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*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.
—Psalm 27:5*

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And the curious girdle of the ephod, which is upon it, shall be of the same, according to the work thereof; even of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen.

—Exodus 28:8 (See also 39:5.)

The Curious Girdle

Closely connected to the ephod was the curious girdle, which was a strip of cloth tied around the waist of the high priest to serve as a belt. The word *curious* here means *artistic, cunning, ingenious* workmanship. It was not a plain old belt but a skillfully-made, beautiful garment of the high priest. It was made of the same blue, scarlet, and purple colors as the ephod and the breastplate, with the same golden thread worked throughout. Though it was not as visible as some of the other garments, the curious girdle was just as much for glory and for beauty as the other garments.

The curious girdle served a practical purpose for the high priest by holding his various garments together. The blue robe had only one hole in it, for the high priest's head, which means the arms and sides were unattached. The ephod was made of pieces of cloth in the front and back, joined at the shoulders, which means that it hung loosely on the high priest. The curious girdle served to secure these other garments snugly to the high priest. When Moses later would put these garments on Aaron for the first time in the sight of the congregation, we read that he "put the ephod upon him, and he girded him with the curious girdle of the ephod, and bound it unto him therewith" (Lev. 8:7).

The significance of the curious girdle is twofold. First, in scripture the girdle is a symbol of performing hard work. In those days, as well as today in the Middle East, men wore long tunics or robes. Before a man could labor, he must first gather up the bottom hem of his robe and tuck it into his belt so that his legs could

move unrestricted. The Bible calls this "girding up one's loins." The Israelites had been commanded to eat the passover with their loins girded in preparation for their long, arduous walk out of Egypt (Ex. 12:11). The Christian is told to stand and gird his loins with truth for his hard spiritual battle (Eph. 6:14). Girding one's loins with a girdle or belt prepared a man for hard work.

Second, in scripture the girdle is a symbol of servitude. The servant needed his garments girded up so that he could move unrestricted to work in his master's field, to bend and wash his master's feet, to serve his master's table, and to wait upon his master hand and foot. Jesus instructs his people to have their loins girded about in preparation for their Lord's return (Luke 12:35) and promises that when he does return, he will gird himself to serve them (v. 37). This is also the significance of Jesus' girding himself to wash his disciples' feet at the last supper (John 13:4). Even though the garment he used was a towel and not a belt, the idea of girding oneself for service is the same.

The curious girdle upon the Old Testament high priest signified that he was ready to labor in his service of God and the people. It also signified what his service was to be. The curious girdle matched the other garments. It also matched the cloth of the tabernacle. This indicated that his work was to serve God in God's house by fulfilling all the duties God had given him, as represented by all the garments.

Our Lord Jesus Christ fulfills the curious girdle. "And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his

reins” (Isa. 11:5). “And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle” (Rev. 1:13). Our savior is girded to serve God by saving

his beloved church. Holy garment for glory and for beauty! Our high priest has girded himself for our salvation!

—AL

FROM THE RAMPARTS

The Life of James Arminius (4)

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. —Romans 7:14

Romans 7 gives expression to the life of the child of God in this world. What is that life? It is a struggle, a continual warfare, against sin. Within the regenerate child of God there remains what Paul calls the believer’s “flesh,” in which flesh “dwelleth no good thing” (v. 18). This flesh, or “old man,” is “corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Eph. 4:22). So powerful is this flesh that it causes even the apostle Paul to lament that “the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Rom. 7:19). Finally, Paul, speaking for every regenerate child of God, cries out, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (v. 24).

John Calvin, followed in Geneva by Theodore Beza, taught that Romans 7 describes the experience of the regenerate believer. In his commentary on Romans 7:14, Calvin writes that Paul “sets before us an example in a regenerate man, in whom the remnants of the flesh are wholly contrary to the law of the Lord, while the spirit would gladly obey it.”¹ The redeemed child of God must therefore spend his life contending with indwelling sin that continually cleaves to him. Calvin further explains in his commentary on verse 15,

