



REFORMED

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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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MEDITATION

Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well. Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How is it that ye are come so soon to day? And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock. And he said unto his daughters, And where is he? why is it that ye have left the man? call him, that he may eat bread. And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter. And she bare him a son, and he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.

—Exodus 2:15–22

What a stranger Moses was. Where did he belong? Moses had no place in Canaan yet, for it was very far away. Moses had no place among the Hebrews, for they had mocked him and thrust him away. Moses had no place in Egypt, where he was born and raised, for Pharaoh sought to slay him. Moses fled to the land of Midian and sat down by a well. His head drooping? His hands hanging down? His face crestfallen? Probably. Moses was a stranger in a strange land.

The first people that Moses met in that strange land were strangers like Moses. They were not strangers in the sense that they came from a different place like Moses. But they were strangers in the sense that, like Moses, they had no place in that land, even if it was their own. The seven daughters of Reuel (also called Jethro) came to the well to draw water for their father's flock. Their father was the priest of Jehovah in Midian. Although descended from Abraham through Keturah and therefore not part of the nation of Israel, these half brothers of the Israelites worshiped the true God. Their worship of the true God made them strangers among their fellow citizens. The members of this family were covenant friends of God, as indicated by the name Reuel, which means *friend*

of God. The other shepherds were not friends of God and therefore hated Reuel's daughters and persecuted them. The shepherds drove Reuel's family and flock away from the life-giving water. Even in their own land, the family of Reuel were strangers in a strange land.

Stranger met with stranger and found company. Moses stood up and helped the daughters of Reuel to water their flock. Reuel invited Moses into his home, not merely as kindness for kindness but in covenant fellowship. Moses would eat Reuel's bread, dwell in Reuel's house for forty years, marry Reuel's daughter Zipporah, and raise Reuel's grandsons Gershom and Eliezer.

Mark well Moses the stranger. The outstanding fact about Moses those forty years in Midian is that Moses was a stranger. So significant is this fact that it was the name of his son: Gershom—a *stranger here*. For Moses said, "I have been a stranger in a strange land" (Ex. 2:22). So significant is this fact that it was Stephen's entire summary of Moses' forty years in Midian: "Moses...was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons" (Acts 7:29).

Mark well Moses the stranger, for God's people are Moses. God's people on this earth are only ever strangers in a strange land. They are

strangers in their own churches, which they built, as far as the earthly form goes, with their own tears and blood. They are strangers in their own schools, which they built, as far as the earthly form goes, with their own sweat and hours and treasure. The relentless slander by their foes, the threats of further cruelties, and the constant uncertainty of dwelling in tents all press upon the strangers' consciousness that they are indeed strangers in a strange land. And just about the time that the believer begins to imagine that life is becoming normal and comfortable, God makes his life so strange that he can only say, "I have been a stranger in a strange land." Yes, mark well Moses the stranger! For the stranger in a strange land is you who believe.

And what a blessing to be a stranger. For then one's life does not consist of the form that one built with his blood, sweat, tears, hours, and treasure, which all pass away; but one's life consists of the kingdom of God's dear Son, which he established with his blood and which is eternal. And then one's hope is not that somehow, somewhere, sometime life on this earth will feel normal and become comfortable; but one's hope is that he has a tabernacle eternal in the heavens, where his savior has gone before. Here is the stranger's confession: I am a stranger here, for my life is hid with Christ in God.

—AL

FROM THE EDITOR

With thanksgiving to God we present to our readers a new issue of *Reformed Pavilion*. This issue may be a bit slimmer, as the editors had other matters to attend to this week, but we trust the issue is not light. God has given weighty matters for his church to consider. Our thanks to Mr. Bryan Van Baren, who has graciously permitted the publication of his letter to the consistory of First Reformed Protestant Church. Our thanks

also to Miss Agatha Lubbers for her letter to the editor. We continue to extend an invitation to our readers to submit letters, contributions, book reviews, etc. We are delighted that so many are willing to read parts or all of the magazine. If any readers are also minded to put pen to paper, we would welcome your contributions. God is good to our little magazine; may he prosper another issue.

