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STUDIES
IN THE
SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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Studies in the Scriptures appeared without interruption from 1922 to 1953, each issue including six to eight articles addressing a different topic in a series. While virtually unknown to the Christian world when he died, his writings continue to grow in their influence upon God’s people around the world, through their clarity, careful exposition, and Christ-centeredness.

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MARVELS

(As in the English, so in the Hebrew and Greek, “marvels” and “wonders” are synonymous, and therefore throughout this article, we shall render the term uniformly, instead of following the Authorized Version.)

Marvels! We are literally surrounded by them. We are ourselves the subjects of them, both in our beings and in the common experiences of our daily lives, by which we mean that innumerable tokens of the divine handiwork confront us on every hand. To begin with, the reader need look no farther than himself, for in his own body he beholds something which infinitely surpasses the skill of the most curious, delicate, and complicated piece of machinery that was ever invented by man. Good reason has he to say, “I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and marvelously made” (Psa 139:14)—“As anyone must admit, who has with any care examined the structure and texture of the human body. The exact symmetry and just proportion of all its parts, their positions and usefulness. Every bone, muscle, artery, nerve and fibre is nicely framed and placed to answer its designed end. Particularly the eye and ear, the exquisite make of them for sight and sound having filled the most diligent inquirers into nature with amazement” (John Gill, 1697-1771). Justly may we be astonished at these living temples—the composition of every part, the harmony of all together.

There is very much more in the Scriptures upon this subject than might be inferred from the writings of God’s servants and the converse of His people. The following verses from the Psalms may be regarded as representative ones. “I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvelous works” (Psa 9:1). “Many, O LORD my God, are thy marvelous works which thou hast done” (Psa 40:5). “Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth marvelous things” (Psa 72:18). “Thou art great, and doest marvelous things: thou art God alone” (Psa 86:10). “The heavens shall

praise thy marvels, O LORD” (Psa 89:5). “Declare his glory among the heathen, his marvels among all people” (Psa 96:3). “Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his marvelous works to be remembered (Psa 111:4). “To him alone who doeth great marvels” (Psa 136:4). In attempting to write upon such passages as these, we take up a theme to which the profoundest mind and ablest pen could do but scant justice.

“The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein” (Psa 111:2). There is something in the divine handiwork surprising and that strikes an awe upon us. God’s actions and productions are like Himself—unique, perfect, wonderful. They demonstrate that He is possessed of omniscience and omnipotence. None of the works that deluded souls have ascribed to their idols can in any wise be compared with the prodigies of the august JEHOVAH. His *doings* are grand and mighty, as worthy of our best attention as are His *sayings*. They are not few in number, but incalculable. They are not confined to a single sphere, but are equally evident in every realm. They were not performed only before the past generations of our ancestors, but are being done before our own eyes. Note the present tense of the verb in, “For thou art great, and *doest* marvelous things” (Psa 86:10)—they are transpiring before us now. Look upon the bursting buds of spring or the maturing fruits of autumn. Behold the glorious sunset, the star-spangled heavens, the white-mantled trees in winter.

The creation of all things out of nothing, and the bringing of them into their form and order, and especially the formation of man out of the dust of the ground in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-27, 2:7), are altogether beyond our comprehension. The immense universe is full of the glory of its Architect, and the world in which we live is stored with innumerable wonders and beauties which bear witness to God’s attributes. “At the first glance we perceive a majesty and greatness in all the works of God. There is nothing mean or trivial to be anywhere discovered in them. If we have any taste for sublime grandeur and beauty, we shall take peculiar pleasure in investigating the works of creation and providence, and in admiring the discoveries which are made of the divine wisdom, power, and goodness, in every one of them—the minute as well as the immense” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). Yet, how few of the sons of men deem them worthy of their serious attention. As Bishop Horne remarked, “Angels admire and adore, where men will not deign to cast an eye or employ a thought.”

Not only in the heavens and the earth, but we behold “his marvels in *the deep*” (Psa 107:24)—its flux and reflux, the bounds which He has set to it by His decree, the myriad creatures therein and their continued sustenance. The provision which God has made for the countless number of His creatures on land, in sea, and in air, His providential care in nourishing and preserving them all from day to day, should fill us with wonderment and praise. These are such stupendous undertakings as no one else can match. Equally wonderful is the divine *government*. That the sun, moon and stars keep their stations. That cold and heat, summer and winter, seed time and harvest, are as they were from the beginning. That men are endowed with different inclinations and abilities for the common good of all, some desiring and qualified to be farmers or fishermen, others manual labourers or craftsmen, teachers or physicians. Each man has his own distinct talent and calling. That God confines sin within due bounds and makes it work to His glory. If we were attentive in

marking the operations of God in the ordinary occasions of life, we should be filled with admiration and awe, for, whatever instruments He may use, God is the great Agent.

But the greatest marvel is the divine work of *redemption*. That transcends all the other doings and deeds of the Almighty. Its design was laid in infinite wisdom and its execution was by infinite power. What an amazing thing that the Holy One should determine to redeem vile sinners, and fix upon the scheme which He did, selecting His own Son to be the Redeemer of some out of every tribe and nation. "O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvelous things: his right hand...hath gotten him the victory" (Psa 98:1). JEHOVAH the Saviour is the subject of that song. He became incarnate, the true Immanuel, God with us. So wonderful was this that a multitude of the heavenly hosts descended and acclaimed the same over the plains of Bethlehem (Luk 2:13-14). The mighty acts which He performed were the works given Him to do as proofs of His Deity and Messiahship. Such miracles as His walking upon the sea (Mat 14:25), stilling the tempest by a word of His lips (Mat 8:24-27), feeding a vast multitude with a few loaves and fishes (Mat 14:16-21), giving sight to the blind (Joh 9:1-7), and raising the dead (Joh 11:1-45), filled the beholders with astonishment. In redemption, His glory shines forth and His grace is displayed in an unprecedented manner, putting away the sins of His people by the sacrifice of Himself. What a truly amazing thing it was that the Lord of life should expire, that He conquered death by dying, vanquished the opposing powers of darkness, and gained such a triumph as none beside Him could.

The *consequences* of Christ's redemption unto all eternity are equally marvelous. These are the operations of and the fruits produced by the Holy Spirit. The works of the new creation are even more remarkable than those of the old. The finite mind is incapable of comprehending how an adult person can experience a new birth, be delivered from a death in sin, and quickened into newness of life. So, too, the Spirit makes the obstinate willing in the day of His power, slays their enmity, and brings the one-time lion to lie down with the lamb. Equally miraculous is His maintenance of a work of grace within hearts so full of corruption, preserving it despite the hatred and opposition of the world, and all the snares of the devil.

"Blessed be the LORD: for he hath showed me his marvelous *kindness*" (Psa 31:21), which is free, sovereign, discriminating. It is better than life, and passes knowledge. It is set upon men, not angels; some, not all; and they, many of the worst and vilest, and all by nature the children of wrath. That marvelous kindness was displayed by choosing them in Christ, putting them in His hand, making a covenant with Him for them. It is seen in His saving them with an everlasting salvation. The entire life of a Christian is marvelous in his eyes—in the answers he receives to prayer, in being daily loaded with benefits, supported under trials, assisted in his warfare, delivered from perils, solaced in afflictions, in his growth in grace, and foretastes of heaven.

"Thy *testimonies* are marvelous" (Psa 119:129) in revealing to us many things of deepest importance which could not be ascertained from any other source. In the discoveries which the Word makes of the Persons in the Godhead, Their distinctive offices and glorious perfections. In the light it throws on the mysteries of life, and the secrets of eternal happiness. In the unerring guide it provides for us in this dark world. In the doctrines it teaches, the precious promises it contains, the announcements of things to come. In making

known how God brings out of the ruins of the fall more glory to Himself and more blessing to us than had our first parents remained in innocency. In declaring to us what had never entered our hearts to conceive of the things God has prepared for them that love Him. The more His Word be studied, believed, obeyed, the more wonderful it becomes.

EXPOSITION OF JOHN'S FIRST EPISTLE

29. Apostates (2:19)

"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

The first of those "perilous times" announced to take place in "the last days"—i.e., the Christian dispensation—had begun. Those "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof...ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" had appeared in John's day; men of whom it had to be said: "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (2Ti 3:5-8). The Spirit's prediction in 1 Timothy 4:1 was likewise receiving a fulfillment: "in the latter times [i.e., the present era] some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." Impostors and heretics were rising apace: antichrist had already begun to show himself in the false teachers and seducers, who were his forerunners. It was therefore necessary for the apostle to make reference to a very great evil that had broken out among some of the congregations of the saints, for these apostates had formerly been numbered among and had enjoyed fellowship with them. As Jude also declared, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (verse 4), by coming out in their true colours as the opposers of His Christ.