The godly, on the other hand, in whom the regeneration of God is begun, are so divided, that with the chief desire of the heart they aspire to God, seek celestial righteousness, hate sin, and yet they are drawn down to the earth by the relics of their flesh: and thus, while pulled in two ways, they fight against their own nature, and nature fights against them; and they condemn their sins, not only as being constrained by the judgment of reason, but because they really in their hearts abominate them, and on their account loathe themselves. This is the Christian conflict between the flesh and the spirit, of which Paul speaks in Gal. 5:17.²

James Arminius, however, denied that Romans 7 describes the regenerate child of God. “The apostle,” he wrote, “in this passage, is not treating about a man who is already regenerate through the Spirit of Christ, but has assumed the person of a man who is not yet regenerate.”³ Elsewhere he identified the man of Romans 7 as one who is “under the law,” not yet renewed by the Spirit.⁴

Arminius developed his argument in five sections. First, he defended his proposition that

¹ John Calvin and John Owen, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 259.

² Calvin and Owen, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 263.

³ James Arminius, “Dissertation on the True and Genuine Sense of the Seventh Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans,” in *The Works of James Arminius*, trans. James Nichols, vol. 2 (Montoursville, PA: Lamp Post Publishing, 2015), 155.

⁴ Arminius, *Works*, 2:155.

Paul in Romans 7 adopts the person of an unregenerate man. Second, he contended that this interpretation was never condemned as heresy and, in fact, had defenders among the church fathers; he marshaled a crushing number of quotations from them to make his point. Third, he maintained that his position was not Pelagian but actually opposed to Pelagianism. Fourth, he contended that the interpretation held by the “modern divines” (that Romans 7 describes the regenerate man) was condemned by Augustine and other early fathers. Finally, he asserted that the commonly-received Reformed position, that Romans 7 describes the regenerate believer, is “not only injurious to grace, but likewise adverse to good morals.”⁵

A few notes should be made before examining his argument more closely. The sermon Arminius once preached on Romans 7 has not survived, but the dissertation he later wrote on the passage, while a professor at the University of Leiden, has. His writing is dense.⁶ He frequently employs syllogisms and enthymemes—tools of logic and philosophy—to construct an argument.⁷ Oh, and he is verbose. To quote Arminius’ definitions of a “regenerate man” or an “unregenerate man” would require pages of quotations.⁸

I will do my level best, though in my own dense, circuitous, and verbose way, to distill for the reader the main points of Arminius’ reasoning, focusing especially on the first and last of his sections, which, in my judgment, contain the essence of his argument and most clearly reveal the substance of his position.

A Man Under the Law

For Arminius Romans 7:14 was his stone of stumbling and rock of offense. How, he asked, could the child of God confess that he was “carnal, sold under sin,” when in the previous chapter the apostle had comforted the church at Rome with the words of Romans 6:14: “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace”? On this basis Arminius concluded,

A man who is regenerate and placed under grace is not carnal, but spiritual. Therefore, it is a matter of the greatest certainty that the subject of the apostle in this verse is not a man placed under grace.⁹

He reinforced this argument by appealing to several passages from Romans that, in his judgment, described the believer in terms opposite to those of Romans 7, including Romans 8:9: “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.”¹⁰

The issue for Arminius was that Romans 7 seems to describe a man who is more under the dominion of sin than under the dominion of the Holy Spirit, in whom “the party of the flesh is more powerful than that of the Spirit.”¹¹ Likewise, Arminius objected to applying the phrase “sold under sin” in verse 14 to a regenerate person, arguing that the child of God is freed from such bondage, according to Romans 6:17–18.

What, then, did Arminius do with Romans 7:22–23—verses that seem to provide clear and irrefutable proof that the man of Romans 7 is regenerate? For can an unregenerate man, an

⁵ Arminius, *Works*, 2:157.

⁶ Or, what is perhaps more likely, the writer of these articles attempting to study Arminius is the one who is dense. Support for that argument comes from the fact that others find Arminius’ arguments to be compelling. “For 234 pages of learned argumentation and close reasoning Arminius defends the thesis that the person described there is unregenerate” (Thomas J. Nettles, “The Conversion of the Man in Romans 7,” *Reformation and Revival* 7, no. 3 [Summer 1998]: 177).

⁷ A syllogism is a formal, logical argument that draws a conclusion from a major premise and a minor premise. An enthymeme is simply a shortened syllogism, where one of the premises (most often the major one) is implied rather than stated explicitly.

