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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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STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink

OLD THINGS

1. *The old man.* “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom 6:6). Alas, how few of God’s people today *do* “know this” and enjoy the settled peace which accompanies a scriptural apprehension thereof. It is one of those profound doctrinal statements in which this epistle abounds. It has to do with the objective side of things and not the subjective, having reference to a past judicial transaction and not to a present experiential process or future attainment. In the preceding verses, the apostle had affirmed the identification of believers with Christ, their being legally one with Him in His death and resurrection. Here he states a threefold consequence thereof. First, their old man was crucified with Christ—the aorist tense is used, denoting a completed act in the past. According to the righteous judgment of God, when Christ was crucified, all His people were associated with and included in His penal sufferings and death. It is important to note that the verb is in the passive voice, for this crucifixion was accomplished wholly outside of themselves in the person of their Head. Nowhere in Scripture are Christians exhorted to crucify themselves, for it is a form of death which cannot be self-inflicted. What is required from them is that they reckon or account themselves to be dead indeed unto sin (Rom 6:11), and act accordingly—denying self, mortifying their lusts, taking up their cross, and following the holy example which Christ has left them.

Most of the commentators regard the “old man” as synonymous with our corruptions, but against this there are weighty objections. It fails to discriminate between the person himself and his depraved nature—a difference which Paul was most careful to preserve throughout (Rom 7:15-25). Moreover, the “old man” is distinguished from the “body of sin” in the next clause; so too in “the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Eph 4:22). No, “our old man” is what we were from the very beginning of our existence, before divine grace found us, namely *our Adam standing*, our natural selves; and

that was, in the reckoning of God, executed upon the cross. It was so in order that "the body of sin might be destroyed." The body of sin is our evil nature, the "flesh" of John 3:6, that which defiled our natural selves. It is called "the body of this death" in Romans 7:24, where the reference is not to the physical body, but to that which corrupts it. Sin is here personified, called a "body" because it is an organized entity, comprising a complete system of unholy dispositions, diffusing its pernicious influence through all the faculties of our being. Again, sin is here designated a "body" in keeping with the previous clause, where "crucifixion" is in view: in Colossians 3:5, some of its hideous "members" are described. But what is meant by "that the body of sin might be *destroyed*"? Not annihilated, but annulled.

Because of the believer's federal union with Christ, he was "co-crucified," for such is the literal meaning of the Greek. God's *design* in that arrangement was that his sin, root and branch, should be made an end of in His sight; that is, as He is considered in His official character as the Judge. The object of this was that his sin should be done away with entirely. In the original, it is the strongest possible word: the same as in "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1Co 15:26). That body of sin and death, which is such a grief unto the Christian, is, by virtue of his co-crucifixion with Christ, as much destroyed in the eyes of the divine law as death will be destroyed when it is swallowed up in victory. In 1 Corinthians 1:28, the same Greek word is rendered "bring to nought," in Galatians 3:17, "make...of none effect," in 1 Timothy 1:10, "abolished," in 11 Corinthians 3:14, "done away." The *effect* of this is "that henceforth we should not serve sin," or more literally "be slaves to sin." The full wages of sin have been paid, and therefore the believer is freed from his old master. The body of sin can no longer be the ruler of those who died in and with Christ, for in that death the scepter of the tyrant was taken away. Sin still puts in its claims, but it has no authority to enforce them. Christ alone has the right to govern us. Having been made free from sin, we have become servants to God (Rom 6:22). To Him alone we are to yield ourselves, refusing sin's solicitations.

Now concerning *our apprehension thereof*, "Knowing this," says the apostle. The only way we can do so is by divine revelation. We know nothing about our co-crucifixion with Christ by actual experience. There is not a saint on earth whose own history informs him that his whole body of sin has been brought to naught, made of none effect, abolished, done away. And from his daily inward conflicts, it appears very much to the contrary that he has been liberated from sin. Nevertheless, these things are so, though not as matters of perception but of reception—by believing them to be so because God affirms them, setting to our seal that He is true (Joh 3:33). Thus "*knowing* that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more" (Rom 6:9), we know that not by our feelings or through our senses, but by the sure testimony of God. So it is with the three things stated in Rom 6:6. It is in no wise a matter of practical acquaintance, for neither the work of Christ for us nor the work of the Spirit in us has effected any improvement or change in our sinful nature. Every believer died (legally) with Christ on the cross, for he was federally in Him as represented by Him. The condemning sentence of the Law was executed upon him. Again, "We *know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have [so infallibly certain is it]...an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2Co 5:1). And again, "*Know ye not* that ye shall judge angels?" (1Co 6:3). Those are certainties of faith!