—AL



To the Consistory of First Reformed Protestant Church

May 28, 2023

Men of the Consistory,
“Lead me to the Rock that is higher
than I.” Psalm 61:2

It is with brotherly love that I must lay before you what you have done to the flock here at FRPC. By your actions with regard to the controversy on exclusive psalmody in our church and churches, you have shown that you hate this flock. You have unrighteously judged that Rev. Lanning committed the sin of preaching the false doctrine of legalism. You have not proven from Scripture and the Confessions that the teaching of “exclusive psalmody” is the false doctrine of legalism. You have lorded it over Rev. Lanning’s office of minister of the gospel in suspending him from his office for faithfully teaching the flock the words of Christ from the scriptures. He did not put the Law over us, but on the contrary showed us the thankful life and obedience of the child of God in gratitude for what He has done for us. You have effectually put Rev. Lanning in a well, so that he may not continue to teach us regarding God’s will for His people. This is a horrible thing that you have done to Christ’s church.

I cannot and may not continue under such authority in the church and I may not continue in a church that has done such despite to the cause of Christ, and even in the name of Christ. My conscience has been grieved by the wickedness that has been going on in FRPC and in the denomination of which I have been a part. The preaching at FRPC has been a scourge and not a balm to God’s hurting people. This is because it became the will and oppression of man, and not the will and salvation of God in that preaching. God has taken His Spirit away from the RPC.

Striking that you who have been telling the congregation: Peace, peace, everything was

fine just the way it was, and grieved the church by imposing man’s will on the church in the singing of what you determined was a psalm, haven’t even helped the hurt of Christ’s body slightly by confessing to that sin in brokenness to the people. Then you proclaim about Christ’s people the slander that they are oathbreakers and ungodly people. You are those who lead others to go after fellow saints and seek to kill them, calling them sinners and legalists, even if you suspect them of following after the teaching of exclusive psalmody in the worship. You are guilty of forcing God’s people out of this church and denomination. These are not the actions of faithful shepherds, or even of hirelings, but you have shown yourselves to be wolves who devour God’s sheep.

You are as the scribes and Pharisees described by Jesus in Matthew 23: “But do not after their works: for they say and do not.” (vs. 3) Jesus says about you in verses 37-39: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

Men, we have loved you and have born much together, but God has revealed you to be unfaithful men who fight against Christ’s pricks and persecute Him. We grieve for the flock left under your oversight. With grief we must leave your midst and continue God’s church by again forming a new church that we pray will stand with the Truth. You have, as it were, removed Christ from your midst, by shutting up the

faithful preaching of the gospel and slaying Christ's faithful office bearers. We do not hate you and are not bitter against you, for as Joseph told his brothers that they had meant it for evil, but God did it for good to save much flesh alive, that is, to preserve His church. We pray that the

Lord break you and cause you to repent of the evil that you have done to Him.

Please send the papers of myself and my daughter Bryanna to our home.

In Christ,
Bryan Van Baren

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

CONCERNING Believers and Their Seed

The 7th Issue of the First Volume of the *Reformed Pavilion* published May 23, 2003, contains an excellent and thorough review by Editor Rev. A. Lanning of the out-of-print *Believers and Their Seed*, by Rev. Herman Hoeksema. Thank you, Editor Lanning, for your review of this classic book. Professor Herman Hoeksema could certainly be called Doctor of the Covenant.

Believers and Their Seed, published last in 1977, is a publication into English of the Dutch articles, *De Geloovigen en Hun Zaad*, composed by Herman Hoeksema and published in several issues of the *Standard Bearer* of 1927. I agree with Rev. Lanning, who evaluates the 166 page book as one that is a warm, vibrant, and very understandable examination of the history and development of Covenant theology in Reformed churches. The Protestant Reformed Churches have adopted unanimously this clear-cut declaration of the Particular and Unconditional Covenant of God with believers and their elect offspring.

