration for the style of that version, than the generality of protestant translators have shown from that of the original'.<sup>308</sup> This would have appealed to those amongst his congregants who held sectarian sentiments, for it implies that to advocate sprinkling is to be worse than a Romanist.<sup>309</sup> Furthermore, Alexander Campbell's quotation of George Campbell succeeds in balancing any suggestion of a lack of integrity. Clearly, if George Campbell is amoral to deny what he practises, then the 'sprinkler' is equally guilty of dishonesty because he translates scripture in a prejudicial manner.

The particular issue which gave rise to George Campbell's remark, was the translation of the preposition 'en' in Matthew 3:6.<sup>310</sup> George Campbell insisted that its simple meaning 'in' the Jordan ought to be used, and not the more complex 'by' or 'with' which arise from taking the dative case into consideration.<sup>311</sup> Although, on occasions, George Campbell allowed for the instrumental use, of this preposition, in this case he thought that the context excluded it. He cited the phrase *anabainein apo tou udatos* in support of his argument, which, he insisted, means 'to arise out of the water'.<sup>312</sup> Additionally, he remarked that the New Testament never uses the Greek verbs *raino* and *rantidzo*, both of which mean 'sprinkle', to imply immersion, nor in his judgment is *baptidzo* ever used to convey the thought of sprinkling.<sup>313</sup> Alexander

<sup>308</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 125.

<sup>309</sup> The number of Roman Catholic churches in the United States between 1790 and 1860 grew from 65 to 2,550. This compares with Baptist Church growth of 858 to 12,150 and Presbyterian of 725 to 6,406 during the same period. Clearly, although Catholics were increasing per capita more rapidly than either Baptists or Presbyterians, nevertheless Catholicism was still a relatively small demographic group, (Noll, *America's God*, 166).

<sup>310</sup> 'And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah'

<sup>311</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 125.

<sup>312</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 126.

<sup>313</sup> Although George Campbell asserts that these verb groups are never used interchangeably, in fact, *rantidzo* and *baptidzo* appear together in Hebrews 10:22 to convey cleansing (Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water'). Clearly, the text is being used in connection with the Christian rite of initiation. To this extent, George Campbell's exegesis could be described as a sweeping generalisation. (See Bromley, G. W.

Campbell noted that George Campbell ‘censures translators’ for translating some words and yet transliterating *bapto* and *baptidzo* from Greek to Latin script as if their meanings are obscure, when in fact they are as clear as the words that they did translate.<sup>314</sup> George Campbell had written:

Thus the word paritume they have translated circumcisio, which exactly corresponds in etymology; but the word baptismal they have retained, changing only the letters from Greek to Roman. Yet the latter was just as susceptible of a literal version into Latin as the former.<sup>315</sup>

In light of the above, Alexander Campbell asserted: ‘I have then brought a Paedo-Baptist to confront a Paedo-Baptist, a Paedo-Baptist to condemn a Paedo-Baptist.’<sup>316</sup> On that basis he concluded: ‘Mr. W. then, is sufficiently refuted by one of the ablest critics of the Presbyterian Church, and therefore I am exempted from the trouble of doing it.’<sup>317</sup>

## Authorised Version

Alexander Campbell proceeded to discuss two authorities which posed a problem for his position, that baptism self-evidently means immersion: the Authorised Version or King James Version of the Bible and the Westminster Assembly.

Campbell referred to Lewis’s copy of the instructions that were given to the translators of the King James Bible, which prohibited the unambiguous translation of *baptisma* and *baptidzo*.<sup>318</sup> In Campbell’s judgment, the reason for the prohibition was one of political expediency. This was a policy of ambiguity,

(Eag.). (1968). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (vol. VI). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 983).

<sup>314</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 127.

<sup>315</sup> G. Campbell, *Gospels*, 354.

<sup>316</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 126.

<sup>317</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 127. In his own publication, Walker attempted to counter this type of refutation by drawing an analogy between baptism and communion and so insisting on a higher level of proof than can be produced by etymology.

<sup>318</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 127-9. The copy of instructions for translators of the King James Version to which Campbell referred is taken from John Lewis’ (1675-1747) *A Complete History of the several Translations of the Holy Bible*, London, 1739. Campbell published these instructions from Lewis’ history in *The Christian Baptist* (Nov. 1824, 104-106). He gives fourteen instructions in total. Instructions 3 and 4, in Campbell’s judgment, prohibited the translation of *baptidzo*. Instruction 3 is given as: ‘The old ecclesiastical words are to be kept’.

he said, which was motivated by a desire not to support any one party within the Church of England. Campbell commented: ‘Had the translators been at liberty to have rendered these terms by appropriate words, the controversy would have been at an end long ere now... no controversy concerned the “mode” of Baptism would have now existed. Every person would have read in plain English, that immersion was performed by immersing.’<sup>319</sup>

Campbell’s conclusion runs into a substantial difficulty when the precursors and successors of the King James translation are considered.<sup>320</sup> He maintained that unrestricted translators would universally have translated *baptidzo* exclusively as ‘immerse’. However, neither the Authorised Version’s precursors nor its successors support Campbell’s case.

## Westminster Assembly

The second authority with which Campbell’s conclusion was at variance was that of the Westminster Assembly. The Assembly, which met at Westminster intermittently from 1643 to 1649, produced, amongst other ecclesiastical documents, the Westminster Confession of Faith. This became the subordinate standard of the Church of Scotland and its seceding Presbyterian denominations. Its revision, ‘The Philadelphian Confession of Faith’ (1742), was the subordinate standard of the Calvinistic Baptist Churches to which Campbell adhered. It was, therefore, a document with which Campbell had to interact. On baptism, the Westminster Confession reads:

Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary, but baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling, water upon the person.<sup>321</sup>

Campbell pointed out that although the divines were called to assemble by Parliament and their Moderator appointed by that body: ‘yet they retained so much regard for the meaning of the terms *baptisma* and *baptidzo*, that they

<sup>319</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 128.

<sup>320</sup> The King James (1611) Version’s primary precursor was Tyndale’s New Testament (1526), which also translated *baptidzo* as baptise (see Daniell, *Introduction*, xiii).

<sup>321</sup> *Confession*, Chapter 28, Section 3.

could not at once consent to establishing sprinkling as baptism.<sup>322</sup> He explained to his audience that when the Assembly voted on the mode of baptism, it was tied, with twenty-three votes for sprinkling and twenty-three for immersion. It was the Moderator's casting vote which resulted in the decision for sprinkling being taken. This eventuality led Campbell to vent his displeasure at both the Moderator and the Assembly. He represented the Moderator as a non entity, describing him as 'the creature of Parliament'.<sup>323</sup> In a footnote, Campbell asked for the reader's pardon because of his censorious rhetoric. However, he went on to attempt to justify the use of such rhetoric by explaining that the Moderator had been chosen, on his predecessor's retirement, not by his fellow divines, but by Parliament.<sup>324</sup>

Campbell may have been just hinting at coercion here, but he went on to all but state that the Westminster Divines were compelled to vote against their better judgment: 'Never was there an assembly of Divines so completely trammelled as the Westminster Assembly. They were the humble servants of the Parliament.'<sup>325</sup> Campbell provided an anonymous quotation which suggested that the minds of the divines were policed: 'They were confined in their debates to such things as the Parliament proposed. Many lords and commons were joined with them, to see that they did not go beyond their commission.'<sup>326</sup>

Perhaps this inconsistency in Campbell's approach to the Assembly can be explained by his endeavour to score points. When Campbell wanted to support his contention that *baptidzo* means 'immersion', he portrayed the Assembly as

<sup>322</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 128.

<sup>323</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 128-9.

<sup>324</sup> Walker addressed this point: 'I consider it no disparagement to a good man to be appointed by the Parliament, nor does it, in my opinion, weaken the influence of his decision, on the various subjects discussed in that Assembly' (Campbell, *Debate*, 133). Walker, however, chose not to explain his position, although it implies that there is no necessary incompatibility between a lack of neutrality and objectivity.

<sup>325</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 129.

