

The Benefit of Having a Worthy Opponent

How the Theology of Seventeenth-Century Puritans Can Be Complemented by the Nineteenth-Century German Thought Known as the Mercersburg Theology

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Chapter Four

Shipwrecked, Rescued and Grounded

For those who have never waded into *The Economy of the Covenants* by Herman Witsius, one quickly comes to appreciate his ability to relate varied parts of Scripture to each other, providing many “aha!” moments as the reader’s understanding increases. Yet one may struggle also with some concepts such as where in the Bible a covenant of works is mentioned or described. If one is schooled in the Heidelberg Catechism, the question might arise as to why there are not plentiful allusions to the covenants in that solid, instructional, comforting, beloved, widely-accepted tool for discipleship which has provided guidance to an impressively wide group of believers since it was produced in the sixteenth century. The later Westminster Confession and Catechisms include the doctrine of the covenants as established and accepted doctrine creating a noteworthy distinction between the two most widely used guiding documents in Reformed communities.

On one occasion two published, well-known Lutheran professors of church history made a statement that led the hearer to believe that before the Puritans there was no such thing as covenant theology and that it was an invention of the Puritan movement. How could something so dear to modern-day evangelical Reformed theology have been missing throughout the history of the church? To further raise concern, there does not seem to be a great deal of unity on what to call the alleged covenant established between God and Adam in Eden. Some call it an Adamic covenant, some the covenant of works (which is rejected by others who claim that faith was required on Adam’s part and not just raw obedience, maintaining that Adam’s failure was one of faith when he chose to believe Satan and follow Eve), some the covenant of creation or life or nature.

Philip Schaff believed that the church is organic in nature, and that while it never grows or develops into something other than what it was constituted by Christ and His Spirit to be from the beginning, it does mature and develop in its

understanding of Scripture and of itself. He explained that while the church brought to the sixteenth century the developed doctrine of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ and the incarnation, error forced it to develop further its soteriology.¹ While Schaff was not keen on many aspects of Puritanism, could it be that his theory regarding the organic nature of the church can assist in understanding the development of covenant theology? Such an approach would view the covenant of works as not a new invention but a development in the church's understanding of God's use of covenants in unfolding the salvation of His people. So to further investigate the matter, much of the following will focus on the significance of events in the Garden of Eden recorded in the first chapters of Genesis, specifically attending to original sin and the covenant of works.

The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended

Robert Jenson recognizes Jonathan Edwards, a Calvinistic, New England Congregationalist, as a founder of American evangelicalism. Edwards lived from 1703-1758, and Jenson reckons him to be among the top six thinkers in his century.² In another place that particular author recognized Edwards as America's greatest theologian.³ Many others share his high regard for Edwards.

Edwards wrote *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended* near the end of his life. It was published posthumously (1758). In it he answers a Dr. John Taylor of Norwich who had published *The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination* (1740). The third edition, published in 1746, became influential in the growing Unitarian movement of the time.

At the beginning of Edwards' work the reader is called to take interest in the seriousness of this topic which infiltrates and dooms all members of the human race. The author said that "All mankind constantly, in all ages, without fail in any one instance, run into that moral evil, which is in effect their own utter and eternal perdition in a total privation of God's favour, and suffering of his vengeance and wrath."⁴ He defined original sin as "innate sinful depravity of the heart" which encompassed the depravity of the whole of human nature and the imputation of Adam's first sin which made all who are descended from Adam by normal means liable for punishment.⁵ To explain his point he used an illustration of a man living in the king's palace and in line to receive honor, but he violates the king's rule and dishonors him. Would the king's punishment affect that man only or also his

¹ Schaff, *The Principle of Protestantism*, p. 78.

² Robert W. Jenson, "Mr Edwards' Affections," *Dialog* 24, no. 3 (Sum 1985): p. 169.

³ Robert W. Jenson, *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 3.

⁴ Jonathan Edwards, "The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* Vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011, reprinted from an 1834 edition published in Great Britain), p. 146.

⁵ *Ibid.*

heirs? Certainly his heirs would not receive what he forfeited in being evicted from his position.⁶ Adam was guilty not only of breaking a law but of breaching a covenant and thus ruining a relationship with God, dismissing himself and his posterity from God's favor.