I cannot restrain myself from quoting the following pithy line, page 31, of the review: "Over against the Arminian slander that the God of election and reprobation is a capricious tyrant, gleefully slinging innocent infants into hell, the CANONS OF DORDT, Article 1.17 declares that God is a covenant God, who comprehends the elect children of believing parents in his covenant. God is not a tyrannical God but a covenant God."

In the conclusion of the review—A Marvelous Development of the Covenant, page 34—Editor Lanning states that "Hoeksema would continue to refine his doctrine of the covenant through the years; but *Believers and Their Seed* was his major development of the doctrine. The essence and the basics of his covenant doctrine are all there."

With this evaluation I totally agree and also believe that Hoeksema's later refining and development of the doctrine of the covenant would not have been possible if the 1927 articles had not been written. Students being schooled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary in 1927, as my Father and fellow students were, would carry with them to the catechism classes and the pulpits of the early Protestant Reformed Churches the grand doctrine of the covenant articulated by their Professor Herman Hoeksema.

The review of *Believers and Their Seed* is important for me because I played a small part in 1948 by typing the manuscript into English. I believe I was providentially given the opportunity to type and prepare the earliest and undoubtedly first English translation of the booklet containing the Dutch SB articles of 1927. I recall vividly that in 1944 my Father, Rev. George C. Lubbers, possessed a paperback copy of *De Geloovigen en Hun Zaad*. When my Father was installed as the first pastor of the Randolph Protestant Reformed Church I was 13 years old and was helping in moving into the parsonage in

Randolph. The Dutch version of *Believers and Their Seed* was one of the books that packed in boxes of books to be placed on the book shelves in Dad's study. I did not know at the time of the unpacking of the Dutch version of the booklet that it would be translated into English by my Father; nor did I know that I would be the typist of the more than 166 pages. I was conscripted to type Dad's daily English translation using his Portable Royal Typewriter. Many of you must remember learning to type and perhaps typing on a typewriter like this; and know what it was like to experience and endure some of the frustration of such a venture.

My Father would often say that the Dutch pamphlet ought to be translated into English so young people and older folks could read it. He believed he could do this but his translation into English was delayed because of the sickness and serious depression he experienced and endured in 1948. The depression resulted in his hospitalization at Pine Rest Christian Hospital, Grand Rapids, Michigan for several months. When Dad returned home, he could not assume many of his ministerial duties; but soon began the translation into the English of *Believers and Their Seed*. As an 11th grade student at the Randolph Public High School I was learning to type so Dad conscripted me to be the daily after-school "typist" of the 166 page manuscript. It was a challenge that I have never forgotten. My typing skills were improved and more importantly it was a theological catechism for me as I typed the first English copy of a book of Reformed theology that has become one of my favorites. It taught me the doctrines of the Covenant during the years prior to controversy of 1953, and before I began the fifty-six years I served as a Protestant Reformed teacher of covenant children and young people.

When the manuscript was completed it was sent to Rev. Homer C. Hoeksema, who was serving the seminary as an assistant to Rev. Hoeksema, who was recovering from the effects of the stroke of 1956. Professor Hoeksema accepted calls to Doon PRC and South Holland PRC

and Dad's translation into English remained safely in the file of Homer Hoeksema. It was 1971 when Rev. Homer was a professor in the Protestant Reformed Seminary that he prepared a translation that was printed in 1971 as the first hard-copy of the book. The first English translation was printed twenty-eight years after the first translation by my Father.