<sup>326</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 129. Campbell attributed the Moderator's decision to cast his vote in favour of sprinkling as being motivated by England's cold climate, but he also referred to the Greek-speaking church as immersing their baptisands, despite cold climates (*Debate*, 129). In his own volume, Walker drew attention in his third main argument, to climate (*Treatise*, 224-5), maintaining that immersion is incompatible with some diseases and could endanger people's lives. He even went as far as to maintain that immersion is therefore, in principle, in violation of the sixth commandment: 'Thou shalt not murder.' Walker contended that immersion suits only warm climates and is therefore not appropriate for a sacrament that requires universal implementation, whatever the climatic conditions.

principled in trying to assert that meaning over against a hierarchy that was resistant to such a translation. However, when he wanted to explain why the Assembly's decision went against his own conclusions, it suited him to present it as impotent and its Moderator as weak.

Certainly, if the Assembly consisted of highly capable theologians, as Campbell's audience of Calvinists would have believed, and if the meaning of *baptidzo* is as clear-cut as Campbell insisted, then the Assembly's decision required explanation. It is not that they lacked erudition or integrity in Campbell's judgment; any such suggestion would have lacked credibility in the eyes of his congregants. Rather, it was that they lacked freedom. This line of reasoning was politically loaded, given freedom's association with the mixture of American republicanism and religion. It is likely therefore that the approach found ready acceptance by Campbell's listeners.

In this section of the debate Campbell also referred to the English Baptists, whom he suggested were absent from the Assembly both because they had no desire to attend and also because they were uninvited. He called them 'the poor Baptists' and so presented them as downtrodden, and yet ennobled by their conformity to Apostolic teaching.<sup>327</sup> Campbell's emotional appeal even went as far as to refer to an imagined election. Those who cast their votes, favouring immersion over against sprinkling, were the Apostles. These men acted in accordance with God's authority and not that of the English Parliament, or so Campbell's imagination determined. The outcome was a unanimous conclusion, with which of course Campbell concurred.

In making this comment, Campbell compared the Westminster Assembly with the Baptists and placed the latter on a higher plane, because they stood apart from political entanglements and, in his judgment, faithfully followed in the Apostles' teaching. Campbell's remarks are undoubtedly motivated by a need to remove an awkward historical counter-conclusion. Clearly, Campbell was no neutral commentator, but despite his lack of neutrality, his basic point is not necessarily an invalidated one: that is, that the Westminster Assembly was no free forum. However, this reality does not necessarily mean that the Assembly's judgment

---

<sup>327</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 129.

lacked objectivity, as Campbell's argument implies. In fact, if it is impossible to have objectivity without also possessing neutrality then Campbell's position is equally flawed.

## **Greek and Latin Fathers<sup>328</sup>**

Campbell's next authority was the Greek Church, which he said, always immersed its baptisands. He argued that the Greeks understood their language better than non-Greek speakers and that consequently they can be relied upon to interpret *baptidzo* and its cognate words accurately. He also added that despite the church's many theological errors, it adhered to immersion as the only mode of baptism: the Greeks 'always immerse all subjects of the ordinance of baptism.'<sup>329</sup> Campbell's point is that the meaning of *baptidzo* is so clear that even an error-strewn church can discern its proper meaning.

Campbell also cited Eusebius in support of his contention that immersion is the only proper mode of baptism, although he did not identify the citation within Eusebius' writings. He claimed that Eusebius described the use of sprinkling when baptising someone who, for health reasons, was bed-ridden, and remarked: 'If that can be called baptism'.<sup>330</sup> Moreover, said Campbell, Eusebius cited Valesius concerning a similar type of baptism and attested that sprinkling was used where health prohibited immersion. However, it is evident from Eusebius that this mode of baptism was thought to be authentic, even if imperfect and 'not solemn'.<sup>331</sup> Similarly, in the case of the Council of

---

<sup>328</sup> These terms are rather exaggerated, given that there is no discussion of Greek Fathers and only one Latin Father mentioned.

<sup>329</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 129.

<sup>330</sup> The reference is to Eusebius, *Church History*, 6.43.20, p. 217 where its general context concerns the acceptance into church membership of heretical and schismatic baptisands during the third century. It is taken from a letter written by Cornelius to discredit Novation's sickbed baptism. Ferguson suggests that this baptism imitated immersion because water was poured around the body and not just on it. However, he thinks that the problem with Novation's baptism was not 'so much the abridged action but the delay of baptism until death threatened' which suggested to Cornelius a lack of commitment to Christ on Novation's part (Ferguson, *Baptism*, 382).

<sup>331</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 130.

Neocaesarea,<sup>332</sup> which apparently prohibited a group known as the *Clinici* from joining the priesthood because they had been baptised by sprinkling.

It is probably fair to say that these citations would support a nuanced version of Campbell's position, one which was less absolutist, that is, immersion as a more appropriate method of baptising than sprinkling. The citations present sprinkling as imperfect, yet generally acceptable, and so they do not support Campbell's absolutist assertion that immersion is correct, and sprinkling incorrect.

Furthermore, that Campbell can find only one of the Latin Fathers to support his case, and that only partially, advertises a weakness.<sup>333</sup>

### **Eminent Lexicographers<sup>334</sup>**

Alexander Campbell developed his argument by shifting from 'fathers' to lexicographers. He referred to Scapula whom he described as the 'father of modern lexicographers'. He also mentioned Stockius and extolled him as 'venerable'. Both of these lexicographical authorities, according to Campbell's discussion, strongly supported his position, as did his stated lesser authority, whom he gave as Parkhurst.<sup>335</sup> In his remarks about these authorities, Campbell referred to Luke 16:24 and Mark 7:3-4, but without commenting on them.<sup>336</sup> His lexicographical discussion once more led to the assertion that the literal meaning of *baptidzo* is 'immersion' and that its figurative meaning is

<sup>332</sup> A Cappadocian Council of imprecise date. It occurred early in the fourth century, prior to Nicaea, 325.

<sup>333</sup> Campbell earlier mentioned Tertullian whom he described as the ablest of the Latin Fathers. Campbell said that he, through the medium of Latin, used *baptidzo* to refer to the process of dyeing cloth, (*Debate*, 125).

<sup>334</sup> Walker criticised Campbell for reverting to lexicographical authorities: 'He spends a great share of his time, in praising lexicographers; no time in giving the true analysis of the words' (Walker, *Treatise*, 220). Walker is clearly hinting at what he perceives to be a lack of confidence, which is borne out of incompetence at handling the Greek text, or so he would like his readership to think.

<sup>335</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 130. In pages 122-6, of *Christian Baptism*, Campbell refers to more than a dozen lexicographers. Among them is Scapula whom he described as a 'foreign lexicographer, of 1579'. Campbell also cites Stockius: '[He] furnished us with a Greek and Hebrew clavis – one for the Hebrew and one for the Greek Scriptures. My edition is the Leipsic, of 1752.' Campbell referred to Parkhurst (1728–1797) as 'an English lexicographer' and quoted from his lexicon of the New Testament, published in 1762.

<sup>336</sup> 'Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water', Luke 16:24. 'When they [the Jews] come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables', Mark 4:7.

'purification'. Consequently, Campbell concluded that: 'this word is applied to the sacrament of baptism, because, in ancient times, the baptised was immersed in water, that the filth of sin might be washed away ...'.<sup>337</sup> Stockius, he said, allowed sprinkling as a form of washing in his discussions of Mark 7: 3-4, but did so not due to the meaning of the word, but as an accommodation of the practice of paedo-baptism. Consequently, Campbell felt able to observe:

From all these authorities, we cannot acquire one idea favourable to sprinkling. Dipping or immersion is the uniform meaning of the term. Nor can there be one solitary instance found in all the dictionaries of the Greek language, nor in classical use that *bapto* and *baptidzo* signifies to sprinkle or pour.<sup>338</sup>

In his conclusion, Campbell introduced two new Greek words, *raino* and *rantidzo*, which he set in contrast to *bapto* and *baptidzo*. The former, he insisted, refer to sprinkling, while the latter suggest immersion. Campbell used this contrast to support his argument that, 'the Greek language, the most philosophic in its construction of all languages does not use words in a manner so lax and incongruous'<sup>339</sup> as to mix up the meaning of two words. For Campbell the matter was clear: the Greek language is precise and has a group of words, which mean 'to sprinkle' and another group with the meaning 'to immerse'. These words, Campbell suggested, are employed separately without confusion, and only the words meaning 'to immerse' are applied to baptism.