⁸ Arminius, *Works*, 2:162–63. His definition of a regenerate man spans nineteen lines of fine print, more than 260 words, impressively composed without a single period.

⁹ Arminius, *Works*, 2:175.

¹⁰ Arminius, *Works*, 2:175.

¹¹ Arminius, *Works*, 2:176.

enemy of God, truly desire to do good and “delight in the law of God after the inward man”? Arminius explained these verses away by resorting to an argument that seems to come straight from Aristotle or Plato: the “inward man,” he said, signifies the mind or reason; and the “outward man” signifies the body.

In his own words,

The inward man is to be understood as that which is incorporeal and inhabiting, so denominated from the interior of man, that is, his mind or soul; and that the outward man is here taken for that which is corporeal and inhibited, so denominated from the body, the exterior part of a man.¹²

Whatever distinction Arminius intended—and it is not easy to untangle—the fact remains that you have an unregenerated man who can will the good (Rom. 7:19), a clear denial of total depravity. Arminius not only rejected the contrary position but also insisted that in verses 22–23 “not a single syllable occurs which can afford even the least indication of regeneration, and of the newness arising from regeneration.”¹³

Injurious to Grace

In addition to arguing exegetically that the man of Romans 7 is unregenerate, Arminius also charged that to take the opposite position would inflict an injury on grace. His reasoning was that God’s grace would never leave a man in such a condition that he must still describe himself as “carnal, sold under sin”—a man who strives to do good but cannot perform it, who seeks to avoid evil but finds himself unable to do so. After all, Arminius asked, according to Philippians 2:13, does not grace work in us both the willing and the doing?

For Arminius the view of Romans 7 as that of a regenerated man makes grace “too weak to

crucify the old man, to destroy the body of sin, or to conquer the flesh, the world and Satan.”¹⁴ Further, he asked whether this description of inner conflict can rightly be ascribed to the Holy Spirit without at the same time dishonoring both the Spirit and the grace of Christ.

Finally, Arminius stated that

this opinion [that the man of Romans 7 is regenerated] is inimical and hurtful to good morals. For nothing can be imagined more noxious to true morality than to assert that it is a property of the regenerate not to do the good which they would, and to do the evil which they would not.¹⁵

He pressed the point by recounting pastoral cases in which those living in sin defended themselves by appealing to Romans 7. “With Paul,” they would say, “we are not able to do the good we would but must do the evil we would not.” Once Arminius presented his interpretation, these individuals, he claimed, “gave [him] hearty thanks, as they have declared, because by [his] interpretation, [he] had delivered them from that false opinion.”¹⁶

But this charge—that the gospel of sovereign grace leads men to carelessness—has always followed the truth that salvation is of the Lord and not of man. “The result of your teaching,” the opponents say, “will be that men live wicked lives!” There was no excuse for Arminius to make this accusation against the gospel then, just as there is no excuse for a Reformed minister to make it now. Arminius knew full well the Heidelberg Catechism’s answer to question 64 of Lord’s Day 24:

Q. 64: But doth not this doctrine make men careless and profane?

A: By no means; for it is impossible that those who are implanted into Christ by a

¹² Arminius, *Works*, 2:204.

¹³ Arminius, *Works*, 2:203.

¹⁴ Arminius, *Works*, 2:288.

¹⁵ Arminius, *Works*, 2:289.

¹⁶ Arminius, *Works*, 2:291.

true faith should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.

The preaching of the true gospel, worked in the heart of the child of God by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, has never led, and will never lead, a man to live a sinful life. It is an impossibility.

That same truth provides a useful test for the preaching you hear today. After listening to a sermon on grace, ask yourself, “Will this sermon ever draw the charge that it makes men careless and profane?” If, at its conclusion, the sermon places the weight upon man—on what he must do to obtain what God desires to give—then you can be certain such preaching will never attract that charge. And for that very reason, it is not the gospel of grace, and it is not Reformed. It is, rather, Arminianism dragged out of hell and clothed in Reformed garments.