By these explanations, Edwards meant to confute all who wish to see humanity as inherently virtuous by nature. Such opponents of Edwards, including Dr. Taylor, would propose that an individual's good deeds far outweigh whatever sins may be credited to him. Dr. Taylor cautioned against examining a prison and the convicts found behind its walls to make an assessment about the whole of humanity.

Against such attempts to salvage the notion of a generally good nature belonging to humanity because it contains some praiseworthy elements, Edwards argued that evil in society would be far worse if it were not for God's merciful hand restraining it. The fact of universal divine justice being foretold in the Bible is evidence that all of humanity is polluted and corrupt. Unless God's grace would intervene in the normal course of human life and interrupt with divine power the constant sinning, all humans would be condemned to eternal death and torment.⁷

Edwards set out to prove that all are universally born into the world destined to commit sins. He cites Scriptures such as 1 Kings 8:46 ("there is no one who does not sin"); Galatians 3:10; Psalm 143:2 ("no one living is righteous"); etc.

On the other side of the argument, in Dr. Taylor's attempts to prove that the human race is not in such a predicament as Edwards claims, he argues that the law was and always must be a law useful for obtaining life.⁸ This, of course, implies that humans are not so completely polluted by sin as to prevent them from complying with God's requirements.

Arguments such as Taylor offers demand that alternate explanations for the plain meaning of various Scriptures passages must be developed. For example, Romans 3 says that justification comes by the promise of God and not by means of keeping the law. Romans 8:3 explains that because of the weakness of the flesh the law was rendered weak and unable to justify. The earlier theologian John Owen maintained that the law was originally to conduct the human race to life and only accidentally did it become the instrument which acquainted humans with death. Taylor's failure to grasp the extent of the pollution of sin in humanity caused him to depart on an aberrant path which separated him from a Biblically orthodox understanding of the law and created much confusion in his various attempts to formulate how the law remains useful still.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 147-148.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

Taylor acknowledged a powerful tendency toward sin present in human nature, but he defended innate goodness by naming this regular yielding to temptation as being only a minor infirmity or defect. This implies that the real cause of sin must involve one's environment and the pressure or stimulus that it presents. It seemed inconceivable to him that humans could be born polluted. Certainly the surrounding world must account for any pollution that envelops a person. When Dr. Taylor read that God pronounced the world good, he believed that God's assessment was still valid, even after Adam's sin.⁹

Edwards responded by changing the question from whether there is a good balance in the world between good and bad deeds, to whether or not humans are regarded as being in a state of innocence and righteousness and favor with God, or if there is evidence that God abhors Adam's descendants as existing in a state of sin and guilt. He argued that a ship cannot be classified as good if it is not seaworthy enough to cross the Atlantic Ocean but is able to stay afloat for a majority of the trip.¹⁰ Humans are surely corrupted in morality because it is impossible to find one who can fulfill the law perfectly which is God's requirement for being accepted. There is no evidence from Scripture that any number of seemingly good deeds can cancel out demerit caused by violation of God's law. One sin yields eternal demerit. Edwards asks if a wife could be recognized as good if she fulfilled her intimate marital duties to her husband more than she did to other men with whom she slept.¹¹

In Chapter One, Section Four the reader finds Edwards' argument for total depravity from observing the human race and realizing that all sin as soon as they are able even in spite of the example and influence of godly parents.¹² This demonstration of human sinfulness then continues progressively until death, just as an acorn matures into a mighty oak, unless the hell-bent person is interrupted by divine grace.¹³ Humans sin because they are born sinners. (See James 3:2 – "we all stumble in many things" and Proverbs 20:9 – "Who can say, 'I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?'".)

Another instructive point Edwards made is that true obedience is relational and is rooted in love for God and not the mere fulfilment of duties. God, he said, deserves a love equal to His infinite perfection. We demonstrate by our sinful disrespect for God and His law that we by nature are incapable of truly fulfilling the law by loving God as we should.¹⁴ Further, by lack of gratitude we fail to exhibit the love and worship God deserves. We degrade God when we esteem Him to be of less value than earthly objects. When love for God exceeds love for

⁹ Ibid., pp. 150-151.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 151-152.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 152.