## Walker's Second Speech

Walker opened by dismissing Campbell's speech as a 'bundle of Greek'. In fact, Walker began his argument by effectively telling his congregants 'I told you so'. According to Campbell's documentation, he wrote: 'I was telling you, my friends, that Mr. C. was going to give you 'a bundle of Greek', and you see, I was not mistaken.'<sup>340</sup>

---

<sup>337</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 131.

<sup>338</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 132.

<sup>339</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 132.

<sup>340</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 132.

Walker then responded to Campbell's 'dictionary authorities',<sup>341</sup> remarking that 'so long as they admit that 'to wash' is one meaning of the term, it is easier for us to show that washing may be performed by sprinkling.'<sup>342</sup> According to Campbell's representation, Walker added that if Campbell's reasoning is followed, then Mark 7:4 suggests that the Jews immersed their whole bodies, not just their hands, and also their utensils and tables in water. In Walker's judgment the interpreter is required to make a choice: 'we must either admit that the Jews washed by sprinkling or pouring, or baptised by sprinkling, or that they dipped themselves all over in water every time they came to market.'<sup>343</sup> Walker was attempting to present his congregants with a choice between the sensible and the nonsensical. He then concludes:

I must insist, then, that the term *baptidzo* signifies to wash, and that this washing must have been done by sprinkling, and not by dipping; and if, in one place, or in some places, it signifies to wash by sprinkling, it may do so in many others.<sup>344</sup>

Under normal circumstances Walker's argument would be regarded as inadequate because he provided only one example of where *baptidzo* means 'sprinkle' or 'effuse'. However, under the particular circumstances of this debate, a single example is sufficient because Campbell asserted that there is not 'one solitary instance found in all the dictionaries of the Greek language, nor in classical usage, that *bapto* or *baptidzo* signifies to sprinkle or pour.'<sup>345</sup> Clearly, it would have served Campbell's purposes better if he had developed a more nuanced approach.

Walker then turned to a point which Campbell had refused to discuss: that the sprinkling of water is analogous to the sprinkling of Christ's blood. Walker wrote:

Why should we act in any way contrary to our faith, in baptising, so as to indicate that it was the quantity, not the quality that relieved our souls, or affected our state? It must also be admitted, that a few

---

<sup>341</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 132.

<sup>342</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 132.

<sup>343</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 133.

<sup>344</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 133.

<sup>345</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 132.

drops of water sprinkled on the face, are a clearer emblem of the atoning blood of Christ, than the total immersion of the body in water.<sup>346</sup>

Walker again argued that a single drop of Christ's blood is sufficient for the achievement of justification, and that the Baptists' insistence on immersion amounts to an implicit denial of this reality. Walker's point would not have been unreasonable if he confined his remarks to the exclusivity of immersion. Perhaps if he had done so, Campbell might have felt more of an obligation to offer a refutation. However, in stating that the Baptist position is contrary to 'our faith', he went too far, and thereby not only contradicted but repudiated his original thesis. Furthermore, Walker's argument repeats his earlier theological problem because it implies that there was no necessity for Christ to suffer. Clearly, a single drop of blood is insufficient to entail suffering and consequently it exposes the Father to the charge of sadism in requiring unnecessary suffering of the Son.<sup>347</sup>

## Walker's Concluding Remarks

At the beginning of his conclusion, Walker remarked that of all his opponents, Campbell seemed to be the one most impacted by his points.<sup>348</sup> Additionally, he told his audience that they were aware of this: 'you ... have observed with what difficulty he replied to many things I advanced.'<sup>349</sup> This was undoubtedly a debating tactic designed to place this impression into his congregants' minds, as if it were their own. Later in the conclusion, he adopted a similar tactic, in anticipation of Campbell's attempt to persuade their audience of the superiority of his case. Consequently, Walker said: 'I have no doubt, that many of you are so well informed, that you will not be led by him.'<sup>350</sup> This could be construed as an attempt to use flattery to manipulate people. If his congregants liked to regard themselves as discerning, and surely they would, then they are obliged to support Walker rather than Campbell, or so Walker's argument flows.

---

<sup>346</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 122.

<sup>347</sup> That Walker's comment rules out the possibility of a penal theory of the Atonement would have been a considerable theological problem for many of his reformed colleagues.

<sup>348</sup> The remark suggests that Walker was no novice to debate.

<sup>349</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 133.

<sup>350</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 133.

Walker also attempted to turn Campbell's greater wordage in on itself. 'It is not the man who has the most to say, that is always right', Walker asserted.<sup>351</sup> He then supported this remark with a further comment which would have resonated with the frontier mentality: 'Nay, the truth is plain, a man does not require so much to defend it as error requires to maintain its pernicious ground'.<sup>352</sup> The frontiers person being appreciative of the plain, uncomplicated individual of few and direct words, is likely to have gravitated to the concise debater.

Furthermore, in presenting this argument Campbell may have been attempting to counter a remark made by Campbell at the beginning of their dispute when he suggested that Walker's brevity was indicative of superficiality.

As Walker drew his remarks to a close he deployed what must be the most emotionally powerful point of the whole debate. Addressing Paedo-Baptist parents, he reminded them that they had made vows on behalf of their baptised infants. He told them firstly, that both they and their children would be the recipients of 'the benefits arising from the ordinance of infant baptism'.<sup>353</sup> His second remark was to advise the parents that there would be a conspicuous difference between their children and those of parents who denied to their offspring the seal of the covenant.<sup>354</sup> The emotional power of this point is self-evident. Walker was implicitly warning Paedo-Baptist parents against departure from infant baptism at the risk of eternal consequences for their youngsters. His remarks may also have been designed to stir Baptist parents to consider that their children were missing out because they had not received the covenant's seal of baptism.

<sup>351</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 133.

<sup>352</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 134.

<sup>353</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 134. This statement suggests that the word ordinance is being used to mean sacrament, a means of grace. Both Campbell and Walker used the terms ordinance and sacrament interchangeably. However, Brownson distinguishes between them. He says that in an ordinance, promises are made from man to God, while in a sacrament, promises are made from God to man. Consequently, the former is an expression of obedience, while the latter is a means of grace, (*Promise*, 25).

<sup>354</sup> This raises the issue of baptism's efficacy. If the rite is regarded as a sacrament, and not just a sign, then Walker's point is valid. Although Walker used the word 'ordinance', he evidently employed it as an active sign, which was therefore capable of producing the difference to which he referred. David Wright thought that this particular issue is, 'to some degree empirically or historically verifiable'. He suggested that there could be an arithmetical calculation made to establish the difference between the number of infant baptisms and the subsequent number of adult worshippers, (*Infant Baptism*, 83-5).

In concluding his remarks, Walker encouraged his congregants to be impartial in their judgment. Although this appeal can hardly be faulted, it could be maintained that in his earlier comment, he had emotionally bound the Paedo-Baptist members of his audience to the extent that they were deprived of freedom of choice.

## Campbell's Second Speech

Campbell began his speech by referring again to George Campbell's work on the gospels against Walker's exegesis of Mark 7:2-4. It was Walker's contention that the passage, if Campbell's position were consistently maintained, would require the Jews to bodily dip themselves in water after returning from market.<sup>355</sup> In discussing this text, Alexander Campbell had cited a passage from George Campbell's work where he perceived an inadequacy in the English translation: 'A small degree of attention will suffice to convince a judicious reader, that there must be a mistake in the common [King James] version of this passage.'<sup>356</sup> This citation was problematic for Alexander Campbell's apologetic because he had earlier attempted to undermine the need for a discussion of the Greek text saying: 'I repeat it again, that the English New Testament sufficiently shows us that a believer is the only proper subject, and that the only baptism of divine authority is immersion.'<sup>357</sup> It seems, therefore, that Alexander Campbell had selected a rather injudicious citation from his authority.