"*They.*" The opening word of our present verse at once makes it apparent that it is closely related to the preceding one, for the "they" has its antecedent in the "many antichrists" of verse 18. There John reminded the newly converted that they had heard antichrist should come, and that many of his tribe were even then in existence, whereby they might know that the last period of the world's history had already dawned. It must be "the last time," for God has nothing further to reveal, and therefore it is naught but His longsuffering that prolongs this final hour. Since it be the concluding season for mankind, no higher privileges will ever be vouchsafed to those on earth, and no other means of grace appointed by God than those that are now in existence. Hence the urgent force of that exhortation, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb 2:3).

It was most needful that the saints should take notice of what the apostle had alluded to. *First*, to prevent them from being carried away with the error of the wicked, and thereby fall from their own steadfastness. The only safeguard against that was to continue cleav-

ing unto the Lord, and maintain fellowship with Him by walking in separation from the world. It is when the heart departs from its anchorage that it is liable to be “tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:14). When the soul is not at rest, the mind cannot be; instead, it is ever seeking some fresh object to afford it satisfaction. It is the unstable who are always on the wing after some new opinion. King Saul forsook the Lord before he turned to the witch of Endor (1Sa 28:7), as those mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:1 departed from the faith ere they gave heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. A tender conscience is slow and cautious in receiving the truth, and for that reason holds tenaciously to the same when assured it has it. A tender conscience examines carefully and weighs prayerfully whatever is presented to the mind. Not so a conscience which is seared by the world and put to sleep: with such there is no waiting on God for light, but an independence of mind that leans unto its own understanding (Pro 3:6), and a consequent running after novelties and an espousing of error.

“*They went out from us.*” Those antichrists were not men who had from the beginning been open antagonists to the truth, but, instead, professing Christians. They were not those who took their rise from among the rejecters of the Gospel, but rather were such as had avowed their belief in and acceptance of the same. Formerly they had walked with the Lord’s people, and then had deserted them. The Greek is even more emphatic, “From among us they went out”; originally they were members of Christian assemblies. The word rendered “us” (*hemon*) occurs again in 1 John 1:3; 3:16, 20 (rendered “our”), 21; 4:6; 5:14-15. The statement that they went out signifies more than a local and corporeal departure, namely one in affection and doctrine. It was far more than their forsaking of any particular church for a season, and then walking irregularly; they became leaders of heretical sects contrary to the glory of Christ and the doctrine of His apostles, denying that the Son of God had come in the flesh. They were therefore apostates from the faith, repudiators of the Gospel, though most of them still claimed to be “Christians,” yea, peculiarly enlightened and eminent ones.

Our present verse makes still more evident the propriety of the whole passage being addressed more specifically to the spiritual babes, for though all of God’s children need to take the same to heart, the younger ones especially so, since they were the ones most liable to be stumbled by the defection of these apostates. It is always a very disturbing and distressing thing for any of God’s people to see some of those whom they regarded as their fellow Christians apostatizing, the more so when such were members of their own local assemblies. Particularly is that the case with the recently converted. In the glow of his first love and newly found joy, his zeal longs to see his unsaved loved ones brought into the fold. But to behold some of those with whom he was in communion forsaking the church is a severe shock to him, and should some of the preachers he had sat under prove to be traitors and set themselves up in opposition to the truth, that is indeed a shattering blow. Inexperienced as he is, yet unacquainted with the fickleness of human nature and the prevalence of hypocrisy, he little expects to find those whom he considered to be quite orthodox¹ suddenly becoming thoroughly heterodox.

¹ **orthodox** – that which pertains to the body of doctrines that are essential to the Christian faith; this implies consistency in belief and worship with the revelation of Holy Scripture.

By thus going out, those men renounced all subjection to the headship of Christ over His churches. Thereby they proclaimed themselves as hypocrites, devoid of any love to Him and His Word. It was a terrible thing to do: they were guilty of the fatal sin of apostasy. They started up new sects, drew away many disciples after them, and corrupted the worship of God. In so doing they disrupted the unity of the faith, producing disorder in Christendom. Now, says the apostle (for such was the scope and design of his words here), be not shaken by this sad sight, for, *first*, you were forewarned that “antichrist should come,” and therefore instead of being perplexed and staggered by what you are now witnessing it should strengthen your faith. *Second*, as I have told you, the appearing of these many antichrists furnishes proof that “the last time” has come. *Third*, it was a word of warning for them to take heed unto themselves, to keep their hearts with all diligence, and to close their ears unto the horrible doctrines which were being propagated by these false prophets. *Finally*, there was, as he went on to state, a needs be why God permitted this tragic occurrence: that the line should be drawn between the genuine and the spurious, the latter being exposed for what they really were.

“*They went out from us.*” There have always been such. Even Moses had to say, “Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods” (Deu 13:13). There were false prophets in Israel as well as true ones, as Jehoshaphat discovered (1Ki 22:6-7). Through Jeremiah the Lord said, “Hearken not unto the words of the prophets...for they...prophesy a lie in my name” (27:14-15). Ezekiel was told to “prophesy against the prophets of Israel” and to pronounce a “woe” upon them (13:2-3). Zephaniah declared, “her prophets are light and treacherous” (3:4). At the beginning of His ministry the Lord Jesus gave warning, “Beware of false prophets” (Mat 7:15). The church at Jerusalem found it necessary to send word to the Gentiles, “Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain men which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment” (Act 15:24). The carnality and unbelief of men’s hearts always assure a welcome unto those who speak smooth things in order to win disciples. In his second epistle, Peter announced, “there shall be false prophets among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies,” adding “and many shall follow their pernicious ways: by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” (2:1-2).

“*But they were not of us.*” John is very definite in repudiating these apostates, careful to point out that they were never anything more than nominal Christians. They had professed faith in the Gospel, had been baptized, received into fellowship with the Lord’s people, and been admitted to His table; some of them had, perhaps, been church officers. John first informs us whence these antichrists sprang, and then he disowns them, denying that they were living branches of the Vine. They originated in Christian assemblies, but forsook the same. It was that which made them the more dangerous, for they knew the better how to sow their pernicious errors, and deceive the unwary. They were falsehearted professors who had cast off the sacred privileges of communion with the regenerate, and acknowledged no obligations to them. They pretended to have greater light, calling themselves Gnostics, or “knowing ones.” But the apostle here gives the lie to their proud boast, and then states a reason for and an explanation of their conduct: “they were not of us”—they

were never of one heart and soul with God's people, for such love the truth above everything on earth, and abhor whatever detracts from it.

"They were not of us." It was very necessary to make this clear, for apparently the Church had produced these vipers and nurtured them in her bosom. John therefore denies that they ever belonged to Christ—"as chaff, though mixed with wheat on the same floor, cannot yet be deemed wheat" (John Calvin, 1509-1564). They had not obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine, which had been delivered unto them; so far from being all that they seemed, they were but wolves in sheep's clothing. So it has been ever since. Almost all the heresies that have plagued the churches throughout the centuries originated from persons who were once in good standing in the assemblies. When some old error is revived, it is generally by those who were disaffected² to the saints and apostatized from the truth. Though for a season associated with believers, yet they were never united to them in spirit. As it was in the days of our Lord, "many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (Joh 6:66)—they were but nominal "disciples," for verse 64 tells us they were of those "that believe not." Paul warned the Ephesian saints, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Act 20:30); and also lamented, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2Ti 4:10).

Strange as it may appear to those who closely examine our present text, it is one of the verses appealed to by those who deny the eternal security of the regenerate. Arminians³ quote it in proof of their contention that it is not only possible for those who have been saved by divine grace to fall away and be lost, but that many such have actually done so. But certainly there is nothing here to support their erroneous theory, but that which directly refutes it. Instead of furnishing an example of real Christians falling from grace, it is evident that the characters, which are here in view, never had any grace. Though their names had been registered upon an earthly church roll, they were never written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev 13:8; 17:8; 20:12). They may have had much head knowledge and zeal, but they were destitute of true piety. First, the apostle expressly declared "they were not of us," and then he added "for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us." Instead of belonging to the company of God's elect, they were reprobates.⁴ This is the case with all who repudiate the truth and become teachers of error—they were never genuinely converted! It is a fundamental article of the faith that no regenerate soul is ever suffered finally to apostatize: the honour of God is concerned in the preservation of such, the efficacy of Christ's redemption secures it, the sufficiency of the Spirit's indwelling and operations effects it.