“Lie not one to another, seeing that *ye have* put off the “old man” with his deeds” (Col 3:9). This presents quite another aspect of our subject, though one that is closely related to the former, growing out of it. As the result of Christ’s work for His people, the Holy Spirit is sent to them, and one of the effects of His regenerating them is that they are brought to loathe themselves and their former manner of life. At conversion, they put off the old man by renouncing the world, the flesh and the devil, and by resolving to live a new life unto the glory of their new Master. Their language then is, “O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but [henceforth] by thee only will we make mention of thy name” (Isa 26:13). They are thoroughly ashamed of themselves for having served such evil tyrants, and now determine, by grace, to render submission unto God alone. Now, says the apostle, lie not one to another, and eschew whatever is inconsistent with and contradictory to the profession you have made. Refuse to yield obedience to any of the dictates of your old self.

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Eph 4:22). That is the final reference to the “old man”, and it gives completeness to the others. The first is a doctrinal statement treating of the legal aspect. The second is a factual reference to what we did at our conversion. This is a practical exhortation bidding us to shun everything incompatible with the resolutions we made when we first gave ourselves unto the Lord. We are to abandon our previous ways as a worn-out filthy garment that is thrown away. That outward conduct which issues from our old self must be eschewed, and inward desires after forbidden things sternly denied. All behavior that conflicts with a Christian profession is to be studiously avoided, all carnal affections unsparingly mortified.

2. *Old leaven*. “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye *are* unleavened” (1Co 5:7). Taken by itself, that verse appears to present a paradox, for what occasion is there to purge out leaven if they already be “unleavened”?—if unleavened, what old leaven could be purged out? Yet in the light of the distinctions the Scriptures themselves draw regarding the “old man”, there should be no difficulty in understanding this passage, and though it be couched in typical language, its meaning is easily interpreted. Allusion is made to the Passover feast, when every Israelite was required to seek out all leaven and put it away from his house (Exo 12:15, 19; 13:7). Leaven is the symbol of sin, and the apostle applies the type to the local assembly, calling upon it to cast out everything offensive to God and contrary to His holiness, thus observing a strict discipline (verse 13) and maintaining Gospel purity. The Corinthians had been sadly remiss in this, allowing both moral (verses 1-5) and doctrinal evil (15:12).

The apostle enforced his exhortation for the local church to put matters right by a number of weighty considerations. First, he reminded that that “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (verse 6)—if evil be tolerated, it leads to more ungodliness. The presence of a worldling in their midst would corrupt the believers by his evil example. Second, by their fidelity thus, they would be “a new lump” (verse 7) and not a heterogeneous mixture of regenerate and unregenerate souls. Third, they were “unleavened” (verse 7) in Christ, in their standing before God, and they were obligated to make that good practically in their behavior. Fourth, the sacrifice of Christ their Passover (verse 7) demanded this (see Titus

2:14). Fifth, neither our “feast” of communion with God nor the Lord’s supper can be observed with leavened bread (verse 8).

EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

26. The World Described (2:16)

*“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh,
and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,
is not of the Father, but is of the world.”*

The divine precepts ought to be as highly esteemed by us as God’s promises; and if they be not, something is seriously wrong with our hearts. They are as much an integral part of God’s Word, are accorded a place of quite as much prominence, are revealed by the same Spirit, and rest upon the same foundation. They proceed from the self-same love, and are designed equally for our good. When God gave His commandments unto Israel, it was that, by their obedience, “it might be well with them, and with their children” (Deu 5:29). The preceptive part of the Gospel is designed to be our director in the path of filial obedience, the rule of our duty, and the standard at which our love is ever to aim. If it be true that God is glorified by our faith as we trust Him to fulfill His pledges, it is none the less a fact that He is honoured by our submission as we cheerfully keep His statutes. And if it be true that our hearts are strengthened and our lives enriched by laying hold of and feeding upon God’s promises, it is equally the case that we are greatly the gainers by cherishing and heeding His precepts. “His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good” (Deu 10:13). Walking according to God’s Law is the only way to true happiness (Psa 119:1).