The Church Fathers

To support his interpretation of Romans 7, Arminius provided an abundance of quotations from the church fathers, claiming that the church fathers lent weight to his position—chief among them Augustine. There is reason to doubt, however, that Augustine’s support was as firm as Arminius suggested. Although Augustine’s earliest comments on the passage aligned with Arminius’ interpretation, he later changed his view.

In fact, as one historian notes, by the time of the Reformation, only one Reformed exegete could be said to have supported Arminius’ position.

The majority view in the early sixteenth century, moreover, echoed the late Augustine: the subject of Romans 7 was a human being under grace, not a human being under the law. Among the exegetes who could be called Reformed, only Bernardino Ochino disagreed; Zwingli, Bucer, Oecolampadius, Calvin, Beza, and Bullinger all held that the conflict in the Pauline text referred to the life of a believer. Significantly, Bullinger (who is

sometimes identified as a major Reformed alternative to Calvin) had no substantial disagreement with Calvin on this point.¹⁷

The Confessions

Even if we grant that there were some church fathers who took the position of Arminius, does that mean such a position would be acceptable for a Reformed man in that day? To ask the question is to answer it. Arminius was an ostensibly Reformed man serving as a pastor in a decidedly Reformed church. As such Arminius was bound by the two confessions of his day, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession.

Or was he?

There is debate about that—whether those two confessions were indeed binding on ministers in the period in which Arminius lived. This was, after all, before the formal adoption of the Formula of Subscription, which explicitly bound officebearers to the three forms of unity. Was there, then, a measure of latitude granted in Arminius’ day regarding adherence to the Heidelberg Catechism and Belgic Confession, since the Formula had not yet been established?

The truth is that those two confessions were binding in the Reformed churches of Arminius’ time, Formula of Subscription or no Formula of Subscription.

By nearly all accounts, including that of the seventeenth-century Remonstrant Gerard Brandt, the Belgic Confession was the primary confessional document of the Dutch Reformed churches as they developed into the national church of the Netherlands in the second half of the sixteenth century. Written in 1561 by Guy de Bres and published in the same year at Rouen, the “Confession of faith, made... by the faithful...in the low countries” was adopted as the standard of faith by the synods of Antwerp (1566), Wesel (1568), Emden (1571), Dordrecht (1574, 1578), Middelburg (1581), and Den Haag (1586). At Antwerp (1566), Wesel (1568),

¹⁷ Richard A. Muller, “Arminius and the Reformed Tradition,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 70, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 42.

Emden (1571), and Dordrecht (1578), the Heidelberg Catechism was also accorded a symbolic or confessional status.¹⁸

After mentioning the synods and councils where these confessions were affirmed and adopted, the same historian writes that to say these confessions were not authoritative is a serious distortion of the historical record.

To claim that the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism were not the authoritative standards of the Dutch Reformed Church prior to the conclusion of the Arminian controversy and that the synods that ratified them were less than authoritative in the Dutch church is, therefore, seriously to misstate the case.¹⁹

Indeed, even Arminius himself stated that the confessions were authoritative.

If it be decided, that [my opinions] are contrary to the Confession, then I have been engaged in teaching something in opposition to a document, “against which never to propound any doctrine,” was the faithful promise which I made, when I signed it with my own hand: if, therefore, I be found thus criminal, I ought to be visited with punishment.²⁰

Un-Reformed and False Grace

The position taken by Arminius stood in opposition to that of the Reformed men of his day and to the consensus of the Reformed fathers. It was not, however, contrary to the position taken by Pelagius and Socinus. Though such a comparison would have offended Arminius, as well it might, and though he labored strenuously to distance himself from it by pointing out areas

of apparent difference, the fact remains: his position was not that of the Reformed faith but that of Pelagianism and Socinianism.

Arminius’ view, more ominously, was contrary to the Reformed faith as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession.

Article 14 of the Belgic Confession, titled “The Creation and Fall of Man, and His Incapacity to Perform What Is Truly Good,” explicitly denies the position advanced by Arminius. It teaches that man was created good and able to will in harmony with the will of God, but through the fall he forfeited all those good gifts he had received. As such, fallen, unregenerated man “is but a slave to sin, and has nothing of himself, unless it is given from heaven.” The article further declares that the church rejects “all that is taught repugnant to this concerning the free will of man.”