A sound expositor always feels himself to be on the safest ground when he is able to interpret Scripture by Scripture: that is, when he can locate another passage that is more or less parallel with the one before him, that uses different language but treats of the same subject. If he knows his Bible, he will naturally turn to Jude, for the distinctive theme of

² **disaffected** – alienated; resentful and rebellious.

³ **Arminians/Jacobus Arminius** (1560-1609) – Dutch theologian, born in Oudewater, The Netherlands. He rejected the Reformers' understanding of predestination, teaching instead that God's predestination of individuals was based on His foreknowledge of their accepting or rejecting Christ by their own free will.

⁴ **reprobates** – unbelievers left in their sins and abandoned by God to judgment (Romans 1-2).

that epistle is “apostasy,” the second half of it describing in detail the character of the false prophets in this “last time.” Now our present text and the nineteenth verse of Jude are a case in point, for the one throws light upon the other, the latter affirming, “These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.” The first clause corresponds with John’s “they went out from us.” It was not a brief lapse or temporary break in fellowship from the Church that is here in view, but an entire and total forsaking of the same, an unwillingness to be amenable any longer to its doctrine and discipline, and that because of worldly ends and the affectation of vainglory. The second half of the verse amplifies John’s “but they were not of us”: they were *sensual* (the Greek word being rendered “natural” in 1 Corinthians 2:14), unregenerate, “having not the Spirit”—and therefore without any inward restraint upon their carnality, pride, and avarice—unsaved, abandoned by God.

“*For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.*” There was not need for the supplementary “no doubt” of the translators, in fact it tends to weaken the apostle’s positive announcement. In those words he was supplying proof of his assertion in the foregoing clause. The force of his argument may be stated thus: the regenerate are endowed with a spirit of perseverance and run the race that is set before them, therefore those who quit the race and become apostates could never have been renewed in their hearts. It is the solemn engagement of God’s everlasting covenant that He would put His fear into the hearts of His people, promising “they shall not depart from me” (Jer 32:40)—from faith to infidelity, from Christ to Belial. Thus it is that steadfastness, loyalty, and endurance are among the surest marks of the new birth. Said our Lord, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye [not “shall become such” because of so doing] my disciples indeed” (Joh 8:31, and cf. 1Co 15:2; Heb 3:6, 14). Those who have been divinely quickened will most assuredly remain true to the faith and persevere in holiness to the end of their earthly course. Such may indeed experience many a “fall” (but they “shall not be utterly cast down,” Psa 37:24).

The new birth is a being made partaker of the divine nature (2Pe 1:4), and while that is far from signifying that they are deified, it does mean “such moral qualities as may be imparted to the creature” (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677). That which is received at regeneration is sometimes called “the life of God” (Eph 4:18), because it is a vital principle of action; sometimes the “image of God” (Col 3:10), because they bear a likeness to Him. One of the “moral qualities” which is imparted to the Christian is that of stability. We read in the Psalms that “the goodness of God endureth continually” (52:1), that “the glory of the LORD shall endure forever” (104:31), that “his righteousness endureth forever” (111:3), and that “his mercy endureth for ever” (136:1). As Christ declared, “they shall never perish” (Joh 10:28). Such a thing is impossible, for they were “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1Pe 1:23). Thus it is that constancy characterizes them: “and now *abideth* faith, hope, charity” (1Co 13:13). Those graces may indeed wax and wane, but be quenched they shall not. God’s children are deeply rooted trees, and not chaff, which the wind blows away.

“*They would have continued with us.*” Those words were written for the encouragement of believers who feel their own weakness and have no confidence in the flesh; and not to provide a pillow for the presumptuous, nor for slothful fatalists. While they show that no Christian will fall from grace and be lost, yet they do not ignore his responsibility. They include within their scope not only the faithfulness of God in renewing their inner

man day by day, but also the discharge of their duty in the use of means. The same power that made them Christians keeps them, yet “*through faith*” (1Pe 1:5)—through the exercise and cultivation of faith, and of all other graces, and not independently thereof. Remember that it is only by cleaving firmly to the words of God’s lips that we can keep ourselves from the paths of the destroyer (Psa 17:4); then heed the injunction, “Prove all things” (1Th 5:21), and give not place to “itching ears.” It is not sufficient for us to shun the hearing or reading of false teaching; we also need to be constantly on our guard against inward defection, mortifying our lusts (Col 3:5), and taking heed to the first decay of our love. It is much cause for thankfulness when we can truly say, “I have stuck unto thy testimonies” (Psa 119:31).

“*But they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*” In this clause John states the reason why God had suffered the presence of antichrists, therefore it would probably be more perspicuous⁵ to supply “But [this occurred] that they might be made manifest,” for the “they went out” was already definitely stated. Such characters are raised up by God to disturb the peace of the churches in order that the true may be distinguished from the false. Error serves as a flail to separate the wheat from the chaff. “For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you” (1Co 11:19). Let some plausible and popular preacher come forward with an old error decked out in new clothes, and empty professors will at once flock to his standard; but not so those who are established in the truth. Thus, by means of false prophets, God purges His garner,⁶ and makes it appear who are the ones who hold the truth in sincerity. The genuine gold endures every test to which it is subjected. Those who turn away from orthodoxy to heterodoxy must not be regarded as real Christians. Had these men been truly one with God’s people in a personal experience of His saving grace, nothing could have induced them to apostatize.

As God Himself raised up these antichrists for His own wise reasons, so He also caused them to forsake the assemblies of the saints—to make it evident that they were but formal members, and of a totally different family from His own children. Previously they had every appearance of being the genuine article, but by their defection and opposition to Christ they were now revealed as counterfeits. He who searches the heart and tries the reins was determined to give definite proof that they were unregenerate men. Let them boast as loudly as they pleased of being among the Lord’s beloved ones, their conduct gave the lie to such a claim; they never had any root in Christ, but were merely external and temporary followers. Those whom God gives up unto strong delusion to believe a lie (2Th 2:11) are such as never truly received His truth in the love of it, for none of His people are ever suffered to deny the faith after their conversion. Since they never “knew the grace of God in truth” (Col 1:6), He left them to the pride and corruptions of their hearts and the wiles of Satan, to be deceived into the espousing and propagating of fatal heresies. And though they drew many professing Christians after them, their divisions served a useful and necessary purpose, inasmuch as they made manifest those who were the friends and those who were the enemies of Christ.

⁵ **perspicuous** – clear in statement or expression; lucid; easily understood.

⁶ **garner** – granary; a building where grain is stored.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

81. Individual Portions

Our previous articles upon the distribution of Canaan were confined almost entirely to the typical side of things, adumbrating as it did, that blessed heritage which God decreed and Christ purchased for His people. But we must now consider briefly some of the *literal* features connected with the same. The orderly dividing of the land was not only a wise provision, but a necessary arrangement, so that the particular section of each tribe should be clearly defined. In Joshua 14-19, a full and detailed description is recorded of the boundaries of each one. That was done by the immediate appointment and direction of God, and not by any human sagacity and prudence, still less by the dictates of partiality and greed. All was regulated by "the lot." This was done long before the whole of Canaan was actually conquered and possessed by Israel. There was to be no waiting until all the tribes had secured their respective portions. Instead, they were now informed of the exact section to which they had been given a divine title, so that they might go forward and possess their possessions. Thus were they called unto the exercise of *faith* and full confidence in God as they set about the performing of their respective tasks.

In our last, we saw that the method which God selected for the allocating of Canaan unto Israel combined the principles of grace, sovereignty, and righteousness. Of grace, inasmuch as Israel's inheritance was a divine gift. Of sovereignty, for all was done by lot or submitting to the divine will in the dispositions made. Of righteousness, for the numerical strength of the tribe was taken into account in the size of the portion allotted it. The plan followed was thus the very opposite of what would be euphemistically termed a "Welfare State," for there was no dividing of the land into twelve equal parts. The whole of Scripture makes it plain that it is the divine will that there should be distinctions both among nations, in the territory which they occupy, and among individuals, in the property which they possess. Likewise, it is required that each shall be contented with what the Lord has assigned them and him. "Thou shalt not covet" (Exo 20:17) is as much a part of the divine law as "Thou shalt not kill" (Exo 20:13). When the antitypical Joshua was asked to appoint two of His disciples to the chief places of honour in His kingdom, He replied, "To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father" (Mat 20:23), thereby acknowledging the sovereignty of the Father.

