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Is An Alien A Sinner?

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By an “alien” I mean one who has not obeyed the gospel, and is therefore not in the kingdom of Christ. Is such a one a sinner in the sight of God? Do not dismiss this as an idle foolish question; for it has to do with the very basis, or reason, for the scheme of human redemption. When Jesus came into the world, Gentiles were “*alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise*” (Eph. 2:12). Were the Gentiles sinners at this time? If not, neither are they sinners now. Jesus came to call sinners to repentance; does that call now come to Gentiles and Jews? Are you wondering why I am saying these things? It is because of the theory held by some brethren, and also by the followers of Russell and Scofield.

Years ago a good brother, in answering a question in a gospel paper, said that it did not make any difference how many times aliens married and divorced; for they are not in covenant relationship with the Lord and therefore disobeyed no law of God. If that be so, how can they be regarded as sinners? And more, in God’s sight are aliens married? If I mistake not, Mormons say Gentiles, or aliens are under no law of God. How then do they become sinners? One brother said that they become sinners when they hear the gospel and disobey it. If that be so, then the gospel makes more sinners than it prevents, for the greater number who hear the gospel disobey it. Besides, if people become sinners only when they hear and disobey the gospel, then the one who disobeys the gospel as soon as he hears it is never an alien sinner, for he does not become a sinner by disobeying it. Cornelius and those with him, and also the jailor, obeyed as soon as they learned what to do. They did not have the least inclination to disobey. If the theory is correct, they were not sinners at all. From what, then, were Cornelius and the jailor saved?

One preacher in a sermon which I heard, said, “When a man becomes a Christian, he obligates himself to do right.” Look at that statement closely and see what is implied in it. If the statement is true, then a man who is not a Christian is under no obligation to do right—no obligation even to believe! A man does no wrong when he is under no obligation. Hence, if the statement is true, an alien is not a sinner. Well, the Lord will not damn a man who is not a sinner. Why then should any one obligate himself to do right by becoming a Christian?

Several years ago I had a debate with a follower of Pastor Russell. One position I affirmed was that baptism is for the remission of sins to Jew and Gentile alike. My opponent believed that baptism was for the remission of sins to the Jews but not to the Gentiles. If you do not see the grounds for his contention, you will see it later. But in his contention he was more consistent than the brethren I have mentioned; for according to their theory, how can an alien, a Gentile, have any sins to be remitted?

In Scofield’s forward to the book of Acts he said this:

“Acts is in two chief parts: In the first section (1:1;9:43) Peter is the prominent personage, Jerusalem is the center, and the ministry is to the Jews. Already in covenant relationship with Jehovah, they had sinned in rejecting Jesus Christ. The preaching, therefore, was directed to that point, and repentance (i.e. a change of mind) was demanded...”

In the second division (10:1;23:31) Paul is prominent, a new center is established in Antioch and the ministry is chiefly to the Gentiles, who, as strangers from the covenants of promise (Eph. 2:12) had to “*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*” to be saved

Here you have the theory stated plainly. The Jews had sinned in rejecting Christ, for they were in covenant relations with the Lord, and therefore needed to repent; but the Gentiles had not been in covenant relations with the Lord, but were “*strangers from the covenants of promise*” and therefore they did not need to repent, but only to believe to be saved. But if the Gentiles were not sinners, from what were they saved by believing? But no matter who advocates this foolish theory, it is so crooked that it is bound to twist itself around over itself at some point. No non-Christian today, whether Jew or Gentile, has ever been in covenant relations with the Lord. If the theory is true, no man needs to repent, neither can he be baptized for the remission of sins.

It is true that the Gentiles were not under the covenant at Sinai, but they were sinners. Jesus said to Pilate, “*He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.*” Pilate, though not as sinful as the Jewish counsel, was himself a sinner, and yet he was not a Jew; he was an alien, an alien sinner. Paul was sent to the Gentiles “*to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and in inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me.*” (Acts 26:16-18). The Gentiles were in the power of Satan and needed remission of sins. Could they receive remission of sins without repentance?

Read the list of sins charged against Gentiles. (See Rom. 1:18-32). Both Jews and gentiles were all under sin (Rom. 3:9). Paul charges that Gentiles in the past were disobedient to God (Rom. 11:30). He also says, “*we being Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles.*” (Gal. 2:15). There is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles — “*all have sinned.*” (Rom. 3:23). Jews are not now in covenant relationship with God anymore than Gentiles are. If people can not sin unless they are in covenant relationship with the Lord, then there are no sinners outside the church! A man would have to become a Christian before he could sin. Get such an idea into the mind of the alien, and what have you? When he hears the command to believe, he can consistently say, “Why should I do what God says? I am not under His jurisdiction.” Or, if a man obligates himself to do right when he becomes a Christian, he is under no obligation to do anything that is right as long as he is not a Christian. Get an alien imbued with such ideas, what then? On what grounds can you who hold such theories appeal to any one to become a Christian? So far as I can see you have no ground for such appeal. I know of no theory more absurd and vicious.

But one may ask, “What about I John 3:4?” The common versions reads: “*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is a transgression of the law.*” More accurately the **American Standard** Versions reads: “*Every one that doth sin*

doth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness” To be lawless is to be without law — without being governed by law. Can a man without revealed law sin? Paul says, “*For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law.*” (Rom. 2:12). Paul here was referring to Gentiles. They did not have a revealed law, nor were they in covenant with the Lord, yet they sinned. John further defines sin: “All unrighteousness is sin” (I John 5:17). In the long lists of sin Paul charges against the Gentiles is the sin of “*being filled with all unrighteousness.*” (Rom. 2:29). It is plain therefore that any rational being who fails to do right sins, whether he is in covenant relationship with the Lord or not. Some things are right, and some things are wrong within themselves. The moral law applies to all human beings, and cannot be disregarded without guilt, nor can a foolish theory make it of no effect.

But why go on? More than enough has been said to convince any thinking person; and if a man will shut his eyes to truth no amount of reasoning will make him think.

*** — R.L. Whiteside

So True! “It is not enough just to trust. You must have your trust in the right one.”