This inconsistency however does not fatally undermine the point, which Alexander Campbell was about to make by referring to the writings of his namesake. In George Campbell's judgment, the English translation of Mark 7:2-4 is mistaken because it fails to reflect the nuanced use of two Greek words *nipsontai* and *baptisontai* by translating them as though they were equivalents. According to George Campbell, the first is a generic term for washing. In his judgment, its generic nature allowed it to convey a variety of modes of washing, from sprinkling to effusion to immersion. In George Campbell's estimation, the meaning of *baptisontai* is different in that it is fixed to immersion. Alexander

---

<sup>355</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 133.

<sup>356</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 134.

<sup>357</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 124.

Campbell quotes him to this effect: 'The genus comprehends the species; but not conversely ... the species for the genus'.<sup>358</sup>

At this stage in George Campbell's exegesis, a translator would not be incorrect to render the words uniformly as immersion. However, in George Campbell's view, when the words under discussion occur in close proximity to each other within a text, the one is set in opposition to the other and so they cannot be intended to convey the same meaning. Consequently, *nipsontai* here adopts a meaning other than that of immersion. In deploying George Campbell's argument, Alexander Campbell is replying in the affirmative to Walker's rhetorical question that expects a negative answer: 'Are we then to suppose that the Jews, every time they came home from market, dipped themselves in water?'<sup>359</sup> Although this seems unlikely, it does not mean that the original readership would have been unconvinced.<sup>360</sup> In fact, given the frontier laity's commitment to a literal hermeneutic, it is likely that any critical evaluation of the biblical text would have been rejected, and a literal one, no matter how improbable to modern people, would have been accepted.

## Campbell's Concluding Remarks

Campbell begins to set out his conclusion by referring to: 'the last branch of the argument'.<sup>361</sup> In this section, he initially discussed John Walker's sprinkling analogy. Campbell said that he postponed its discussion so that he could do so within the context of illustrating baptism.<sup>362</sup> In fact, he discusses the analogy

<sup>358</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 135. George Campbell did not cite any examples of *nipsontai* being used to convey a variety of meanings.

<sup>359</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 132-3. In support of his contention, Campbell cites Maimanides, a 'Jewish Rabbi of those times' (*Debate*, 135). This authority gives the impression of a rigorously observed ritual 'only a profluvious man' refused to cleanse himself. The OED offers only one definition for profluvious which was used between 1574 and 1746 to mean: 'Of the nature of or afflicted with a copious discharge of bodily fluids' (Internet edition).

<sup>360</sup> If the comments made by the modern commentator R.T. France are correct, they may make the argument more credible. France says that Mark's representation of Jewish purity laws was 'more impressionistic than historically exact.' He then adds contra Maimanides: 'Even among the Pharisees the practice may not have been as rigorous or as uniform as Mark indicates' (*Mark*, 281-2).

<sup>361</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 136.

<sup>362</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 136.

within the context of what he describes as the 'Christian positive institutes'.<sup>363</sup> He then began a more focused conclusion by calling his audience his friends, as John Walker had done. Campbell however does so thrice.<sup>364</sup> That Campbell used this personal address more often than Walker is indicative of a more sustained appeal to the congregants. Campbell's conclusion consists of two parts - a theological argument which he presents as if it were an appendix, and an appeal for the acceptance of his conclusion.

## Appendix

It is Campbell's contention that there are three institutions, which he described as both Christian and positive, the Lord's Day, the Lord's Supper and baptism. Each represents some 'leading part of the Christian faith.'<sup>365</sup> The Lord's Day, he suggested, represents the resurrection, while the Lord's Supper signifies the atonement of many and the justification of the guilty,<sup>366</sup> and also exhibits pardon, acceptance and community because Christians share a 'joint participation' in the blood of Christ.<sup>367</sup> The third positive institute, baptism, Campbell suggests is indicative of events subsequent to Christ's death, namely his burial and resurrection,<sup>368</sup> in accordance with his understanding of Romans 6:4-6.<sup>369</sup> Campbell insisted that baptism is related to the giving of the Holy Spirit which: 'denotes the overwhelming influence of the almighty agent in consequence of which, all the faculties of the human mind are imbued with

<sup>363</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 137. Peter Edwards also employed this terminology, by referring to the sacraments as 'positive institutions', (*Candid*, ch. 2, 6).

<sup>364</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 138, 140-141.

<sup>365</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 137.

<sup>366</sup> Given the commitment that Campbell made to a limited atonement in his Sermon on the Law, it seems likely that he contrasts 'many' with 'all' rather than 'few'. Campbell insisted that the Atonement was precisely measured in quantity to redeem the exact number of individuals whom God intended for redemption. In quality, it had the capacity to redeem all, including fallen angels, but its quantity was restricted, so that none of its efficacy was wasted. That is, Campbell distinguished between the Atonement's latent power to save and its application to effect salvation. He did so by establishing a mathematical equivalence between the Atonement's quantity and the number of those who are redeemed by it. He wrote: 'The life and sufferings of Christ in quality, and in length or quantity, were such as sufficed to make reconciliation for all the sins of the chosen race; or for all them in every age or nation that shall believe in him' (Sermon, 245-6).

<sup>367</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 137.

<sup>368</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 137.

<sup>369</sup> Campbell also cited Colossians 2:12 and 1 Peter 3:21 in support of his position. Walker did not appreciate Campbell's distinction, in his judgment: 'The death and burial of Christ, stand necessarily connected', (Walker, *Thesis*, 229).

it.<sup>370</sup> For Campbell, this implied death to sin and resurrection to renewed life. Furthermore, it also implied immersion, given that it too 'imbues' its subject. Campbell wrote: 'The outward rite must bear an analogy to the doctrine exhibited in and by it.'<sup>371</sup>

Campbell also discusses Walker's 'blood of sprinkling' analogy, suggesting that it more properly relates to the Lord's Supper than to baptism, and that therefore, 'It is a repetition without a meaning of that already exhibited in the Lord's Supper.'<sup>372</sup> Campbell saw these positive Christian institutes as together exhibiting, illustrating and enforcing 'the whole outlines of the Christian faith.'<sup>373</sup> This passage of Campbell's argument raises the question of the interconnectedness between baptism and the Lord's Supper within the economy of salvation.<sup>374</sup>

His criticism of his opponent's position, if valid, is perhaps corrected by Walker who, in his own writings, may have hinted that baptism's function was for the remission of original sin. If he did so, then Walker assigned to baptism a more distinct place within the economy of salvation than Campbell did. However, Walker only hints at this, rather than making the relationship between sin and an Augustinian view of baptism explicitly clear. He wrote:

---

<sup>370</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 138. Campbell here referred to the Holy Spirit as neuter, as if he is impersonal. Referring to the 'Rabbi of Presbyterianism in the North of Ireland', Campbell expressed more personal views of the Holy Spirit. In a critique of Henry Cooke's (1788-1868) Armagh sermon on baptism (1853), Campbell criticised him for referring to the Holy Spirit impersonally as an emblem: 'No Calvinist, in my day, presumed to call the Spirit of God "the emblem of the true God." The Holy Spirit is a positive person, and no emblem of the person or thing. This would have been called Unitarianism, in Scotland, forty years ago' (*Harbinger*, May 1853). His final remark sounds like a 'barbed' comment, given that Henry Cooke was instrumental in purging the Synod of Ulster of Unitarianism and the subsequent formation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in 1840.

<sup>371</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 138. This statement has implications for the sacraments of theology. If baptism is administered on subjective (e.g. covenantal faithfulness) or objective (e.g. covenantal membership) principles, then by analogy, a subjective or objective theory of the Atonement is implied.

<sup>372</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 137. Campbell refutes his own position in making this point, because he assigned the same role to baptism as he did to the Lord's Supper.

<sup>373</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 137.

<sup>374</sup> Although Campbell hints at sacramental efficacy by citing 1 Peter 3:21, 'even baptism does save us now', he does not comment on the text's meaning.