¹² See argument on p. 171.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 153-154.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 154.

competing interests, then virtue will outshine evil affections in our lives.¹⁵ Who can show by his actions that he is by nature good and loving toward God and his affections are not fettered to idols?

Compiling yet more evidence for total depravity Edwards makes observations about human foolishness and claims that corruption manifests itself in folly and stupidity in religion. Citing Romans 1:28 he explains that even though ample knowledge of God is presented to humanity, each sinful heart suppresses truth and refuses to worship properly. The author asserts that even in the most refined cultures, noted for their higher learning, absurdity is the product of their citizens. By absurdity he means idolatry, superstition and evil behavior.¹⁶ Such phenomena are universal and can be identified in every known civilization of all ages. Proverbs 8:36 says, “But he who sins against me [wisdom] wrongs his own soul; all those who hate me love death.” Certainly this verse references what Edwards calls absurdity.

Dr. Taylor attempts to reinterpret the empirical evidence by pointing to Christians who love God and devote themselves to His service for His glory as evidence that humans are not really that hopeless.¹⁷ But does Matthew 7:13-14 not state that the gate of salvation is narrow and that there are few which find it? Ecclesiastes 9:3 warns, “Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.” At times even Taylor must admit along with Stephen (Acts 7:51-53) that Israel’s history demonstrated a greater adherence to wickedness than godliness.¹⁸ Edwards noted that when Jesus sent out the disciples as sheep in the midst of wolves (Matthew 10:16-17) His description of humanity hinted nothing of innocence or freedom from depravity.¹⁹

Edwards’ opponent crafted a creative explanation for the consequences of Adam’s sin that God enacted. He saw those consequences as the tool of a benevolent Father who disciplines His children to teach them the vanity or emptiness of all earthly things so as to entice the erring beloved back onto the correct path. Edwards countered that such a theory might be effective if there was no existing bias in humanity which constantly inclines all toward sin. Man is not capable of changing merely through external stimulation. His explanation included the fact that Adam was alive two-thirds of the time from the beginning of the world to the flood and was able to tell of Eden and so entice sinners to follow after God and love Him, yet there is no evidence His testimony restrained evil. The same is true of Noah’s preaching. Was there evidence that God’s judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah produced a revival? Or the miracles of Moses’ time when God was proven to be superior to all other gods? One could add to this list

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 156.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 157.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 160.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 161.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 162.

the glory of God displayed in the rule of King David and his son Solomon, the discipline of the Babylonian exile, Daniel's experience and testimony, fulfilled prophecy, etc. The nations (including Israel) became hardened. Dr. Taylor's theory does not hold up at all. Christ spoke of the Jews in His day who witnessed His miracles as worse than the wicked residents of ancient Sodom and Gomorrah.²⁰ He had set a good example for them and would have been a powerful influence by modeling love and humility and self-denial, meekness and patience.²¹

Dr. Taylor attempted to assert that humans today retain the same freedom to choose to serve God as Adam had.²² He believed that sin could not rightly be named sin if it did not proceed from our own choice. No one, he said, could be credited with sin that he did not commit and was allegedly born with.²³ He argued that the fact that sin is so rampant in the culture we observe fails to prove that all humans are corrupt by nature because Adam also sinned, and he was not corrupt at the time of creation.²⁴ In other words, we may sin *like* Adam, but not *because of* him.

Edwards' firm response was quite logical. He explained that if one year produces a bad harvest of a certain type of fruit, the environment may be blamed. But if all fruit trees of that type in all places and times produced rotten fruit, the proof seems conclusive that there is a fatal defect in that type of tree. Continuously repeated actions stem from fixed principles.²⁵ There is not one human who has ever used the free will which Dr. Taylor alleges to choose to please God perfectly.

Edwards points to universal mortality even affecting infants as evidence of original sin. Death is referenced repeatedly in Holy Scripture as a punishment.²⁶ Here Dr. Taylor's ideas about affliction and death are elaborated further. He believes that these consequences of sin are merely meant to assist humans in curbing their pride and ambition and fleshly desires. He denies punishment as the primary reason for death. But why would such an incentive to obedience be executed on infants? And if death is such a benefit, why would Christ come to remove it, and why would it be called our enemy (1 Corinthians 15:22ff.)?²⁷

Edwards draws the reader's attention to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham pleaded for God to restrain Himself and not destroy the righteous with the wicked. In answer to those petitions, God spared Lot and his family, but He

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 163-167.