What did Arminius teach about the free will of man? This:

It always remains within the power of free will to reject grace bestowed, and to refuse subsequent grace; because grace is not an omnipotent action of God, which cannot be resisted by man’s free will.²¹

Arminius wore out the word *grace* in his teaching and preaching, yet what he set forth was not truly grace—for grace is only grace when it means *everything for nothing*. For Arminius grace was merely a helper alongside the effort of man. What made grace effectual, in his system, was not the inherent power of grace itself but man’s cooperation with it.²²

This is another test you can apply to the preaching you hear: when the minister speaks

¹⁸ Muller, “Arminius and the Reformed Tradition,” 24–25.

¹⁹ Muller, “Arminius and the Reformed Tradition,” 30–31.

²⁰ Jacobus Arminius, *Declaratio sententiae*, in *Opera theologica*, 98–99 (*Works* 1:609), quoted in Muller, “Arminius and the Reformed Tradition,” 31.

²¹ Jacob Arminius, *The Writings of James Arminius*, trans. James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall, 3 vols. (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 3:509, quoted in John A. Aloisi, “Jacob Arminius and the Doctrine of Original Sin,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 21 (2016): 204.

²² This concept is described by writers generally sympathetic to Arminius in the following way: “Christ does not simply knock and wait for a response, but he continues knocking, and even helps a person open the door, as the operation of prevenient grace indistinguishably evolves into a cooperation of subsequent grace” (Keith D. Stanglin and Thomas H. McCall, *Arminius: Theologian of Grace* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2012], 155).

of grace, is he describing the child of God as receiving everything, without a single exception, for nothing? Or, at some point in the sermon, does he tell the people what they must do to obtain something, however small? If the latter, then you are not hearing of the grace of God but of the grace of Arminianism, dragged out of hell and clothed in Reformed garments.

Arminius' position is also condemned by the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 3.

Q 8: Are we then so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness?

A: Indeed we are, except we are regenerated by the Spirit of God.²³

For Arminius the unregenerated man *could* do good, including loving the law of God and hating to do the evil and even desiring salvation through Jesus—things which, according to the Catechism, can only be done by the regenerated child of God.²⁴

The Synod of Dordt addressed this very teaching directly in heads 3–4, rejection of errors 4, rejecting the errors of those

who teach that the unregenerate man is not really nor utterly dead in sin, nor destitute of all powers unto spiritual good, but that he can yet hunger and thirst after righteousness and life, and offer the sacrifice of a contrite and broken spirit, which is pleasing to God.

As in all its doctrinal affirmations and rejections, the synod grounded its teaching squarely on the word of God:

Rejection: For these are contrary to the express testimony of scripture. *Ye were*

dead through trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1, 5); and: *Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually* (Gen. 6:5; 8:21).

Moreover, to hunger and thirst after deliverance from misery and after life, and to offer unto God the sacrifice of a broken spirit, is peculiar to the regenerate and those that are called blessed (Ps. 51:10, 19; Matt. 5:6).

Conclusion

Paul cries out in Romans 7:24, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” This question is on the lips of every believing child of God: “How shall a wretch like me be saved?” Will man save himself, or will God save man?

For Arminius the answer was clear: man can save himself. Yes, God plays his part—God gives grace; God enables; God assists—but at the decisive moment man must act. Salvation, for Arminius, depended not upon the sovereign will of God but upon the cooperating will of man.

The question, then, always comes down to this: who saves? Does God alone save? Or do God and man together save? For Arminius man's contribution was decisive. And Arminius' doctrine, though now dressed in Reformed language, remains alive and well in many so-called Reformed churches today, as we shall see, Lord willing, at the conclusion of these articles.

This history teaches us that those who make salvation in any respect depend upon the cooperating work of man are not Reformed, and neither is the church that tolerates them. They walk in the footsteps of their spiritual father, James Arminius.

²³ Compare that affirmation of the Heidelberg Catechism to this statement by Arminius: “Secondly, that to delight in the law of God, or, rather, to find a sort of condelectation [natural or intellectual delight] in the law of God after the inward man, is not a property peculiar to the regenerate and to those who are placed under grace, but that it appertains to a man placed under the law” (Arminius, *Works*, 2:203). Another name for that is common grace.