The washing of regeneration, signified in the sacrament of baptism, is but partial. Corruptions, moral pollution, remain even after regeneration.<sup>375</sup>

## Appeal

In this section, Campbell made personal remarks and is strikingly condescending in his implied magnanimity. Campbell's appeal could be described as personal, anti-clerical and fundamental. Certainly, it consists of three parts, each of which is introduced by the endearing designation, 'my friends'.

To begin with, Campbell made a personal remark about Walker's Moderator, Mr. Finlay, whom he accused of prejudice, but then magnanimously forgave, attributing his behaviour to 'misguided zeal'.<sup>376</sup> He also suggested that Walker was delusional because he thought that Campbell felt the force of his arguments. According to Campbell, the felt force existed exclusively in Walker's 'own mind'.<sup>377</sup> Campbell then portrayed himself as a victim who had suffered 'unbecoming treatment' at the hands of Mr. Finlay.<sup>378</sup> The victim motif was also deployed in his presentation of the Baptists whom he described as 'poor'.<sup>379</sup> There is, however, no ascription to the cause of his victory in personal terms. Rather Campbell, as magnanimous as he was in forgiving Mr. Finlay, ascribed his victory to the truthfulness of his position and presented it as a prelude to the end of time and the absolute victory of truth over error.

In the second section of his appeal, Campbell launched into an attack on the clergy, accusing them of withholding 'the key of knowledge from the people'.<sup>380</sup> They have done so, Campbell claimed, by subordinating the laity to the clergy so that the people look to them 'for instruction as children to a father'.<sup>381</sup> Furthermore, the clergy substitute the pure Word of God for human creeds and

---

<sup>375</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 222-3. Calvin rejected the notion that baptism is for the remission of original sin, (*Institutes*, 4.15.10, p.1311).

<sup>376</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 139.

<sup>377</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 139.

<sup>378</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 139.

<sup>379</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 139.

<sup>380</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 140.

<sup>381</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 140.

men's works, to support this subordination.<sup>382</sup> He wrote: 'I do not say that all the clergy are doing so, but I am sure that the vast majority of them are doing so.'<sup>383</sup> Campbell then reinforced and extended his earlier portrayal of himself as an innocent victim. He said that he has 'been stigmatised with many opprobrious epithets.'<sup>384</sup> The stigmatisers are not named but, given the context, it is not unreasonable to suppose that they are members of the clergy. The reason for this alleged stigmatisation, which involved the accusation of antinomianism, is Campbell's theological position on the relationship between the Testaments. The New Testament, he perceived as sufficiently explanatory for Christianity, as the Old Testament was for Judaism.

Campbell drew his anti-clerical comments to a climax by asking his congregants what they should do as a result of listening to 'this tedious debate'.<sup>385</sup> His answer is for them to return home, read their Bibles and make up their own minds, without being 'implicit followers of the clergy'.<sup>386</sup> This advice may seem to be reasonable and even magnanimous. Nevertheless, by portraying himself both as victim and as custodian of truth, Campbell was implicitly appealing, both emotionally and cerebrally, to his congregants to follow his lead, rather than that of the clergy.

In the concluding part of his appeal, Campbell made remarks of a more fundamental nature. This final appeal consists of three parts, each of which addresses different categories of people: convinced Paedo-Baptists, unconvincing Paedo-Baptists who continue with the error of infant baptism and Baptists. Campbell accuses the first group of 'will-worship', and told his audience that such a condition is the consequence of a mindset, which is subject

<sup>382</sup> Perhaps Campbell added this comment to cover himself from the criticism of Protestant clergy. They could have retorted that it was men of their number who risked life and liberty to translate the Bible into the vernacular, so that the laity could read the 'pure Word of God'. They could have pointed to the celebrated exemplar, William Tyndale (1492-1536). Furthermore, Campbell's contemporary, the Baptist missionary linguist William Carey (1761-1834), could also have been cited.

<sup>383</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 140. Of course, his father Thomas was a member of the clergy and a former Moderator of the Anti-Burgher Presbyterian Assembly (1805-6), so it was inevitable that Alexander would qualify his statement.

<sup>384</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 140.

<sup>385</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 140.

<sup>386</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 140.

to 'the tyrannical dominion of prejudices, the most obstinate and irrational.'<sup>387</sup> The second group is informed that their position is inconsistent with their claim to be Christian and that it emanates from the fear of man.<sup>388</sup> Furthermore, Campbell informed the reader that as its advocates are ashamed of God so God will be ashamed of them.<sup>389</sup> The third group is encouraged to continue to walk worthily of their Christian calling. To dissent from his position is to depart from what it is to be a Christian and risks divine rejection, while to embrace his position is to conform to Christianity itself.<sup>390</sup>

## Walker's Volume

In his response to Alexander Campbell's work, John Walker made some introductory remarks, then set out his rebuttal in three main arguments, each of which were delineated simply as argument one, two and three and all of which argued for sprinkling. The first main argument was Christological and proceeded from the greater to the lesser. The second main argument focused on ontology and the third raised the question of the suitability of baptism's mode for climatic conditions. Walker concluded his remarks with supporting statements. On this occasion he represented four statements against immersion.<sup>391</sup> He then presented a further four supporting statements, this time for sprinkling, but more specifically against Campbell's insistence that baptism has no reference to the blood of sprinkling. His work is concluded with comments which feature an exegesis of Romans 6: 4,6 and are presented as if set in an appendix.

## Preliminary Remarks

The preliminary remarks deal with the alleged misrepresentation of Walker by Campbell together with the alleged misinterpretation of baptism's symbolism by the Baptists.

---

<sup>387</sup> Campbell, *Debate*, 142.

<sup>388</sup> Campbell does not explain the nature of this fear. It may be that baptism drew lines of social demarcation, the crossing of which would result in social exclusion, of which people were afraid.

<sup>389</sup> Problematically for Campbell, George Campbell, one of Alexander Campbell's authorities, fits into the second category, (Campbell, *Debate*, 125).

<sup>390</sup> In making this assertion, Campbell elevates baptism to a position of primary importance, and shows his Reid-like fundamentalist attitude.

<sup>391</sup> The first of these points is discussed as part of the introductory remarks to this section and the third has been included in Campbell's earlier comments on climate.

Regarding misrepresentation: speaking in the third person, Walker's commentator said of Campbell that he presented Walker as offering: 'some tolerably good criticisms on the Greek words.'<sup>392</sup> However, he also insisted that some of them were not made by Walker, and that Campbell had, in places, 'mutilated' and 'entirely misrepresented' Walker's arguments.<sup>393</sup> In particular, arguments affecting the Atonement, which were construed to present Walker as advocating 'that the water of baptism represented the ground of justification alone.'<sup>394</sup>

Regarding misinterpretation: Walker maintained that water itself, and not its quantity, is the sign. It is for this reason that he found Baptist reasoning unconvincing.<sup>395</sup> He argued from an analogy with the Lord's Supper. In the context of the Supper, he tells us, that the Greek word 'deipnon' meaning 'a full meal' is used. Yet, all agree that the Lord's death is adequately commemorated 'by eating a morsel of bread, and drinking a small quantity of wine.'<sup>396</sup> Walker suggested that the Corinthian church fell into the sin of gluttony because they interpreted the noun literally, as the Baptists have done with baptidzo.<sup>397</sup> In Walker's judgment, this shows that even if baptidzo exclusively means 'baptise', it does not follow 'that baptism is rightly administered, unless by plunging'.<sup>398</sup> Walker has Calvin's authoritative support for this position. In the 1536 edition of the Institutes, Calvin wrote:

---

<sup>392</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 220. It is unclear as to who is speaking in the introductory section, Walker or an anonymous commentator.

<sup>393</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 220.

<sup>394</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 220. The writer does not provide a reference detailing where Campbell represented Walker in this way. Nevertheless, Campbell's remark is understandable, given Walker's approach which was to make an overly strong statement and then qualify it. It is also important to observe, if Walker is to be properly understood, that his initial comment in the first main argument, was hypothetical.