²¹ Ibid., p. 171.

²² Ibid., p. 167.

²³ Ibid., p. 216.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 168.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 168-169.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 173.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 174.

did not spare the infants of the unbelievers. God said He would spare the entire city if ten righteous persons could be identified among the ranks of citizens. Apparently no ten could be found, indicating that the infants were not considered righteous by God.²⁸ This same argument could be used concerning the infants that perished in the flood or during the Canaanite conquest. Proverbs 22:15 teaches plainly that foolishness exists already in the heart of a child. Genesis 8:21 claims that the earth was wicked, and each man from his youth was no exception. The Hebrew word for youth used here refers to all of the period called youth, even the earliest years. Psalm 58:3 says “The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.”²⁹

In Part Two of the work Edwards begins to examine particular Scriptures to learn about original sin and the continuing significance of what happened in Eden. This brings him to interact quickly with Dr. Taylor’s ideas about the creation of Adam. Dr. Taylor dislikes the idea that God may do things without human consent. He resents the idea that God would create the first man holy. He opposes original righteousness on the grounds that he believes man must have a choice to determine his own destiny. He would prefer to hold that Adam was created without any disposition for or against God.

Taylor’s thinking grew out of an Enlightenment context which sought to downplay revelation as an authority in determining human destiny. Reason was elevated to the supreme position of steering human lives. The autonomy of the individual was to be preserved at all costs by Enlightenment adherents. During this time rationality dismissed much Biblical truth as needless and as a nuisance that hampered an individual reaching full human potential.³⁰ Further, Taylor believed he was defending God’s glory by arguing against original sin which, if accepted, seems to present God as unjust, cruel and tyrannical and to lead people to blasphemous thoughts of Him.³¹

Edwards taught that Adam was created with both inferior and superior principles implanted in him. Inferior principles included self-love, appetites, passions, love of liberty and honor and pleasure. These inferior principles can be recognized as the flesh. The superior principles were righteousness and holiness, given because of the Father’s love for His highest creation. The superior principles were supplied by the Holy Spirit and were thus imparted through initial union/communion with God. They are called spiritual in distinction from what is named the flesh. These superior principles were given to rule the heart. Tragically, when man sinned these superior principles which were the grounds for real dignity, life, happiness and glory, were withdrawn and no longer ruled the human heart because communion with God was lost, and the Holy Spirit was no

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 175-176.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 187-189. See also David’s statement in Psalm 51:5 about being sinful from conception.

³⁰ Andrew C. Russell, “Polemical Solidarity: John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards Confront John Taylor on Original Sin” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 47, no. 2 (Fall 2012): p. 74.

³¹ Ibid., p. 77.

longer in residence there. This left man in darkness, corruption and ruin – merely flesh without spirit. At this the inferior principles began to reign because there were no superior principles to serve. The result is that from that time on man’s private affections took the place of God.

Our author described these inferior principles as being similar to a fire in a house. Fire is a good servant but a bad master. In believers who are restored to union with God and who have the Holy Spirit living within them, the spirit and flesh now war as the flesh does not wish to relinquish its previous position of control.³² What has been passed on to us is a state of being born with the flesh in control which leads us to concur by nature with Adam’s rebellion.³³

The real struggle here is whether a choice to obey makes one righteous or whether a righteous choice springs from a virtuous disposition. If Adam’s choice was made available to him without any inherent, governing principle of righteousness within him, and he had chosen to obey, would that truly have been love for God? If the virtue of an act is determined by the cause, and the cause is arbitrary choice as Taylor claimed it was, then are there really grounds to establish proven virtue? Dr. Taylor credits man with the ability to create from nothing virtue in himself. Edwards refers to this as Dr. Taylor’s “self-determining power of the will.”³⁴ Edwards in essence argues that a completely blank slate cannot write itself. He maintains that Adam was obliged from the first moment of his life to act rightly, and since he did up until he ate the fruit, he must’ve been created with the inclination to righteousness. The inclination to sin was incited by Satan’s lie. If Adam was created to live life properly oriented toward God, then his punishment makes good sense. Not only is an action judged right or wrong, but so is its motive. Edwards questions how if human nature were not created with a disposition to relish some things and reject others as odious one could claim to have a will at all.³⁵ If one follows Dr. Taylor’s logic, then one could argue that Adam was at a disadvantage to modern men because he did not have the external stimuli of knowing what death and suffering is which Taylor alleges is a part of God’s love to steer individuals to make proper choices. Ecclesiastes 7:29 says that “God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.”