²⁴ One man who spoke at an Arminianism symposium in 1960, sponsored by the Remonstrant Brotherhood, acknowledged that Arminius did not have a proper understanding of the Christian life, writing, “It seems that Arminius did not have the proper feeling for the Lutheran paradox, *simul justus et peccator*; this is, that a man can be righteous and a sinner at one and the same time. Indeed, his distinction between unregenerate and regenerate man is far too rigorous” (Gerrit Jan Hoenderdaal, “The Life and Struggle of Arminius in the Dutch Republic,” in *Man's Faith and Freedom: The Theological Influence of Jacobus Arminius*, ed. Gerald O. McCulloch [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962], 17).

HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

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Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article CXXXVII: The New King and His Kingdom: The Children of the Promise (continued)

“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”—Rom. 9:15; Ex. 33:19

Thus far we studied how God had established his covenant with Israel at Horeb; how Israel had broken the covenant through its golden calf worship, a sin that lies at the root of Israel's apostasy throughout its history; how the Lord had threatened to destroy his people, suggesting that he would make a great nation out of Moses; and, finally, how Moses had pleaded with Jehovah on the basis of his own promises and mighty deeds to repent of the evil he thought against Israel and how, in this prayer, he was heard by Jehovah.

But this is not the end of this significant moment in Israel's history. By his mediatorial prayer Moses had gained the assurance that Jehovah would not destroy the people on the spot. This was, however, not sufficient. What he desires is the assurance that God will forgive the sin of the people, and that he will lead them safely into the land of promise. Hence, on the morrow after the people had been punished for their sin, Moses approaches Jehovah once more. He must be sure that Jehovah will forgive and that he will go with them. For he realizes that the sin committed at Horeb may break out again at any time and the Lord in his wrath may still destroy the people. He, therefore, pleads with Jehovah. He prays: “Oh, this people have sinned a great sin and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin * * * *; and if

not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.” And in answer to this bold prayer the Lord tells Moses four things. In the first place, that he will blot the sinner out of his book, not another; in the second place, that Moses must go and lead the people into the land of which he had spoken; in the third place, that he will send his angel before them to guide them in the way; and, lastly, that in the day of visitation he will still visit their sin upon them. (Ex. 32:31–34.)

The command to lead the people into the land promised to the fathers, together with the promise that Jehovah shall send his angel before them to guide them in the way, is repeated in 33:1–3. Only, in this passage it is made plain that the angel that is to go before Israel is to be distinguished from Jehovah himself. “And Jehovah spake unto Moses, Depart, go up hence, thou and the people that thou hast brought up out of Egypt, unto the land of which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: and I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite: unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people; lest I consume thee in the way.” Plainly, the implication is that just a common angel shall be sent before the face of Israel. Here it is not the angel of Jehovah, the angel of God's face, that is promised as their leader and guide in the

wilderness, but just a common angel. For, in the first place, the Lord expressly says that “an angel” shall go with them, and, secondly, the reason why an angel is promised them is precisely that Jehovah himself cannot go up with them. If he should go with this stiff-necked people, who at any time might repeat their sin committed at Sinai, he surely would consume them in his wrath. And even when the people mourned at these evil tidings and as a sign of sorrow and repentance left off their ornaments, Jehovah repeats this evil message: “Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiff-necked people; if I go up into the midst of thee for one moment, I shall consume thee” (33:5).

This, however, does not set Moses’ heart at rest. How shall he lead the people to the promised land as long as the relation between Jehovah and them is not restored and the Lord refuses to go with them? And, therefore, he still continues to plead as the mediator of the people. He enters into the tent pitched outside of the camp and there Jehovah reveals himself to him, for the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tent. And the Lord there spoke to Moses face to face, mouth to mouth, in familiar intercourse, as a man speaks with his friend (33:11). And Moses pleads with Jehovah for the people. “See thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet, thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found favor in my sight. Now, therefore, if I have found favor in thy sight, show me now thy ways, that I may know thee, to the end that I may find favor in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.” The meaning is evident. Moses here pleads on the basis that he was known by name to Jehovah and that the Lord had called him to be the leader of the people on their way to the land of promise. As such he enjoyed the favor of Jehovah. Thus the Lord had assured him. But if this is actually a fact, Moses asks, as a token of that favor, that the Lord will reveal to him whom he will send with them. The mere assurance that an angel will go with them, while the Lord still remembers his wrath, is not sufficient for