The benefits to be derived from the dividing of Canaan to Israel by divine lot should at once be apparent. Not only did such an arrangement exclude the exercise of human avarice and injustice, but it also precluded any occasion for strife and wrangling between the several tribes, determining as it did the precise location assigned unto each of them, with the limits thereof. Thus, all ground for jealousy, misunderstanding and law-suits about their respective territories was obviated. But more—Israel were thereby taught to submit themselves to the good pleasure of the Lord. Therein lies the chief practical lesson which *we*

should draw from this transaction—to surrender ourselves wholly to the divine will and beg God to choose for us—whether it be in the matter of our earthly vocation, the selection of a life-partner, or the measure of temporal prosperity which will be most for His glory and our good. As an old writer truly remarked, “Such as refer themselves unto God to choose for them, will never find cause to repent of their lot.” No, it is when we leave Him out, lean unto our own understanding, act by carnal impulse, that we bring trouble upon ourselves. How we should pray daily, “Work in me both to will and to do of thy good pleasure.”

Before the lot was cast for the determining of the portions of the respective tribes, Caleb appeared before those who had charge of that business, and presented his claim unto Hebron for his own possession. A brief allusion was made to the same at the end of our October, 1951, article, but a closer examination of the incident is now called for. Ere so doing, it should be pointed out that Joshua 14:5 is a general statement, which is amplified in Joshua 15:1 and onwards, the narrative being interrupted by what is now to be before us. “Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea” (Jos 14:6). Observe here the gracious humility of the man! Caleb was himself one of those who had been divinely appointed to serve as one of the commissioners, to see that the lot was carried out in a proper manner (Num 34:17-19). Yet, lest it might appear that he was seeking unduly to use his authority in furthering his own interests, he brought with him some of his brethren to act as witnesses. How careful was he to “abstain from all appearance of evil” (1Th 5:22)! Equally circumspect should we be in all of our public transactions.

“Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart” (verse 7 and cf. Num 13:30). Those last words are very expressive and blessed. It was in Caleb’s heart that God was fully able to give what He had promised, that the gigantic Amorites with their chariots of iron were nothing to Him. Caleb was strong in faith, and therefore he was quite sure that JEHOVAH would make good His word. It was the Lord Himself who had put such a firm persuasion in his heart. Just as at a later date, when faced with a task that was formidable unto flesh and blood, Nehemiah declared, “Neither told I any man what my God had *put in my heart* to do at Jerusalem” (Neh 2:12). That too was something which burned within and sustained him through heavy trials. David also had “found it in his heart to build the house of the LORD” (1Ki 8:17). How that language of Caleb’s made it evident that his heart was set upon the Promised Land! His “treasure” was there, and so was his heart also (Mat 6:21). That was his animating hope all through the forty years he had to spend with his unbelieving fellows in the wilderness. And so it should be with each Christian, his affections set upon things above as he journeys through this world to the antitypical Canaan.

“Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the LORD my God” (Jos 14:8). His fellows walked by sight instead of faith, and, consequently, they were occupied with and appalled by the obstacles which stood in the way. Full of distrust themselves, they infected the whole of the congregation with the same, intimidating and discouraging them so far that their spirits sank. But Caleb

refused to be influenced by them, yea, boldly withstood them. "I wholly followed the LORD my God" (Jos 14:9) was not the language of presumption, but a plain declaration that he was neither daunted by the power of the enemy nor swayed by the skepticism of his brethren. It signified that on that occasion he had faithfully discharged his duty, remained steadfast in his faith in God, assured that He would enable His people to overcome the mighty sons of Anak. That meaning of his, "I wholly followed the LORD," is made clear by the contrast of Numbers 32:11, where the Lord complained of his unbelieving fellows, "They have not wholly followed me," and from the fact that He there predicated the same fidelity and perseverance of Joshua. The great value which God set upon His servant's steadfastness appears in His having recorded it in His Word no less than six times: Numbers 14:24; 32:12; Deuteronomy 1:36; Joshua 14: 8, 9, 14.

"And Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God" (Jos 14:9). The sure word of prophecy he had hid—held fast, treasured—in his heart throughout the lengthy interval. It is to be considered that probably most of that generation of Israel would be ignorant of the divine grant which had been made unto him and his descendants so long before, and, therefore, Caleb quoted the Lord's promise thereon for their benefit more than Joshua's, so that it might appear that he was not now making any selfish or unreasonable demand. The divine promise was recorded in Deuteronomy 1:36, and treasured in the mind of Caleb. His object was to prevent this particular part of Palestine being put in the lot with the other portions of the country. He had a definite and valid claim upon the same, and he here insisted upon his right. Since God's own mind concerning it had been plainly made known, then it would be useless to appeal unto His will respecting it via the lot, as in the case of the sections for the tribes.

"And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old" (Jos 14:10). What a God-honouring testimony was this! Passing through all the vicissitudes of Israel's wilderness wanderings, during which so many of his fellows were removed from this scene, engaged in the five years of fighting in Canaan, when no doubt there was often but a step betwixt him and death, Caleb here ascribed his preservation not to "good luck" or "fortune" (heathen terms!), but unto Him "which holdeth our soul in life" (Psa 66:9). Caleb had something more than a general realization that his times were in God's hands (Psa 31:15). His faith had laid hold of a special promise, as his "as he said" plainly shows (Jos 14:10). He was resting on the word of One who cannot lie—as David, at a later date, relied upon God's changeless veracity, "Do as thou hast said" (2Sa 7:25). We are on both sure and comfortable ground, my reader, when we take our stand upon God's promise, *expecting* a fulfilment. Caleb's repeated "and now" (Jos 14:10) was tantamount to his saying, "The time has at last arrived for the Lord to make good His engagement."

"As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in" (Jos 14:11). In those words, he was forestalling an objection which might be made against his appeal. Should the demurrer be advanced, "But you are much too old for such a difficult and dangerous venture as the dispossessing of the giants from the mountainous district of Hebron,

that such a strenuous and hazardous task called for a much younger man.” Caleb here pressed his physical fitness for the same. The One who had preserved his life throughout the years had also renewed his youth like the eagle’s (Psa 103:5). Ah, my reader, God does nothing by halves. When He appoints a man for any particular work, He also equips the worker and furnishes him with everything needful. Not only so, He sustains and animates the heart for the task. Faith inspires resolution and courage, and He who had enabled His servant to hold fast for so long to His promise also removed all hesitation and fear, so that Caleb was just as ready and eager to set about the task which lay before him as he was in the prime of life.

“Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said” (Jos 14:12). The second half of this verse is very lovely, yet some have quite misunderstood its force. Though Caleb still retained his vigour, it was not *that* upon which he relied, nor yet upon his military ability and experience; but instead, upon the Lord. Thus, his “if so be the LORD will be with me” was not the language of doubting, but of self-renunciation. He had no confidence in the flesh and felt his own insufficiency. There will not be faith in God, nor even a sincere looking to Him, my reader, while we retain faith in ourselves. Trust in the Lord is ever accompanied by distrust of self. No, Caleb was conscious that the successful accomplishment of the work before him was quite beyond his own powers, but he counted upon the faithfulness of God to undertake for him. Proof was this that the divine promise was no empty theory to him, but a precious reality. Therein he differed sharply from his unbelieving companions. They were occupied with the power of the enemy and their own impotence, he with the omnipotent One and the sureness of His word.

“And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance” (Jos 14:13). Thus was the promise of God through Moses made good *by Joshua*. This is very blessed, for it causes us to look beyond the shadow to the substance. The fulfilment of all the divine promises is in and through the antitypical Joshua. “For all the promises of God in him [Christ] are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2Co 1:20). Since Christ Himself is the end and chief object of all the promises, He has become by His mediatorial character both the channel of supply to all who receive the grace of God in truth and the medium of their responsive praise. To the certified promises, thus declared to God’s elect, in the person of His Son, the Church now sets the seal of her Amen, affirming thus adoringly to the glory of the Father what the lips of Christ have first spoken to her heart. In Christ, we now have by an everlasting covenant of grace, whatever good things God spoke aforetime. In the Lord Jesus, the very fullness of God dwells, and in that holy humanity which He took upon Him for our sakes. The concentrating of God’s mercies in the living and effective Vindicator of His promises—“the Amen, the faithful and true witness” (Rev 3:14)—is declared to be “to the glory of God *by us*” (2Co 1:20), because of the praise which He receives from His people as they realize that all is summed up for them in God’s Beloved and in their Beloved.

“Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb...unto this day, because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel. And the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-

arba; which Arba was a great man among the Anakims. And the land had rest from war" (Jos 14:14-15). Hebron signifies "Fellowship," and may have been so named because of the wonderful communion which Abraham had with God there (Gen 13:18, first mention). This is the place above all others which the enemy of souls seeks to prevent God's people occupying. What a suitable place was Hebron for Caleb! How appropriate an inheritance for the one who (we are once more told) "wholly followed the LORD God of Israel" (Jos 14:9)—who persevered in the performing of his duty, though opposed by ten of his companions and menaced by the whole congregation—which shows us that the ones and twos, who are out and out for God, must not expect to be popular, no, not with their brethren. Nevertheless, Hebron, or the place of intimate fellowship with God, is ever the portion of such. Finally, let it be duly noted, that upon Caleb was conferred the honour of the hardest task of all—the overcoming of the mighty sons of Anak. The next chapter tells us, "And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak" (Jos 15:14). Of course he did! God never fails such a one.

In Joshua 17:3-4, another case is recorded of claim to an individual portion being laid before Joshua, which is in some respects similar to that of Caleb. It was made by the five daughters of Zelophehad, who belonged to the tribe of Manasseh. Those women had received promise through Moses that when Canaan was divided among Israel they should have an inheritance, and now they came before those who had charge of the allotting, making request for the implementing of the same. God's commandment and promise by Moses is recorded in Numbers 27:1-11. These women appeared before what might be termed the supreme court, pointing out that their father was dead and had left no son. Up to that time, no legal provision had been made where the male issue had failed, and thus these daughters of Zelophehad, having neither father nor brother, found themselves destitute. Instead of murmuring and mourning over their hard lot, they wisely came before God's servants and asked for arrangement to be made for them to have a portion of their tribe's section. Moses did not presume to answer their inquiry personally, but brought the case before the Lord, and He declared, "Thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them" (Num 27:7).

In Numbers 36, we learn that the case of those five women was brought again before Israel's high court. This time, it was the chief fathers of the families of Gilead, to which Zelophehad belonged, who appeared. A difficulty was anticipated: should these five women intermarry with other tribes, then, their portion would pass out of Manasseh's possessions unto another's, and that would probably occasion future strife and confusion. In reply thereto, a more specific law was enacted, "Let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry. So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe" (Num 36:6-7). It is very blessed to see how the Lord honoured the faith of those women by protecting their interests. At the time when they first appeared before the judges, Israel was in the wilderness! Canaan had not then been entered, still less conquered and possessed, yet so sure were these women that God would fulfil His promise to give that land unto His people that even then they put in their claim to a portion thereof. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) wittily remarked, "They were *five wise virgins* indeed."

In a striking address made in 1918 on the virgin birth, Dr. A. T. Schofield (1846-1929) (not the editor of the Scofield Bible) pointed out that, but for the above Scriptures, an insuperable difficulty had stood in the way of Christ's being "the King of the Jews" (Mat 27:37): "Therefore, in any case, it seems our Lord could not be the inheritor of the throne of David, either through Joseph, for he was not born of Joseph, or through Mary, because a woman could not inherit it: and, but for one remarkable circumstance, it would be impossible for Him to be King of the Jews. In fact, the virgin birth in itself would appear to bar Him from the throne." Then the doctor went on to show that the "remarkable circumstance" which removed all difficulty was found in Numbers 27:8, "If a man die, and have no son [as in the case of Heli, the father of Mary], then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter." Thus, our Lord, according to the flesh, *had* legal title to inherit the throne of David, while Numbers 36:6 shows why it was necessary for Mary to be espoused to Joseph. From which we may see that not only in the ceremonial law, but in the civil law of Israel also, God ever had *Christ* before Him!

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

11. Its Corollaries, Part 3

The total depravity of all mankind *explains the opposition which the Gospel generally meets with*. When one considers what the Gospel is in itself—namely, a message of good news unto lost sinners—one would naturally suppose that it will be universally and cordially received. Will not those condemned to eternal damnation welcome a reprieve? Will not those perishing from a deadly malady be glad to avail themselves of an effectual remedy? Will the naked scorn the garments of salvation, the poverty-stricken refuse the unsearchable riches of Christ, the famishing decline an invitation to a feast? One had not thought so. The Evangel contains the most illustrious display of the divine character which has ever been given to this world, and therefore is it designated “The glorious gospel of the blessed God” (1Ti 1:11). It makes known to us how divine wisdom has so perfectly adjusted His attributes that God can, at the same time, be both just and merciful in saving a hell-deserving sinner, that He can lavish upon him the riches of grace without in any wise compromising His holiness. Such a marvel is so far beyond human conception that it evidences itself to be truly divine. It is indeed “worthy of all acceptance” (1 Ti 1:15) It announces the inestimable blessings of pardon, holiness, and joy, and therefore, should be cordially welcomed by all who hear it.

The love of God which the Gospel publishes, and the sufferings of Christ for sinners, ought to melt the hardest heart and cause every hearer fervently to cry, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (2Co 9:15). It is a message of glad tidings proclaiming peace. It tells of deliverance from condemnation and promises eternal life to all who receive it. Yet, the fact remains, that the great majority of those who sit under it are but little affected and obtain no lasting advantage to their souls, and *that* perplexes many Christians. How often we hear them saying, after the most winsome notes of the Gospel have been struck, I cannot see how it is possible for any hearer to reject such an appeal. But the total depravity of man fully explains that lamentable event. There is nothing whatever in a heart that is desperately wicked upon which the Gospel can seize that will evoke any echo to it. Nay, its contents are directly opposed to the opinions and inclinations of the fallen creature. If it informed men of how great worldly honours could be secured gratis, or how large sums of money could be obtained for nothing, it would be heartily welcomed. If it assured men how they could indulge their lusts with impunity, and live in sin without fear of death and hell, it would indeed be good news to them. But a *holy Gospel* suits not their tastes, being quite foreign to their longings.

If God were to leave men entirely to themselves in their response to the Gospel, it would be universally rejected. There is a deeply rooted contrariety to God in their very natures which makes them turn a deaf ear to His voice, though they are ready enough to listen to the least whispers of Satan. As there be plants which are attractive to the eye but poisonous to the stomach, so, even though the Gospel be a pleasant sound to the ear, it is re-

pulsive to a corrupt heart. The Gospel requires men to renounce their own wisdom and become as little children, to repudiate their own righteousness and accept that of Another, to cease from self-pleasing and submit to the will of God. The Gospel is designed to transform the inner man and regulate the outer man, and that is quite unacceptable to the unregenerate. No exhortations will reconcile a wolf and a lamb. No logical arguments will tame a fierce lion. Though man be a rational creature, he follows the promptings of his lusts rather than the dictates of his judgment. One who is wholly in love with sin and Satan desires not to enter into the service of Christ, and therefore, it requires to be overcome by a flood of almighty grace, as the stream of the river is by the tide of the sea.

There is a certain class of writers who represent the heart of fallen man as painfully conscious of its burden and sighing for deliverance. But to say that the natural man is eager to escape from the ruin and degradation to which sin has reduced him is but the figment of fancy, unsupported by a single fact of experience. The natural man does indeed encounter conflicts, yet his struggles are not for deliverance from indwelling corruption, but to escape from the accusations of conscience. Man's misery is that he cannot sin without unpleasant consequences. There is nothing whatever in him that predisposes him to welcome the Gospel, or to give it joyful acceptance when it is made known to him. The heart of man is more unwilling to embrace the Evangel than it is to acknowledge the equity of the Law. "The Law puts man upon his own strength, the Gospel takes him off from his own footing. The Law acknowledges him to have a power in himself, and to act for his own reward: the Gospel strips him of all his proud and towering thoughts (2Co 5:14). This is the reason why men are more against the Gospel than against the Law: because it doth more deify God and debase man" (Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680).