In Section Three (of Part Two), in continuing to consider the early chapters of Genesis Edwards defends the idea that God dealt with Adam as representative of the entire human race. Edwards anticipates Dr. Taylor’s counter argument that God’s words to Adam make no reference to his descendants. The Puritan author points out that in Genesis 1:26 when God is quoted as saying, “Let Us make man in Our image,” He also says, “and let *them* have dominion over the fish of the sea

³² Edwards, pp. 217-219.

³³ Ibid., p. 221.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 178.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 179.

. . . .”³⁶ God was treating humanity as a whole, together represented in Adam. How could the ground be cursed without future generations being affected?

According to his attempt to protect the idea that contemporary men and women are born innocent, Dr. Taylor insists that the threat of death did not extend beyond Adam to any other generation. He goes so far as to say that death is not a privation but a punishment as a “means of a more happy existence and a great increase of good.”³⁷

Edwards finds no agreement with Taylor, pointing out that the tone of God’s dealing with sin and the ominously flaming swords of the cherubim were not expressions of fatherly kindness. Dr. Taylor was attempting so hard to preserve the notion of a principle of innocence in all humanity who then have freedom to choose for or against God, that he begins to use the language of Scripture in unnatural ways. Edwards points out that Lamech named his son Noah (Genesis 5:29) because he believed that the baby would bring comfort to all those who toil under the curse begun in Adam’s day. Lamech understood that the curse was not just for Adam but for all humanity.

Edwards moves through later Scriptures to amass evidence of total depravity. When he cites such verses as Psalm 14:2-3 – “The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one,” the way Taylor attempts to preserve free will and inherent innocence for humanity is by suggesting that the Holy Spirit did not mean such blanket statements to actually apply to all people but only to a particular group that was in the author’s mind at the time. Edwards unfolds this line of reasoning further in his later treatment of Romans.³⁸ Conspicuously absent are any statements in Scripture which speak of humans as inherently innocent or holy in their natural state. Instead, 1 Corinthians 2:14-15 equates natural man with carnal man and identifies both as opposed to spiritual man. This means that man in his natural state is now a stranger to true holiness and virtue.³⁹ Before conversion, Christians were by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3).

When attention is turned to Romans 5:12-21 which teaches that death came to all through Adam’s sin, Taylor maintains that death here is only physical whereby the body returns to dust even though he says that death in 6:23 as the wages of sin is eternal. Contrary once again to Taylor, Edwards argues that death in Romans 5 refers to the whole of death – that is, its temporal, spiritual and eternal

³⁶ Ibid., p. 183.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 184.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 187, 194-195. Compare also verses such as Jeremiah 17:9; Ecclesiastes 9:3; Matthew 16:23; Job 15:16; John 14:17; 15:18-19; 17:9; 1 John 5:19.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 193.

dimensions.⁴⁰ Employing creative interpretative technique, Taylor reasons that this passage does not teach that Adam unleashed pollution on all humanity, but merely happens to chronicle which member of the human race sinned first and the consequences he received which did not extend beyond himself but were exclusively his. He was oblivious to the organic nature of the union of all humanity with Adam which can be illustrated by a plant whereby if the root is corrupted, all the branches will be as well.⁴¹

There is a slight sense where Taylor comes close to orthodox doctrine regarding Adam's sin. Breaking the law merely as a rule brings guilt on Adam only as an individual. That simple violation of the law is not imputed to the rest of the race, Edwards said, any more than his other sins were imputed to us. But Taylor rejected that Adam served also as a federal representative of the human race, and what was passed on to all after him was the broken relationship and corruption of nature, the loss of original righteousness. This meant that death also was passed on to all. After he broke the covenant, he stood before God simply as a moral individual with personal obligations.⁴²

Taylor persists in insisting that physical death is a favor from God given on the occasion of Adam's sin but not as a consequence. However, if death in Romans 5 is regarded as a favor from God, the passage does not make logical sense because grace and righteousness through Christ are opposed to that death. How could they be properly pictured as accomplishing the same good purposes of God as death would in Taylor's doctrine? There is no evidence elsewhere that the consequences of sin are received as a favor.⁴³ While Taylor credits death to the love and grace of God, the Apostle Paul credits it to Adam, as he also credits life to Christ. Taylor says that both death and life are a part of the goodness Christ dispenses to sway people toward obedience.