Rev. Herman Hoeksema had passed from Earth to Heaven in 1965 but his beautiful book, a gem, was going into English six years after his death. Professor Homer Hoeksema wrote in the Translator's Foreword of the 1971 publication that "the author himself always looked upon this little work as a concise presentation in popular form of the idea of the covenant and its relation to infant baptism, and he had frequently expressed the desire for an English translation, believing that such a translation could serve for the instruction of many of God's people in the Scriptural and Reformed truth of God's everlasting covenant of grace."

Homer Hoeksema continues in the Foreword as follows: "In preparing this translation I have tried as much as possible to adhere to the author's style and language while at the same time striving for a smooth-flowing English rendering. ... I wish to acknowledge the valuable help by my colleague in the ministry, Rev. George C. Lubbers."

Believers and Their Seed has a ninety-six year history, written three years after the organization of the Protestant Reformed Churches in 1924, and is a valuable and significant treasure that is worthy to be classified as one of Herman Hoeksema's best books; if not the most significant, articulate, and comforting development and statement of God's Covenant of Friendship with his people—the elect of God. Concerning this blessed work by Herman Hoeksema, it can be asserted correctly what others have said about ancient and preserved works—"The work is good not because it is old; the work is old because it is good."

—Agatha Lubbers

Reply

It is always a treat to receive a letter from Miss Agatha Lubbers. For the sake of those readers who may not know, Miss Lubbers was my high school principal at Covenant Christian High School in Walker, Michigan, not so many years ago, it seems. Several readers of *Reformed Pavilion* spent the halcyon days of their youth under the leadership of Miss Lubbers and well remember her spirited presence in the halls of our academia. So it is a treat to receive her letter. If memory serves, Miss Lubbers wrote twice to *Sword and Shield*, and it is now a privilege for *Reformed Pavilion* to be graced with one of her letters. Welcome, Miss Lubbers, to the pages of our magazine.

Miss Lubbers' letter adds a fascinating episode to the story of the publication of *Believers and Their Seed*. In addition to Herman Hoeksema's writing the Dutch articles in 1927, and in addition to Homer Hoeksema's publishing the English translation in 1971, we must now add the interesting fact that Rev. George C. Lubbers prepared the first English translation already in 1948. And we now have the delightful historical color of a young Agatha Lubbers in Randolph, Wisconsin, typing on a portable Royal the first English copy from her father's hand-written manuscript.

Especially interesting in our correspondent's letter is the fact that, well before 1953, Protestant Reformed ministers were thoroughly instructed in Herman Hoeksema's doctrine of the covenant. The following analysis by Miss Lubbers is astounding: "Students being schooled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary in 1927, as my Father and fellow students were, would carry with them to the catechism classes and the pulpits of the early Protestant Reformed Churches the grand doctrine of the

covenant articulated by their Professor Herman Hoeksema." This is such an astounding analysis because it exposes the lie of those Protestant Reformed ministers in the late 1940s and early 1950s who maintained that there was no single Protestant Reformed doctrine of the covenant.¹ Those ministers were attempting to make room in the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) for the conditional covenant doctrine of Klaas Schilder. Those ministers were especially attempting to make room in the PRC for the thousands of Reformed (Liberated) Dutchmen who were emigrating from the Netherlands after World War II. But according to our correspondent's analysis, the Protestant Reformed Churches had been thoroughly indoctrinated in Hoeksema's unconditional covenant doctrine from their earliest days. There simply was no room for the conditional covenant doctrine of Klaas Schilder and the Liberated. Our correspondent's analysis is correct in light of the fact that Hoeksema's doctrine of the covenant was published and taught in the PRC from their earliest days. To be Protestant Reformed meant holding to the unconditional covenant of grace. The fact that some Protestant Reformed ministers in 1953 allowed for a conditional covenant did not mean that the PRC had no established covenant doctrine; it just meant that those Protestant Reformed ministers were not truly Protestant Reformed.