Moses. He must know more. He wants a more definite promise. He cannot rest till he knows that Jehovah acknowledges Israel to be his own people. He must know that Jehovah himself shall go with them. And this assurance he now receives. For the Lord promises him: “My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” This Presence, or Face, of Jehovah is the Angel of Jehovah; it is the manifestation of Jehovah himself, the Angel in whom was the name of Jehovah. It is the same angel that was promised to go before them in 23:20, 21, and who in Isa. 63:9 is called “the angel of his face.” This, therefore, is the personal presence of Jehovah, and it assures Moses that the relation will be restored.

But even thus the mediator of the old dispensation is not satisfied. He desires the positive assurance that Jehovah will again lead Israel as his own peculiar, chosen and favored people in distinction from all the nations. Jehovah must be Israel’s God, and they must be Jehovah’s peculiar covenant people. He, therefore, prays: “If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein now shall it be known that I have found favor in thy sight, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth?” There is, in these words, no doubt as to the divine promise that the presence of Jehovah should go with them. On the contrary, Moses in these words wrestles with God in the supremest sense of the word. Jehovah’s face would go with them. But what if the people should again sin and repeat the violation of the covenant? If the assurance that Jehovah will continue to go with them and be in their midst as their God with his favor must depend on the faithfulness of the people, Moses realizes that all is still uncertain. For at any time the people that have sinned at Horeb may rebel again against their God. And, therefore, the firm assurance for the future must be sought in God alone, in his free and sovereign favor, in his gracious election according to which he had separated this people unto himself and made them distinct from all the nations of the earth. Jehovah must not count their sins against them, but remember his grace

according to election. If this may be promised him, he will have peace.

And lastly, after Moses has obtained even this, he asks the Lord to show him his glory. No vain curiosity is the motive of this request. On the contrary, the same anxiety as to the future of God's people that had caused him to pray so urgently for Jehovah's gracious presence with his people, is also the motive that urges him to make this request. He desired a revelation of Jehovah surpassing all the revelations thus far granted him, even that by which he was privileged to speak to Jehovah face to face. As the mediator of God's covenant people, realizing the significance of his office, and knowing that by the sin of the people a breach was struck, a chasm was made between them and their God which he desired to cross, He must have most intimate communion with the Lord as head of his people. He desired to see God's glory. And it is in answer to this urgent request of Moses that the Lord says, in the words which the Apostle Paul quotes: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

This, then, is the name of Jehovah as he shall go up with his people. Moses had pleaded on the basis of God's own sovereign grace. He had sought the most intimate communion with his covenant God as mediator of his people. The Lord answers him finally, that even with regard to Israel God's election remains free. He shall go with his people. They shall be a peculiar people unto him. He shall show them his grace. But in their midst God's mercy according to election remains free. Not all amongst them are children of the promise. Not all are Israel that are called Israel. But those on whom Jehovah will have

mercy and have compassion according to his free grace are his people evermore.

Thus, then, the apostle has shown from history that the Word of God has not come to naught even though not all that was named Israel was actually saved.

God's covenant is his relation of friendship to his people, according to which he is their friend and they are his; he is their shield and they are his party.

That covenant is historically established in the line of continued generations. It is established with the woman and her seed in paradise. It follows organically the line of Seth. It is again established with Noah and his seed. It confines itself soon to the line of Shem. It is formally established with Abraham and his seed and sealed with the sign of circumcision, which seals the relation between faith and righteousness. And in Abraham's seed it branches out into the national covenant with Israel. It always develops organically. It continually advances. It always follows the line of continued generations.

But as in any organism, so also in the organism of the generations of God's people there are dead branches. Though all are Abraham's seed according to the flesh, they are not all spiritual Israel; they are not all children of the promise. God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion.

And this organic development of God's covenant in the world continues throughout the new dispensation among the spiritual seed of Abraham.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.