Since Taylor reduces death in Romans 5 to physical death only, he likewise reduces justification to a guarantee of a restoration of life at the general resurrection of both the just and the unjust which will be granted to all people.⁴⁴ He believed that the benefit of Christ and the gift of righteousness helped believers in some vague way. Maintaining that all are born innocent, his view of the significance of the shedding of blood was much weaker than the orthodox understanding that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Hebrews 9:15f.).⁴⁵

While Taylor acknowledged some form of a covenant established between God and Adam in Eden, he believed that that arrangement was abolished on the

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 199-200.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 221, 218, footnote.

⁴² Ibid., p. 218.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 200-201.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 204.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 211.

occasion of Adam's sin. Remembering that he believed that physical death was actually a benefit to those born in innocence to deter them from sin, the vague benefit of Christ was then added to the benefit of death. Again, the compounding benefits in Taylor's scheme seem to be competing and not complementary benefits. And it is difficult to see how his understanding squares with passages such as Luke 19:10 which plainly reveals that the Son of man came to seek and to save what was truly lost. How could this be if there are no universal consequences to Adam's sin? It is not clear then from what exactly the Messiah would actually save His people.⁴⁶ Galatians 2:21 teaches that if righteousness could come by way of the law, then Christ died in vain. Yet Dr. Taylor opined that humans retained their full capacity to carry out their duty before God. That apparently means that one who chooses to keep the law (hypothetically speaking) would have no need of Christ's sacrifice. Seeming to disagree with Paul's letter to the Galatians (just cited) Taylor explained that the work of Christ merely increased an individual's talents, light, advantages, means and motives so that by his own will and choice he may be righteous.

This is what Dr. Taylor means when he appropriates the term regeneration for his own purposes. He does not see it as a change of state from natural sinfulness and pollution to righteousness in Christ, indicating movement from a state of death into life. Instead, he believes that it simply refers to one reaching her full potential of fully expressing her own true natural powers in holiness, living a divine life.⁴⁷

It is difficult to reconcile the ubiquitous theme of repentance and conversion in the New Testament (e.g., Acts 3:19) with Taylor's teaching. Repentance and conversion are linked with baptism, and baptism signifies a change from deadness in sin to walking in newness of life (Romans 6:3-5). This Biblical language promotes an understanding of salvation being a rescue from a state of doom and helplessness. Likewise, circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 10:6) refers to transplanting a new nature into the one receiving it (cf. Ezekiel 36:25-27). Colossians 2:11-12 refers to the putting off of the old man and putting on the new while Romans 6:6 speaks of the old self as being crucified as Ephesians 4:22-24 encourages the believer with direction about putting on the new man which is created in righteousness and true holiness.

One begins to tire of Taylor's inventive solutions as he defends his position. He makes the term "new man" refer to the church and not to individual transformation.⁴⁸ But the Bible is clear that the language of the old passing away and being made a new creature in Christ refer to individual believers (Ezekiel 11:9; 36:26).

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 212.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 213.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 215.

Dr. Taylor resented being represented by Adam. However, if one acknowledges God as Creator, then one must also acknowledge His right to treat humanity as a single unit in the first covenant.⁴⁹ This examination of Taylor's arguments seems at times tedious and taxing on the modern mind. His arguments though often sound familiar as many evangelical Christians foster much misunderstanding of the covenants and allow what seems rational to trump what is revealed in Scripture. What one is left with after wading through this thorough treatment of Taylor's work is a powerfully convincing compendium of Biblical teaching from Edwards regarding human helplessness and hopelessness in our natural state. The stage is set to learn of the rescue that God implemented and to receive further explanation of the covenant relationship between God and Adam which provides the necessary background for grasping original sin.

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⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 224.