There is one statement yet in our correspondent's letter that requires attention: "The Protestant Reformed Churches have adopted unanimously this clear-cut declaration of the Particular and Unconditional Covenant of God with believers and their elect offspring." Our correspondent correctly states the historical

¹ See especially the incident of the Holwerda letter in Douglas J. Kuiper, "Recognizing the Legacy of George M. Ophoff" (master's thesis, Calvin Theological Seminary, 2019), 92–95 and in David J. Engelsma, *Battle for Sovereign Grace in the Covenant: The Declaration of Principles* (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2013), 23.

position of the Protestant Reformed Churches. But our correspondent writes as if the historical position of an unconditional covenant were still the teaching of the PRC today. However, a shift has taken place in the teaching of the Protestant Reformed Churches. While the PRC would still claim to teach “the Particular and Unconditional Covenant of God with believers and their elect offspring,” the PRC have introduced a condition into that covenant. The condition concerns the believer’s *experience* of God’s covenant friendship with him. In order for the believer to experience the covenant blessings of God, the believer must first do his activity of repenting and

obeying, which activities are means to the believer’s obtaining forgiveness and blessing.² Even though the PRC mostly avoid the word *condition* or *prerequisite* in their formulation of this doctrine, their covenant doctrine today is one of conditional covenant experience. To the grief of many, Hoeksema’s doctrine of an unconditional covenant, over which so much blood was necessarily shed, does not live on in the Protestant Reformed Churches today.

Our thanks to Miss Lubbers for the informative letter. It undoubtedly will add to the reader’s appreciation of *Believers and Their Seed*.

—AL



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²The Protestant Reformed doctrine of conditional covenant experience has been demonstrated at length in *Sword and Shield*. Although the reader could almost choose any issue at random in the first three volumes, see especially volume 2, number 17 (April 2022).

Article X. Mankind's Relation to the Fallen King

In a previous article we observed that we must consider Adam first as an individual, but secondly also in his relation to all mankind. Thus far our attention was called solely to Adam as an individual. We discussed his original relation to God and to the world in the midst of which the Almighty had given him a place, a relation that can be expressed no more correctly than by the term King-servant. Servant he was in relation to his Sovereign and Creator, king in relation to the world and its creatures. For that purpose he was created after the image of God, so that it might be said of him that he resembled his Maker, even though this resemblance was always limited on account of the finite form of the creature. That image of God was no superabundant power or glory, added to the being of man, but itself embraced man's entire being in body and soul. In all its fullness it adapted his whole nature and being to the God-ordained place he was to occupy. But he willfully wrung himself out of the relation in which he was placed and violated the law, as a result of which he became guilty before his Sovereign, totally depraved, a slave of sin, a subject of Satan. To this we may add that not only the king, but also the kingdom, experienced the effect of sin, as is evident from the fact that the earth was cursed for man's sake, and that, according to the apostle in Romans 8, the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain, stretching itself as it were in longing for the manifestation of the glory of the children of God.

Now, then, we must have our attention called to the consideration of the second question, namely: what is our relation to Adam?

What is the relation of all mankind to the first man? You realize immediately that by asking this question, we touch upon the important doctrine of original sin, for the simple reason that after the fall, the question comes down to this: What is the relation of all mankind to the fallen king, to the guilty and sinful first Adam? And as we are approaching this important, this most significant, but also most profound problem, I wish to assure you once more that I am fully conscious of the fact that of all doctrines, except perhaps that of predestination, the doctrine of original sin is most deeply abhorred by the world, and even to some extent by the Church. If the doctrine of total depravity meets with but little favor in our modern world, that of original sin, with all its implication, incurs the positive hatred and contempt of modern society still more. Of course, this is no matter of surprise to us whatever. On the contrary, if all things are normal in the world and in the Church, nothing else is to be expected than that the former will abhor the confession of the latter, and the more the Church will express itself, clearly and consciously, in regard to the truths of the Word of God, the more an unbelieving world will hate and despise and mock. This is true of every doctrine of the Church, the antagonism of the world is challenged along the whole line of the truth; but even as in the case of an extended battle line the fighting proceeds along the entire front, yet is to be witnessed in its greatest ferocity only at important and strategic points and positions, so also in the world-long battle line of the truth and the lie, there is uninterrupted antagonism along the entire