<sup>395</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 221.

<sup>396</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 222-3. Walker made a similar point within his first main argument. In his first argument, Walker offered an uncritical Christological interpretation of Zechariah 13:1, to which he linked Hebrews 9:19-20. He maintained that Zechariah presented Jesus' blood as a fountain, which was represented by the writer to the Hebrews with a few drops of blood. So, he concluded: 'If sprinkling with the blood of sacrifices was sufficient to represent the cleansing efficacy of Christ's blood, then the sprinkling of water in baptism is sufficient', (*Treatise*, 222).

<sup>397</sup> Walker's expression is 'eat and drink heartily', (*Treatise*, 222).

<sup>398</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 221. If it is maintained that the mode is the medium and baptism the information, then it can be shown that Walker's point is valid because the two are always distinct.

But whether the person being baptised should be wholly immersed, or should only be sprinkled with poured water - these details are of no importance, but ought to be optional to churches according to the diversity of countries. Yet the word 'baptise' means to immerse, and it is clear that the rite of immersion was observed in the ancient Church.<sup>399</sup>

## Main Arguments

Walker's first main argument was presented hypothetically: 'Let us for the present, take it for truth, that, by the blood of sacrifices, nothing more was intended to be emblematically set forth, than the justifying righteousness of Christ'.<sup>400</sup> Walker evidently wanted to establish the fundamental character of justification. His argument proceeded from the greater to the lesser. In his estimation, the sprinkling of blood represented the believer's justification. This was a complete purification because the believer's legal standing before God became one of innocence: 'the believer is perfectly washed from all legal guilt'.<sup>401</sup> This cleansing was symbolically affected by the sprinkled sacrifice of animal blood (Zech. 13:1, Heb. 9:19-20), according to Walker. He then proceeded to discuss regeneration, which, in his estimation, is symbolised by baptism. He seemed to regard it as a lesser blessing than that of justification, because its purification is incomplete due to the believer's continuing sinfulness. Consequently, Walker maintained that if sprinkling was adequate for the administration of the greater blessing, it must therefore be adequate for the administration of the lesser one and so baptism can and should be administered by sprinkling.

It may indeed appear that Walker's position assumes that baptism represents regeneration and not justification. In his comments on Romans 6, he said: 'baptism is a seal of the union with Christ, as it is a seal of *all* the blessings of all the Covenant of Grace.'<sup>402</sup> Clearly, by being inclusive, he must have regarded

<sup>399</sup> *Institutes* 1536, 122. Calvin seems to conflate sprinkling with effusion, as Walker earlier did. Furthermore, while Campbell's remarks support Walker's thesis, they contradict his anti-immersion statements. Surprisingly, Campbell did not cite Calvin in support of his arguments for the meaning of baptidzo. Calvin's reference to 'diversity of countries' probably concerns climatic variations between countries.

<sup>400</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 222. Walker wrote: 'Let us for the present, take it for truth'. Clearly, this is a hypothetical argument.

<sup>401</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 222-223.

<sup>402</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 222. My emphasis.

both the forensic or justifying blessing and also the ontological or regenerative one to be subsumed within the Covenant of Grace.

Furthermore, a fuller picture emerges from his comments during the first of his supporting statements in favour of sprinkling. There he presents regeneration as the principal blessing or grace, but not the only one that is symbolised by baptism. In this point, he explicitly includes justification: 'that the 'washing of regeneration,' is indeed the thing chiefly signified by the sign of water used in baptism: it is not however, the only thing. Justification, regeneration, and sanctification ... have the same ground, the same foundation, the blood of Jesus.'<sup>403</sup> However, regeneration's foundation, according to Walker's rationale, is justification, which is symbolised by the sprinkling of blood. In his remarks on Romans 6, he insisted: 'The death and burial of Christ, standing necessarily connected - the sign which represents the one, must necessarily represent the other'.<sup>404</sup> According to Walker's rationale, this results in regeneration's symbol, that is baptism, being administered by justification's method of application, that is sprinkling. On this basis of the fullness of the believer's cleansing, Walker thought that baptism by the sprinkling of water is also an appropriate symbol for the 'work of the Spirit by which the believer is finally perfected'.<sup>405</sup>

Walker's second main argument is a development of the communion analogy. On this occasion he focused on ontology. He argued that to sit at table, while consuming unleavened bread during the evening in the Upper Room, is not essential for the proper administration of the sacrament. In this argument Walker separated the mode from the being of the sacrament and insisted that, in the case of baptism, the Baptists were wrong to link the two.

His third main argument discussed climatic conditions. He thought that immersion could only be administered in hot countries and is therefore unsuitable to be applied universally. Although this argument may seem to be

<sup>403</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 227.

<sup>404</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 229.

<sup>405</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 227. Walker chose not to develop the point. However, Peter Edwards emphasises the Holy Spirit as the agent of regeneration. The Spirit is said, in Scripture, to descend on its subject and so sprinkling or effusion were deemed, by Edwards, to be appropriate symbols for his work (*Candid*, ch. 7, 10).

rather eccentric to the modern reader, nevertheless Walker was serious and not unreasonably so if universality is an essential feature of sacraments.

## Supporting Statements

Walker continued by representing four anti-immersionist statements in support of his main arguments. All of these statements assume that the sign of immersion draws attention to itself and so detracts from the reality that it is designed to signify. He said that baptism is administered in the Trinity's name and that the object, not the medium is important. He also pointed to immersion as a mode of baptism which detracts from the water's symbolism by emphasising its quantity. Furthermore, he then rather mischievously placed immersion into an odious category, as his peers would have perceived the case to be. He did so by insisting that the mode encourages superstition, as in the case of the Roman Catholic sign of the cross.<sup>406</sup> Finally, he said that immersion detracts from its signification, which is faith. In the case of the believer, it is the faith of the baptisand, while in the case of an infant, it is the faith of the guardians. It was Walker's thought that a plunge into cold water would result in the mind being distracted.<sup>407</sup>

Walker then proceeded by presenting four statements in support of immersion. Specifically, he argued for baptism being symbolised by the blood of sprinkling. I have condensed these arguments within the discussion of Walker's first main point. He concluded with an appendix-like section which offered remarks on Romans 6.<sup>408</sup> Walker's treatise ends with a rebuke for the Baptists, whom he had constantly accused of paying more attention to the sign than its signification:

If more of [the] time was spent, in searching for the possession of the thing signified by the water used in this ordnance, it would be better for the souls of their members.<sup>409</sup>

---

<sup>406</sup> Walker did not fully explain this comment but his remark is probably a reference to Baptist insistence that every last hair of the baptisand's head has to be immersed for baptism to be authentic, or so Walker represented Baptist practice.

<sup>407</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 226.

<sup>408</sup> These remarks have been presented within Walker's first main point.

<sup>409</sup> Walker, *Treatise*, 230.

## Postscript

It is apparent from my discussion that the disputants presented different types of arguments to support their respective positions. Alexander Campbell's remarks are restricted to a discussion of etymology, which, in good scholastic tradition, are supported by authorities. Walker's contribution, however, is distinguished by an attempt to develop the theological significance of the terms under discussion. Campbell hinted at this approach when he referred to the role, in the scheme of salvation, to which the disputants assigned the sacraments, however he did not develop the suggestion.

Both Campbell and Walker argue for exclusivist positions. Campbell does so consistently, while Walker does so inconsistently.<sup>410</sup> It was Walker's opening thesis that the quantity of water is irrelevant, and consequently immersion is a valid mode for the sacrament's administration. However, rather contradictorily, he also presents immersion as contrary to the gospel and the sixth commandment.

From the perspective of a modern reader, there is reason to suppose that the disputants would have been more persuasive if they had adopted a nuanced approach. Campbell could have argued for the priority of immersion over sprinkling and Walker could have maintained his reasonable opening thesis, that immersion is acceptable but sprinkling is preferable. However, their debate was conducted in the nineteenth, not in the twenty-first century, and so a more belligerent tone, if a less reasonable one, was probably demanded by their frontier compatriots.