As there needed to be a forerunner for Christ to "prepare His way" (Luk 1:76) before Him, so the Holy Spirit must first work upon the heart ere it is ready to receive the Gospel. Not until He renews the soul is any real sense of need awakened. And, until its sickness be felt, the great Physician is undesired. Before the heart has been divinely prepared for its reception, the Word of God can find no permanent place in it. That is very evident from our Lord's parable of the sower, wherein He likened those who heard the Word unto several kinds of ground. The seed sown was the same in each case. It was the soils that differed. The seed which fell on the wayside, the stony ground, and the thorny ground was abortive. The heart has to be made "honest and good" (Luk 8:15) before there will be any increase or fruit. None but the Holy Spirit can produce in the soul a hatred of sin and the desire to be saved from it because of its intrinsic vileness. It is owing to the distinguishing and astonishing grace of God that *any* are brought to repent and believe the Gospel. One whose affections are chained to the things of earth cannot seek those things which are above. Nothing more clearly demonstrates the fact of human depravity than that without a special and divine operation no heart ever did or ever will savingly receive the Gospel.

In view of the total depravity of man, *we need not be the least surprised at what we behold in Christendom itself*. A change of clothes effects no alteration in the character of their wearer, neither does a person's taking upon him a profession of religion better his heart. It may indeed foster a spirit of hypocrisy, and cause him to take more pains to hide from the eyes of his fellows what he is by nature, but it will not cleanse his soul from indwelling sin. Thus, while there be more open wickedness in the profane world, there is far

more secret and cloaked wickedness in the professing world. Error is bound to be much more popular than truth unto the unregenerate, and therefore, to render the truth in any wise acceptable to them, it has to be watered down, wrested, and perverted—and there are always those who, for the sake of filthy lucre, are ready to perjure their souls. Hence, it is that heretical sects and systems abound on every side. What delusions are cherished about the character of God! What erroneous ideas are entertained about His way of salvation! What false notions are held of man's dignity, greatness, free will, even by many who call themselves Christians! Because of the unbelief, selfishness, and impiety of men's hearts, the false prophets, who speak smooth and flattering things, are assured of a ready hearing.

Here, then, is the explanation of the babel of tongues which is now to be heard in Christendom. When the natural man takes it upon him to handle the things of God, they are sure to be corrupted. How can those who are devoid of divine grace, in love with sin, deal faithfully with that which unsparingly condemns sin? For the same reason, those who are without true piety will prefer to hear and follow those whose preaching gives them the most licence to gratify their carnality. Moreover, Satan will see to it that his emissaries cater to the worldly-minded. What is Romanism, with its "indulgences," its gorgeous pagantry, its dogma of purgatory, but an appeal unto the flesh? What are Universalism and Annihilationism but opiates to remove the dread of eternal punishment? What is Antinomianism, with its bald fatalism and repudiation of the moral law as the believer's rule of life, but an attempt to set aside the unpalatable truth of man's responsibility? What are the great majority of present-day "missions" and "revivals," with their musical attractions and sensational methods, but a pandering to those who love emotionalism and sensationalism? Higher Criticism and Modernism are but devices to banish the authority of Holy Writ, and get rid of the supernatural. Arminianism panders blatantly to human pride, for it is virtually the deification of man, making him the architect of his life and the determiner of his destiny.

How the depravity of mankind *makes evident the infinite patience of God!* "The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power" (Nah 1:3). How significant is the conjunction of those divine perfections! It is not because God is indifferent unto men's wickedness that He does not speedily take vengeance upon them; still less because He lacks the ability to do so. No, it is because God is not at the command of His passions as men are. He can restrain His anger when under great and just provocation to exercise it. His power over Himself is the cause of His slowness to execute wrath (Num 14:17); nevertheless, His might to punish is as great as His patience to spare. And oh, what fearful provocations, insults, and injuries God meets with daily from mankind. "How many millions of practical atheists breathe every day in God's air and live upon His bounty, who deserve to be inhabitants of hell rather than possessors of earth! An infinite holiness is opposed, and infinite justice provoked, yet an infinite patience forbears the punishment, and infinite goodness relieves our wants" (Charnock). What a wonder it is that God has protracted human history until now, and that He still "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and unjust" (Mat 5:45). Patience is as truly a divine attribute as are holiness, wisdom, faithfulness.

What a mercy that God does not strike dead those who brazenly defy Him and take His holy name in vain! Why does He not suddenly cut off every blatant infidel, as He did Ana-

nias and Sapphira (Act 5:1-10)? Why does He not cause the earth to open her mouth and swallow the persecutors of His people, as He did when Dathan and Abiram rebelled against Moses and Aaron (Num 16:30-32)? Why does He tolerate the ten thousand abominations in Christendom which are now being perpetrated under the holy name of Christ? Only one answer is possible—because He endures “with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” (Rom 9:22). There are many ways in which the patience of God is manifested in this world. First, by publishing His vengeance before He strikes. “Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee” (Job 36:18), thereby affording them “space to repent.” Second, by delaying the judgments which He has threatened. How long was the ark preparing before He sent the great deluge (Gen 6:3)! Third, in executing His judgments by degrees, as He sent plague after plague upon Egypt before He commissioned the angel of death to slay all her firstborn (Gen 7-11). And as the Shekinah glory departed slowly from an apostate Israel, retiring stage by stage (Eze 9:3; 10:4, 19; 11:23), as though reluctant to leave.

Consider how great are our provocations against the Most High—His authority and majesty. Consider how many are our transgressions against the Law. Consider how long-continued they have been. No improvement in their manners during the course of time, but each succeeding generation as bad as the former, nay, “evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse” (2Ti 3:13). Consider how fearfully God is insulted and offended by the world’s treatment of His Gospel. He proclaims mercy unto the chief of sinners, but they scoff thereat. He entreats them to turn unto Him that they may live, but they are determined to destroy themselves. What an indescribably dreadful state men must be in who prefer their idols to Christ, and have no desire to be saved from their sins! What proof of His longsuffering that God has already prolonged this day of salvation for almost five hundred years more than the Mosaic economy lasted! Yet so far from appreciating such clemency, the unregenerate misinterpret and abuse it, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecc 8:11). When His rod was laid heavily upon them they “blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds” (Rev 16:11). How it should astonish us that God not only preserves in this life such a multitude of monsters, but continues to spread their tables!

How clearly the depravity of mankind *demonstrates the necessity for hell!* What can be the future of stout-hearted rebels who throughout life defied their Maker and Ruler and died in impenitence? Shall such a Being be despised with impunity? If, by the common consent of all right-minded people, one who is guilty of treason against an earthly monarch be worthy of death, what punishment can be too great for those who prefer themselves to the King of kings, and daily invade His prerogatives? Sin is a challenge to the government of God, and insurrectionists must be dealt with. Sin has to be paid the wages which it has so hardly earned. Equity requires that each one should reap as he has sown. The time of God’s patience has an end. He has wrath to punish as well as patience to bear. Because God is holy, He hates all sin, and as the moral Governor, it becomes Him to deal with revoltors. How could He be the Sum of all excellence were He to make no distinction between good and evil and to treat virtue and vice alike? Christ bade His hearers, “Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him” (Luk

12:5). He knew as none other did that God is the enemy of sin and the avenger of those who set at naught all His counsels.

God will yet fully vindicate His throne and make evident what a fearful thing it is to despise Him. It is meet that He should display His governmental supremacy and make a footstool of all those who rise up against Him. Though He “endures [not “loves”!] with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,” yet in the day to come He will “show His wrath, and make known His power” (Rom 9:22), and that wrath will be no greater than the mercy which they abused. The highest contempt merits the greatest anger, and it is fitting that those who refuse to make God their happiness should be made to feel everlastingly the misery of their separation from Him. Eternal life and eternal death were plainly set before them, and since they chose the latter, they cannot justly blame any but themselves when they are cast into the same. God’s veracity requires Him to fulfil His threatenings, and His very goodness to separate eternally the wicked from the righteous—for the latter could not enjoy perfect peace and happiness if they lived for ever with the reprobate. It is just that those who freely serve the devil should be cast into the same prison and tormented with him. How could those who hate God, whose very natures are averse to Him, be admitted into heaven? What *must be* the portion of those who would destroy the deity were it in their power to do so?