front, yet also here the battle concentrates occasionally upon positions that are deemed of more than ordinary significance by either side. One of these fundamental truths is that implied in the doctrine of original sin. Of such strategic importance is the maintenance of this truth, that I fail to see how the fortress of salvation can be held against the assaults of the enemy if this stronghold of original sin is surrendered. And hence, that we meet with antagonism, that the doctrine of original sin is deeply detested by the world in general, and sometimes but timidly confessed, not very often strongly emphasized, yea, even largely rejected even by the Church universal, need be no cause of surprise.

Still more intelligible this antagonism will become if we for just a moment touch upon the profoundest question as to the truth or falsity of this doctrine is decided ultimately and solely by the answer to the question: How did God create man? Did He make mankind according to the conception of individualism, a mass of separate individuals, without mutual coherence, without any judicial relation and without the slightest organic connection whatsoever? As we shall see in the future, the Lord willing, in that case original sin is fictitious, a product of the imagination. On the other hand, if mankind is not created as an inorganic accumulation of individual human beings, but if there is both judicial and organic relationship among the members of the human family, original sin is a truth impregnably strong. We do not as yet discuss the question itself. What we mean to point out is that back of the acceptance or rejection of the doctrine of original sin, lies the far more profound and important question whether we will accept the relationship between man and man, between the individual and the whole, between the first Adam and his posterity as God has ordained them. The deepest question is also here that of God's Sovereignty!

Do you accept the statement of Scripture that we are the clay and God is the Potter, and that the latter can sovereignly make of the former whatever He ordained in His Almighty decree?

Do you confess that it was solely God's business to determine how He would create man, whether He would make of him an organism or a mass of separate individuals? Then you will have no difficulty in regard to the doctrine of original sin. But, mark, that is not the attitude of the world, that is not the position it pleases unbelief to assume. The character of sin is rebellion, is self-determination, is self-maintenance, also over against the Sovereign God of heaven and earth. Sinful man is by no means inclined to accept the God-ordained relations and connections revealed in the Word. And, unless we are willing through the grace of God to bow absolutely before the Sovereignty of the Almighty, we shall in our discussion of this truth always bring the objection: God had no business creating me as He did, so that I have anything to do with the sin of my first father! Over against this objection there is but one answer, an answer unbelief will, of course, never accept: It was God's business absolutely, solely, sovereignly to determine how He would create the human race. He is the Potter and we are the clay is a figure which the Word of God employs more than once, and which must not be looked upon as a hyperbole, but which expresses only imperfectly the true relation between the Sovereign God and His creature. But as already remarked, the world will never accept this statement. Sin aims at self-determination and the sinful human being aims at determining sovereignly his own relation in the midst of the world, both to his God and to his fellowmen. It is a changing of the ordinances of God, the maintenance of the principle announced in Paradise by the Lier: "Ye shall be like God, knowing good and evil."

That is the deep sin, too, of the modern movement for the so-called emancipation of woman, of woman suffrage. It is based of a denial of the God-ordained place of woman. God has ordained her position as follows: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of every woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." (1 Cor. 11:3). God says: "For the man is not of the woman but the

woman of the man, for neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man” (I Cor. 11:8, 9). The Scriptures have it: “Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the Head of the Church, being Himself the savior of the body. But as the church is subject to their husbands in everything” (Eph. 5:22–24). But the world maintains boldly that the woman is the equal of the man, must not be subject unto him, that he must not rule over her, but that she is his equal, standing next to him also in relation to the State. Not the family is the unit in the State, but the individual man and woman. Individualism through and through, a denial of God’s ordinances in creation, rebellion against His Sovereignty. Once more, an unbelieving world will never accept the principle of the Sovereignty of God in creating mankind as He actually did, and for that reason it is not astounding at all that such doctrines as that of original sin can neither be understood nor accepted.