A key difference between the disputants is their attitude to, and not just their theology of, baptism's action. Alexander Campbell saw it as vital, while John Walker held it less firmly. This difference came across in Walker's discussion of ontology, and probably explains why he wanted abbreviated discussion of the topic. It also explains why, according to Walker's redaction, Campbell attempted to insert discussion of immersion into other topics. Furthermore, this

---

<sup>410</sup> Although Campbell's thesis is more consistently maintained than Walker's, his argumentation fails the consistency test, because he insisted that the English text was sufficient, but then provoked a discussion of the Greek text by bringing lexicons to the debate. In Walker's case he began with an inclusive thesis and then amended it to an exclusivist one.

difference between the disputants raises the issue of proportionality within this study. Alexander Campbell wanted to discuss the subject of baptism's action more thoroughly than John Walker's restriction allowed. Consequently, the topic was more important to Campbell than the time allocated to it suggests. This, therefore, justifies the student of the debate in allowing more space for the discussion of the topic of baptism's action than the quantity of original material may suggest is appropriate.

## General Conclusion

To some degree, conclusions that are drawn from a study of aspects of a subject can only be provisional pending upon fuller study. However, bearing this in mind, it is nevertheless possible to identify shifts in Alexander Campbell's thinking from the Calvinistic orthodoxy of his youth and also to observe areas where he remained true to his tradition.

Alexander Campbell began to discernibly part company from his theological roots when he came under the influence of Greville Ewing during the time that he spent in Glasgow. This occasioned a refusal on Campbell's part to receive communion within the Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian tradition. The event was an incipient parting, rather than a complete one, because he arrived in America with credentials testifying to his good standing within the Seceder communion. However, the movement from Presbyterianism was accentuated soon after his arrival, when he and his father were shunned by their denomination due to an ecumenical issue, this despite being initially well received by the American Seceders and attempting to forge a future within their assembly.

A further shift occurred when his daughter was born in 1812. This resulted in Campbell rethinking his baptismal theology and his subsequent rejection of covenantal infant baptism. At this stage in his life, he crossed the Rubicon by being re-baptised.<sup>411</sup> In that act, he publicly and formally severed his links with Seceder Presbyterianism.

However, it was not until he preached what became known as his 'Sermon on the Law' that he articulated a reasoned case for the departure in his thinking from that of Calvinistic orthodoxy. Clearly, his rejection of the reformed three-fold division of the Law, of his understanding of the function of the Law in the Gospel's proclamation, and in people's lives, of the role that he assigned to the Great Commandments, of his use of the Regulative Principle and of his understanding of Sabbath observance all show a departure from the Calvinistic orthodoxy of his roots.

---

<sup>411</sup> Alexander Campbell was ambivalent about baptism and not just its action before his daughter was born. He simply 'let it slip' (Richardson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 392-3).

However, even despite this more apparently profound shift from the traditions of his Irish upbringing it is possible to discern a nuanced rather than a dramatic departure from the theology in which he was schooled. While Campbell insisted in rejecting the Mosaic Law, he also demanded submission to the Law of Christ, and to his mind there was little difference between the two. Furthermore, it was Campbell's judgment that the Law functioned subliminally, rather than overtly, and not that it had no role to play in religious conversion or moral living.

The clearest indication that Campbell gave to retaining his Calvinistic heritage, comes from his comments about the Atonement that appear in the Sermon on the Law. Although he was to later criticise his Atonement comments calling them 'metaphysical' (1826) and then 'commercial' (1843), nevertheless in 1816, and probably during the years of the Walker Debate, he continued to view the Atonement calvinistically as objective and limited. If it is correct to maintain that the Atonement lies at the heart of any Christian theological system, then it could be argued that during his debate with John Walker, Alexander Campbell was, at heart, a Calvinist.

However, Campbell notably departed from the theology of his roots by rejecting the efficacy of baptism. In the chapters I have considered from the Campbell-Walker Debate, there is no indication within Campbell's remarks that he viewed the sacrament as instrumental. Even although he cited 1 Peter 3:21, he made no explicit reference to baptism's instrumentality. It is evident from his discussions on 'Prerequisites' that Campbell looked exclusively for a retrospective faith from the baptisand. Clearly, in Campbell's judgment baptism was an emblem and not a sacrament. This marked a clear difference from the approach taken by his opponent, who at the end of his remarks, indicated that baptism is sacramental by suggesting to parents that their infants would be spiritually diminished, should baptism be withheld from them.

# Bibliography

## Primary Sources:

- Campbell, A. (1851). *Christian Baptism with its Antecedents and Consequences*. Bethany, Virginia: Alexander Campbell.
- Campbell, A. (1822). *Debate on Christian Baptism between John Walker, a Minister of the Secession and Alexander Campbell*. Pittsburgh: Eichbaum and Johnston.
- Campbell, A. (1904). *Sermon on the Law in Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union*. (c. b. Young, Ed.) Chicago: First Christian Century Company.
- Campbell, A. (Undated). *The Christian Baptist*. St Louis: Christian Publishing Company.
- Campbell, A. (1835). *The Christian System*. Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company.
- Campbell, A. (2001). *The Living Oracles 1826. Gospel Advocate Restoration Reprints 2001*. Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company.
- Campbell, A. (1853, May). Tracts for Ireland - No. 1. (A. Campbell, Ed.) *Millennial Harbinger*, pp. 272-285.
- Walker, J. (1824). *A Treatise on Baptism*. Mountpleasant, Ohio: B. Wright & B. Bates.

## Secondary Sources:

### Books:

- Bailie, W. D. (Ed.). (1982). *A History of Congregations in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland 1610 - 1982*. Belfast, Northern Ireland: Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland.
- Beauregard, E. E. (1988). *History of Academic Freedom in Ohio*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Beauregard, E. E. (1990). *Reverend John Walker, Renaissance Man*. New York: Peter Lang .
- Bell, M. C. (1985). *Calvin and Scottish Theology*. Edinburgh: The Handsel Press.
- Boston, T. (1964). *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust.
- Brogan, H. (1985). *Longman History of the United States of America*. London: Longman Group Limited.
- Brownson, J. V. (2007). *The Promise of Baptism*. Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Calvin, J. (1975). *Institutes of the Christian Religion 1536 edition*. (F. L. Battles, Ed., & F. L. Battles, Trans.) London: Collins.
- Calvin, J. (1960). *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. (J. T. McNeill, Ed.) Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
- Calvin, J. (1980). *Letters of John Calvin*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust.
- Campbell, G. (1789). *The Four Gospels*. London: A. Strahan and T. Cadell.
- Chalmers, T. (1892). *Alexander Campbell's Tour in Scotland*. Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company.
- Daniell, D. (1995). Introduction to Tyndale's New Testament. In W. Tyndale, *Tyndale's New Testament* (p. xiii). Yale: Yale University Press.
- Edwards, P. (1795). *Candid Reasons for Renouncing the Principles of Anti-Paedobaptism* (Internet edition ed.). Portsea: Not given.
- Ferguson, E. (2009). *Baptism in the Early Church*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