The total depravity of our race *sheds much light on Providence*. Many of God’s dealings with men present insoluble riddles unto carnal reason. There is a divine handwriting on the wall of human affairs which, like that in Belshazzar’s palace (Dan 5:8), is indecipherable by human wisdom. Unto those who are unacquainted with what is recorded in Genesis 3, God’s ways with our race cannot but be most mysterious, but the whole subject is at once illumined when the doctrine of human depravity is understood. The whole brood of ills which now afflicts mankind has sprung from the pregnant womb of sin. The wrecked and wretched condition in which man now finds himself is the inevitable consequent of his fall. The frowning aspect of Providence which so often darkens this scene and appalls our minds receives its only adequate solution in the fact that Adam’s offence fearfully changed the relation of God and the creature. Our nature, being what it is, we cannot expect history to be written in any other inks than those of tears and blood. Hospitals and mental homes, the discords and strifes among men, the warring between nations, unprincipled politicians, conscienceless preachers—all are the effects of the corruption of human nature.

Here is the key to the problem of suffering. All the misery in the world proceeds from sin. But, not only are the governmental ways of God with men what they are because of what the race is, they are also designed to make more evident the real character of fallen man. While Providence sets bounds to the exercise of human depravity, at the same time it permits sufficient manifestations thereof to leave no candid observer in doubt of the same. God causes men to reveal what they are by suffering their insubjection to His Law, their rejection of His Gospel, their perverting of His truth, their persecutions of His people. How many others, who were regarded as upright, are by some sudden temptation shown to have been all along corrupt at heart. Many a merchant, lawyer, bank official, yea, even minister of the Gospel, who was highly respected is permitted to fall into open sin, that the long-cherished depravity of his soul might be exposed. How remarkably does Providence often

bring to light the hidden things of darkness—as in the case of Abraham’s deception, of Joseph’s brethren, the discovering of Judah’s secret sin (Gen 38:17), of Achan’s, of David’s.

Belief of this doctrine *ought to have a beneficial effect upon the children of God*. A sense of our native depravity should engender deep humility. What a state we were in when God plucked us as brands from the burning! The realization of that ought to make us take and maintain a very lowly place before Him. “That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more [in self praise] because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the LORD God” (Eze 16:63). Pride should be for ever hid from us, and that acknowledgment of Jacob’s be our constant confession, “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant” (Gen 32:10). Again, as we look back to the hole of the pit from which we were dug, what fervent praise and thanksgiving should be awakened in our hearts! How we should adore the One who opened our prison doors, for none but His hand could loose the bolts and shoot back the many locks which held us captive. How our hearts should be melted and filled with wonderment at the amazing grace which has saved us from the dominion of Satan and made us kings and priests unto God, which has elevated beggars to be “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17).

Once more, how this solemnizing doctrine ought to convince the saint that he cannot keep himself alive! If, being a mutable creature, sinless Adam, when left to himself, brought about his destruction, how much more so would the mutable believer, with a fallen and corrupt nature still within him, unless an Almighty hand preserved him! So perverse are we by nature, and so weak as Christians, that without Christ, we can do no good thing (Joh 15:5). Sustaining and preserving grace must be sought by us hourly. We are treading a slippery path and need to pray, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe” (Psa 119:117). Finally, the knowledge of this truth ought to beget in us a spirit of complete dependence on God. How beautifully is that state depicted in the description given of the Church of old, “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?” (Song 8:5). So ignorant and wayward are we that “we know not what we should pray for as we ought” (Rom 8:26). It is only by the gracious operations of the Spirit that our affections are raised above this world, faith is strengthened, and we are enabled to lay hold of a divine promise. So shut up are we to God that, in all things, He must work in us “both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phi 2:13).

INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Part 22

30. *The law of full mention.* In our last, we treated of the principle of first mention, and showed that the initial reference to a subject, or the earliest occurrence of a term, indicated from its context, and the manner in which it was used, what would be its force in all later references. This, we followed with the law of progressive mention, wherein it was seen that the Holy Spirit has observed an orderly development in the unfolding of each aspect of

the truth. That as it is naturally, so in connection with divine revelation. There is first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. That may be further illustrated by a simple and well-known example, namely, the three allusions made unto Nicodemus in John's Gospel. In John 3, we behold the midnight condition of his soul. In John 7:50-51, we see, as it were, the dawning of twilight. But in John 19:39-40, the daylight had fully broken. Now those principles are augmented by a third, for, as A. T. Pierson (1837-1911) pointed out in his most helpful book *The Bible and Spiritual Criticism* (now out of print), somewhere in the Bible each of its prominent themes is given a complete and systematic presentation. In other words, a whole chapter is devoted to an exhaustive treatment of what is more briefly mentioned elsewhere. Below, we barely mention examples of this fact—culled from Dr. Pierson, supplemented by our own researches.

Exodus 20 gives us the complete Decalogue, the ten commandments of the moral law being stated clearly and orderly. Psalm 119 sets forth at length the authority, the importance, and the manifold excellency of the written Word of God. In Isaiah 53, we have a full-length picture of the vicarious sufferings of the Saviour. John 17 contains a complete outline on the subject of intercession, revealing as it does the substance of those things which our great High Priest asks of the Father for His people. In Romans 3:10-20, we have the most detailed diagnosis of the depraved condition of fallen man to be met with in the Bible. In Romans 5:12-21, the foundation doctrine of federal headship is developed at length. In Romans 7, the conflict between the "two natures" in the believer is described as it is nowhere else. In Romans 9, the awful sovereignty of God, in election or reprobation, is dealt with more largely than elsewhere. In 1 Corinthians 15, the resurrection of the believer's body is depicted in its full-robed splendour. In 2 Corinthians 8-9, every aspect of Christian giving and the varied motives which should prompt our benevolences are stated. In Hebrews 2:6-18, we find the clearest and most comprehensive setting forth of the reality of our Lord's humanity. In Hebrews 11, we have a wonderfully complete outline of the life of faith. Hebrews 12 furnishes us with an extensive treatment of the subject of divine chastisement. In James 3, we have summed up what the rest of the Bible teaches concerning the might and malice of the tongue. The whole of Jude is devoted to the solemn theme of apostasy.

In these articles, we have endeavoured to set before our readers those rules which we have long made use of in our own study of the Word. Since they were designed more especially for young preachers, we have spared no efforts to make them as lucid and complete as possible, placing in their hands those principles of exegesis which have stood us in best stead. Though not a distinct canon of hermeneutics, a few remarks require to be offered on the subject of *punctuation*, for since there be none in the original manuscripts, the manner and mode of dividing the text is often a matter of interpretation. The early copies were unbroken into chapters and verses, still less had they any notations of their sentences and clauses. It should also be pointed out that the use of large capitals in such verses as Exodus 3:14; 27:3; Isaiah 26:4; Jeremiah 23; Zechariah 14:20; Revelation 17:6; 19:16, originated with the Authorized Version of 1611, for they are not found in any of the previous translations. They are without any authority, and were used to indicate what the translators deemed to be of particular importance.

The use of parentheses is entirely a matter of interpretation, for there were none in the originals, and few in the early Greek copies. The translators deemed them necessary in a few instances, so as to indicate the sense of a passage by preserving the continuity of thought, as in Romans 5:13-17, which is an unusually long one. Some of the simplest and best-known examples are Matthew 6:32; Luke 2:35; John 7:50; Romans 1:2. It is not to be thought that words enclosed in brackets are of less importance. Sometimes they are an amplification, as in Mark 5:13, at others, they are explanatory, as in Mark 5:42; John 4:2. Instead of being only of trivial significance, a number of parenthetical clauses are of deep moment. For instance, "For I know that in myself (that is in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom 7:18)—the absence of that qualifying word had denied that there was any principle of grace or holiness in him. Similar examples are found in 2 Corinthians 5:7 and 6:2. On the other hand, some are of doubtful propriety. Not all will consider that the parentheses found in the following passages are necessary or even expedient: Mark 2:10; John 1:14, and 7:39; 1 Corinthians 9:21; 2 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 4:9-10. Below are three passages in which this writer considers the use of parentheses is a real help in the understanding of them.