But let us turn to the subject under discussion.

First of all, let us try to get the question involved clearly before our consciousness. The relation there exists between the personal guilt of Adam and his personal fall into sin and misery is now perfectly clear. We all understand that it was an impossibility for Adam to return to the road of obedience and holiness after he once in wanton rebellion stretched forth his hand to eat of the forbidden tree. The very law forbade him. He was guilty. And being guilty, the law sentenced him to death. And death included the fall into total depravity and spiritual impotence. Sin, then, is the punishment for sin. That principle we must continually bear in mind. Adam’s sinful condition, equivalent to spiritual death, was the punishment of his first sin.

That is clear, you say. That is not so difficult to understand. The one sin of Adam was also his fall into sin and misery.

There would be no further difficulty if only we all had, in very fact, committed the same sin

as Adam. It would be easy to grasp, how I, how all men, how we all are just as perverse and wicked, just as dead in sin and misery, if only we all had personally committed the same sin. If we still had the same chance; if the tree were still placed in Paradise; if the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life were still there; if God came to each one of us individually with the identical command he gave to Adam; and if, then we just as willfully, yea even with the example of Adam before our eye committed the same act of rebellion and ate of the tree of which we might not eat, we would also be guilty, and being guilty, we would be worthy of death, worthy, too, of our sinful nature, dead in sin and misery. Then our personal sin would be the cause of our personally miserable condition. But this is not the case, you object. We were not born in Paradise, but in a world of sin. We did not receive the command of God that we might not eat of the tree; the thing was all finished before we knew anything about it. In a word, we have not sinned as Adam. And yet we bear his punishment, for we are born in sin and misery. For such is the case, is it not? A sinful condition is the punishment of a sinful deed, guilt is always before death. Now, then, it is clear that all humanity is in such a sinful condition. There is no exception to the rule. All humanity has died the spiritual death, there is not one good, no not so much as one. Altogether we have become unprofitable, unable to do any good and inclined to all evil. Let us have this clearly before our minds. Small and great, rich and poor, civilized or uncivilized, it makes no particle of difference, all are sinful, wicked and perverse, spiritually dead. It is a universal phenomenon. And if it is true, that spiritual death is first of all a punishment of sin, the question arises: Where lies the guilt of the whole human race, or of every individual, that justifies the infliction of this universal punishment of spiritual death?

That is the question.

In a sense, it is a problem that forces itself upon all that try to penetrate into the problem of existence, upon all that give themselves the

trouble of doing any thinking at all. Not only the Word of God, but also experience teaches the universality of the phenomenon of sin. No matter what our view may be of the character of sin, the fact remains that sin obtrudes upon our perception everywhere. There is no nation or tribe that is not subject to this terrible mistress. There is no page in secular history that does not speak of her despotism. There is no day within the range of our memory of which we could say that it was spent without sin in any form. Sin is universal. And the question that forces itself upon our attention is: how must this universality of sin be explained?

Do not say, that it is a question of minor importance. Many a theory has been built up to explain this phenomenon. But to find the correct answer to this question, the answer that is based on the Word of our God, is so important, that

without it you cannot even arrive at a clear conception of the wonders of God's way of salvation in Christ Jesus. The one is dependent upon the other. And the important practical result of our study of this problem ought to be this, that we begin to see how God Almighty in His eternal plan had adapted all things to His wonderful work of salvation.

It will reveal to us that, if man was created so that he could fall away and become rebellious, he also was made in such a wonderful manner that he could be saved, and that the world could be redeemed and delivered from the power of sin.

It will cause us to exclaim admiringly with the apostle Paul: "O, the depth of riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!"

—Holland, Mich.



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