- Fisher, E. (2009). *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. Tain, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications.
- France, R. (2002). *The Gospel of Mark*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Garrett, L. (1981). *The Stone-Campbell Movement*. No location given, United States of America: College Press Publishing Company.
- Garrison, W. E. (1900). *Alexander Campbell's Theology 1900*. St Louis: Christian Publishing Company.
- Gaus, A. (1991). *The Unvarnished New Testament*. (A. G. Greek, Trans.) Grand Rapids: Phanes Press.
- Grafton, T. W. (1897). *Alexander Campbell*. St Louis: Christian Publishing Company.
- Gribben, C. (2007). *God's Irishmen - Theological Debates in Cromwellian Ireland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press Inc.
- Haley, J. (No date given approx 1950s). *Debates That Made History*. None given: Restoration Reprint Library.
- Hamilton, I. (1990). *The Erosion of Calvinist Orthodoxy*. Edinburgh: Rutherford House.
- Harris, H. A. (1998). The Fundamentalist Mentality: Its Philosophical Roots. In H. A. Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals* (pp. 94-130). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Harrison, R. (1970). *Old Testament Times*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Hatch, N. O. (1989). *The Democratization of American Christianity*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Hodge, A. (1869). *The Confession of Faith*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust.
- Hodge, A. (1869. Reprinted 1983). *The Confession of Faith*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust.
- Hodge, A. *The Westminster Confession of Faith. A Commentary*.
- Hodge, C. (1872). *Systematic Theology* (Vol. II). London and Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons.
- Holmes, A. R. (1770 to 1840). *The Shaping of Ulster Presbyterian Belief and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Howe, D. W. (1997). *Making the American Self*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Howe, D. W. (2007). *What Hath God Wrought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Humble, B. J. (1952). *Campbell and Controversy*. no location given: Old Paths Book Club.
- Jeanes, G. P. (2008). *Signs of God's Promise*. London: T&T Clark.
- Johnson, P. (1997). *A History of the American People*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Johnson, P. (1991). *The Birth of the Modern World Society 1815-1830*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Luther, M. (1998). *Galatians*. (A. M. Packer, Ed.) Nottingham: Crossway Books.
- Marshall, I. H. (2007). *Aspects of the Atonement*. London: Paternoster .
- Marty, M. E. (1977). *Faith of our Fathers*. None given.
- McAllister, L. G. (1971). *Alexander Campbell at Glasgow University 1808-1809*. Nashville, Tennessee: Disciples of Christ Historical Society.
- McAllister, L. G. (1954). *Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book*. St Louis: The Bethany Press.
- Mercer, B. L. (1960, May ). A Rhetorical Study of Alexander Campbell's Sermon on the Law. Abilene, Texas, USA: Abilene Christian College Library.
- Muether, D. H. (2007). *Seeking a Better Country*. Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing.
- Murray, J. (1977). *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Vol. Two). Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust.
- Noll, M. A. (2002). 'The Bible Alone' and a Reformed Literal Hermeneutic. In M. A. Noll, *America's God* (p. None). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pailin, D. A. (1986). *Ground Work of Philosophy of Religion*. London: Epworth Press.
- Peterson, E. H. (2002). *The Message*. Colorado Press: NavPress.
- Phillips, J. (1960). *The New Testament in Modern English*. Glasgow: Collins.

- Richardson, R. (1897, Reprinted 1956). *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, Vols. 1 & 2*. Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Company.
- Schopenhauer, A. (2009). *The Art of Always Being Right*. None given: Gibson Square.
- Thomas, J. C. (1991). *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Trueman, C. R. (2010). *Histories and Fallacies*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway.
- Turner, F. J. (1920). *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (2008 ed.). London: Penguin Books.
- VanDoodewaard, W. (2011). *The Marrow Controversy and Seceder Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books.
- Verkruyse, P. A. (2005). The 'Sermon on the Law' and the Art of Constitutive Rhetoric. In P. A. Verkruyse, *Prophet, Pastor and Patriarch* (pp. 51-74). Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- Walther, J. A. (Ed.). (1994). *Ever a Frontier*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Watts, C. M. (2005). *Disciple of Peace*. Indianapolis: Doulos Christou Press.
- Whytock, J. C. (2007). The 1747 Breach and Two Halls. In J. C. Whytock, *An Educated Clergy* (pp. 187-207). Milton Keynes: Paternoster.
- Wilson, E. (1849). *A Scriptural View of Woman's Rights and Duties in all the Important Relations of Life*. Philadelphia: Wm S. Young.
- Wood, G. S. (2009). *Empire of Liberty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wrather, E. J. (2007). *Alexander Campbell: A Literary Biography, Vol. 2*. Fort Worth, Texas: TUC Press.
- Wright, D. F. (2005). *What has Infant Baptism done to Baptism?* Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press.
- Young, W. R. (1932). *Fighters of Derry*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode.

## **Articles:**

- (1989). In J. S. Weiner (Ed.), *Oxford English Dictionary* (Vol. 5, p. 158). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bartlett, T. (1985). Indiscipline and Disaffection in the Armed Forces in Ireland in the 1790s. In P. J. Corish (Ed.), *Radicals, Rebels and Establishments* (pp. 115-134). Belfast: The Apple Tree Press Limited.
- Bromley, G. W. (Ed.). (1968). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Vol. VI). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Buffalo Seminary. (1820, June). *Western Herald & Steubenville Gazette*.
- Davis, R. R. (1906). Pioneer Presbyterianism in Pennsylvania. *Synod of Pennsylvania*, (pp. 3-18).
- Ferguson, E. (1987). *Alexander Campbell's Sermon on the Law. A Historical and Theological Examination. Restoration Quarterly, Second Quarter 1987*. Abilene: The Restoration Quarterly Corporation.
- Garrison, W. E. (1960). Pioneer in Broadcloth. In P. E. Gresham (Ed.), *The Sage of Bethany* (pp. 45-65). St Louis: The Bethany Press.
- Hatfield, E. (1882). Alexander Campbell and the Disciples. *The Presbyterian Review*, 3 (11), 529-552.
- Hicks, J. M. (1998). 'God's Sensible Pledge': The Witness of the Spirit in the Early Baptismal Theology of Alexander Campbell. (W. R. Baker, Ed.) *Stone-Campbell Journal*, None.
- Hill, S. S. (1988). *Campbell-Stone on the Frontier: The Only Ones Weren't the Only Ones in Lectures in Honour of Alexander Campbell by Centennial, 1788 to 1988*. Nashville: The Disciples of Christ Historical Society.

- Howe, D. W. (Spring 2002). Church, State, and Education in the Young American Republic. *Journal of the Early Republic*, 22 No. 1, 1-24.
- Hudson, J. A. (1822). Introduction. In A. Campbell, *Debate on Christian Baptism* (pp. 1-11). Pittsburgh: Eichbaum and Johnston.
- Jamison, W. N. (1994). Associate and Associate Reform Seminaries. In J. A. Walther (Ed.), *Ever a Frontier* (pp. 69-96). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Levison, N. (1957). The Proselyte in Biblical and Early Post-Biblical Times. *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 45-56.
- Marty, M. E. (2006). The American Revolution and Religion, 1765 to 1815. In S. J. Tackett (Ed.), *Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution 1660-1815* (pp. 497-516). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Webster, C. (Ed.). (1840). Religious Monitor and Evangelical Repository. *Associate Synod of North America* (pp. 29-32). Philadelphia: William S. Young.
- Richardson, W. J. *The Role of Grace in the Thought of Alexander Campbell*. Eugene, Oregon: W.
- Schlesinger, A. J. (1960). The Age of Alexander Campbell. In Various, & C. b. Gresham (Ed.), *The Sage of Bethany* (pp. 25-44). St Louis: The Bethany Press.
- Schreiner, S. E. (1996). Faith. In H. J. Hillerbrand (Ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Reformation* (Vol. 2, pp. 89-93). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Scott, A. R. (1987). Thomas Campbell's Ministry at Ahorey. (E. Ferguson, Ed.) *Restoration Quarterly*, 29 (4), 229-234.
- (1993). Scottish Realism. In N. M. Cameron (Ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (pp. 759-760). Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
- Smith, J. (1857). Biographical Sketch of the Rev. Samuel Ralston, D.D. In J. S. D.D., *History of Jefferson College* (pp. 192-232). Pittsburgh: JT Shryock.
- Taylor, T. (1956). The Beginnings of Jewish Proselyte Baptism. *New Testament Studies*, 193-198.
- Watt, H. (1960). Ebenezer Erskine, 1680-1754. In R. S. Wright (Ed.), *Fathers of the Kirk* (pp. 106-117). London: Oxford University Press.
- West, E. (1951). *The Campbell-Walker Debate*. No location given: The Gospel Advocate.
- Williams, D. N. (1988). The Gospel as the Power of God to Salvation: Alexander Campbell and Experimental Religion. In N. Given (Ed.), *Lectures in Honour of the Alexander Campbell Bicentennial, 1788-1988* (pp. 127-148). Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society.
- Young, C. A. (Ed.). (1904). *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union*. Chicago: The Christian Century Company.