In our judgment, a three fold change is required in the punctuation of 1 Corinthians 15:22-26. First, the clause "then cometh the end" should be placed at the close of verse 23, and not at the beginning of verse 24, for it completes the sentence instead of beginning a new one. Second, the whole of verse 25 requires to be placed in brackets, if the order of thought is to be preserved. Third, the italicized words in verses 24 and 26 should be deleted, for they are not only unnecessary, but misleading. Punctuated thus, the passage will read: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive; but every man [literally "everyone"] in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming, then the end." As the sin of Adam resulted not only in his own death, but also in the deaths of all who were in him as their federal head, so the obedience unto death of Christ not only procured His own resurrection, but ensures that of all who are united to Him as their federal Head—a resurrection in honour and glory—the resurrection of the wicked "to shame and everlasting contempt" falls not within the scope of this chapter. The clause "then the end" denotes *not* "the termination of all mundane affairs," but signifies the conclusion of the resurrection—the completion of the harvest (Joh 12:24).

By placing its first clause at the close of verse 23, what follows in verse 24 begins a fresh sentence, though not a new subject. "When he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God [not His mediatorial one, but only that aspect thereof which concerns the suppression of all revolters against heaven], even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power (for he must reign till he hath put down all enemies under his feet), the last enemy shall be destroyed—death." Christ rose again *to reign*. All power in heaven and in earth has been given to Him for the express purpose of subjugating and annulling all the enemies of Himself and of His Father, and this issues in the abolition of death in the glorious resurrection of all His people. The grand object throughout this chapter is to show the guarantee which Christ's resurrection gives for that of His redeemed—*denied* by some (1Co 15:12). That this subject is continued *after* the passage we are here critically examining is clear from 1 Corinthians 15:29-32, where further arguments are advanced—from the case of those who are baptized, and Paul's own experiences. Verses 24-26 are brought in to

assure the hearts of believers. Many powerful enemies seek to bring about their destruction, but their efforts are utterly vain, for Christ shall triumph over them all—death itself being abolished at their resurrection.

Most of the commentators have experienced difficulty when attempting to trace the course of the apostle's argument in Hebrews 4:1-11. Its structure is indeed much involved, but not a little light is cast on it by placing verses 4-10 in parentheses. The exhortation begun in Hebrews 3:12 is not completed till 4:12 is reached. All that intervenes consists of an exposition and application of the passage quoted from Psalm 95 in Hebrews 3:7-11. The connecting link between the two chapters is found in, "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Heb 3:19). On those words is based the admonition of 4:1-3, which bids us to take to heart the solemn warning there given. The first clause of verse 3, when literally rendered, reads, "For we enter into the rest, who believe"—the historical tense is thus avoided. It is neither "have entered" nor "shall enter," but an abstract statement of a doctrinal fact—only believers enter into God's rest. The second half of 4:3 quotes again from Psalm 95—for the force of which we refer the student to pages 92 and 93 of last year's volume for our remarks thereon.

In the parentheses of 4:4-10, the apostle enters upon a discussion of the "rest" which the Psalmist spoke of and which he was exhorting his readers to strive to enter, bidding them to take heed lest they fell short of attaining thereto. First, he pointed out (verses 4-6) that David had not referred to God's own rest upon creation, and the Sabbath rest which ensued therefrom. Second, nor was it the rest of Canaan (verses 7-8) into which Joshua led Israel. Third, it was something then *future* (verse 9), namely the rest announced in the Gospel. Fourth, in verse 10, there is a noticeable change of number from the "us" in verse 1 and the "we" of verse 3 to "He that is entered into his rest," where the reference is to Christ Himself—*His* entrance being both the pledge and proof that His people will do so, "whither the forerunner is *for us* entered" (6:20). In 4:11, the apostle returns to his principal exhortation of 3:13 and 4:1-3. There he had said, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it". Here he makes known *how* that "fear" is to exert itself. Not in dread or doubting, but a reverential respect unto the divine threatenings and promises, with a diligent use of the appointed means of grace.

"Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice (first for his own sins, and then for the people's): for this he did once, when he offered up himself" (Heb 7:27). This is another verse which has troubled commentators, but all difficulty is removed by inserting the above parentheses. In this and the next verse, the apostle specifies some of the respects in which our High Priest is superior to the priests of the Aaronic order. His perfections, described in verse 26, exempted Him from all the infirmities and blemishes which pertain to the Levitical priests, and which disqualified them from making an effectual atonement unto God for sin. In blessed contrast, Christ was infinitely well pleasing to God, not only without personal transgression and defilement, but intrinsically holy in Himself. Thus, not only was there no need for Him to offer any sacrifice for Himself, but His oblation for His people was of infinite value and eternal validity. "This he did once" announces the glorious fact of its absolute sufficiency—that it requires no repetition on His part, nor augmentation from us.

The use of italics is also largely a matter of interpretation. In ordinary literature they are employed for emphasis, but in our Bibles they are inserted by the translators with the design of making the sense clearer. Sometimes they are helpful, sometimes harmful. In the Old Testament, it is, in certain instances, more or less necessary, for the Hebrew has no copulative, but joins the subject unto the predicate, which gives an emphasis of abruptness to which the English mind is unaccustomed, as in "From the sole of the foot even unto the head—no soundness in it...Your country—desolate, your cities—burned with fire" (Isa 1:6-7). In the great majority of cases, this writer *ignores* the added words of men, considering it more reverent so to do, as well as obtaining more directly the force of the original. In some instances, the translators quite missed the real thought of the passage, as in the last clause of Exodus 2, where, "God had respect unto them" ought to be "had respect unto *it*," i.e., His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob of the previous verse. The last word of Daniel 11:32 is too restrictive—doing His will also is included.

But it is in the New Testament that the majority of mistakes occur. There we find a number of passages where needless additions have been made and where the meaning has been misapprehended, falsified, by the words the translators inserted. In Romans 8:27, "the *will* of God" is too contracted—His covenant, His word, His grace and mercy are not to be excluded. The "from another" in 1 Corinthians 4:7 unduly narrows the scope—from what *you* were as unregenerate is not to be excluded. "Inspirer" is preferable to "author" in 1 Corinthians 14:33, for God is the Decreeer of all things (Rom 11:36), yet not the Prompter of confusion. It is very doubtful if "the nature of" is permissible in Hebrews 2:16, for it is not the divine incarnation which is there in view (*that* we have in verse 14), but rather the purpose and consequence of the same. Its opening, "For" looks back, remotely, to verses 9 and 10, immediately, to verses 14 and 15. In verse 16, a reason is given why Christ tasted death for "every *son*," and why He destroyed (annulled the power of) the devil in order to liberate his captives. It was because He laid hold of (espoused) not the cause of (the fallen) angels, but the chosen seed of Abraham—thus, a foundation is here laid for what is said in verse 17.

Second Corinthians 6:1 is a yet worse instance, for by inserting the words "with Him" a thought entirely foreign to the apostle's scope is introduced, and ground given for horrible boasting. Paul was referring to the joint efforts of God's servants, the one planting and another watering (1Co 3:5-6). To say they were "workers together with God" would be to divide the honours. If any supplement be made, it should be *under* Him. The ministers of the new covenant were fellow workers, merely "helpers" of the joy (1:24) of God's people. So too the correct punctuation (as the Greek requires) of 1 Corinthians 3:9 is, "For God's *we* are: fellow workers; God's heritage *ye* are." One other example must suffice. The added "to bring us" in Galatians 3:24 quite misses the scope of the passage, and inculcates false doctrine. The apostle was not there treating with the experiential side of things, but the *dispensational* (as the opening verses of the next chapter demonstrate), not with the unsaved as such, but with God's people under the old covenant. The Law never brought a single sinner to Christ. The Holy Spirit does *that*, and though He employs the Law to convict souls of their need of Christ, the Gospel is the means which He employs to make them close with Christ.

Now one or two brief observations and we conclude this lengthy series. The work of the expositor is to bring out the grammatical and spiritual meaning of each verse he deals with. In order to do that, he must approach it without bias or prejudice, and diligently *study* it. He must neither assume that he knows its meaning nor take his doctrinal views from others. Nor is he to form his own opinions from a few detached verses, but carefully compare his ideas with the entire Analogy of Faith. Each verse requires to be critically examined and every word thoroughly weighed. Thus, he is to note the “*is* accepted” of Acts 10:35, and not “shall be,” and the “are” (rather than “shall be”) in Hebrews 3:6, 14—to change the tense mentally in those verses would inculcate false doctrine. Minute care is needed if we are to observe the “the Lord and Saviour” of 2 Peter 2:20 (not “their”), and the “our” and not “your” of 1 Corinthians 15:3. Finally, it is not the interpreter’s province to explain what God has *not explained* (Deu 29:29), i.e., His “ways” (Rom 11:33), miracles, etc.