What has just been pointed out receives illustration in connection with our observing the precept of 1 John 2:15. It is both our wisdom and our welfare to comply with the prohibition, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world,” for, as a whole and in all its parts, it is the deadly enemy of God’s children. One of the distinctive properties of the Bible is that all its precepts are directed unto our affections. They are not intended to fashion the mere external, but are meant to mould the inner man. Satan is well aware of that, and therefore he is ever seeking to turn our affections away from God and wed them to the world. The very fact that we are enjoined, “Love not the world” intimates that its supreme assaults are upon the heart. It is only by heeding this commandment that we shall be delivered from the world’s fatal snares. It is therefore a matter of the deepest practical moment that we walk in separation from this deadly menace to spirituality, for in proportion as we fail to do so will there be a forfeiting of God’s smile and the loss of peace of conscience. Any measure of love of the world will stunt our growth, deprive us of joy in the Holy Spirit, undermine our assurance, and bring down upon us the chastening rod of God.

That is God's design in regeneration: "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes" (Eze 36:27). But though the Christian has renounced the world, with its God-defying and self-pleasing ways, yet for the enjoyment of communion with God in Christ, and to avoid the grieving of His Spirit, he needs to be continually on his guard that the world does not again possess his heart, for not only is it all around him, but its dominating principle (the "flesh") is still within him—a deputy to do its evil work. By nature we were wedded to the world, thoroughly entangled in its vanities, and naught but love to God and heavenly things delivers the heart from its thralldom. It is indeed a most humbling thing that believers should be told to "love not the world," yet they require that injunction, and ought to turn the same into earnest prayer, daily seeking grace that they may be divinely enabled to decline its temptations and to mortify their desires after its carnal attractions, remembering that by the cross of Christ the world is (legally) crucified unto them and they unto the world (Gal 6:14). If we diligently endeavour to cultivate a spirit of contentment with the temporal portion, which God has given us, however small a one it be, then we shall be delivered from lusting after the husks which the swine feed on.

It is altogether unreasonable for any man to look for satisfaction in anything which this world has to offer him, for how can material and transient things meet the needs of a soul that has been made for eternity? No real, still less any lasting, good is to be found in this world. Abundant proof of that is supplied by the book of Ecclesiastes. There we have placed upon imperishable record the experiences of one who was permitted to gratify every lust of the flesh. The resources at his command were practically limitless. He was a king, and not a poor one, but possessed of abundant means, so that he was able to procure everything that money could purchase. He surrounded himself with every conceivable luxury, form of pleasure, and object of beauty. His palace was filled unstintingly with everything the senses could crave. And what was the outcome? Was he able to say, "All is very good, I can now rest in the enjoyment of what I have acquired?" Very far from it. After he had taken his fill of all its pleasures, drunk deeply from all this world's streams, he declared that, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." And, my reader, if Solomon could find no satisfaction in all his worldly possessions and pursuits, none who comes after him will ever do so.

Since God's commandments are designed for our good, a careless neglect of them cannot but be harmful. In proportion, as we imbibe the spirit of the world, our breathings after God are stifled and the soul becomes dull in holy duties. As one cannot handle pitch without soiling oneself, neither can a believer take a deep interest in the politics of the world without suffering loss spiritually. Conversely, the more we delight ourselves in the Lord, the less relish shall we have for the things on which the unregenerate set their hearts. The two things work in inverse ratio: love to God weans the soul from love to the world. Now the outstanding evidence of love is obedience: a fixed resolve to please Christ in all things. As He declared, "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (Joh 14:23). Then how fervently should we pray for more love to Him (Eph 3:17-18; Phi 1:9). How we should meditate daily upon His manifold perfections and feast on His excellency. How diligently we should cultivate a closer and more constant communion with Him. How we should keep short accounts with God, and make a practice of promptly confessing every known sin. How we should discipline ourselves and love the creature in subordination to Him.

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (verse 16). As the opening “For” indicates, that is said by way of explanation and amplification of the previous verse, which is an instance of the gracious condescension of our God. We ought ever to give a ready and cheerful obedience to the divine precepts on the bare authority of their Author, without His advancing any reasons for them, and whether or not we can perceive the wisdom and benevolence of the same. Sufficient for us to act on the merely revealed will of the Most High. It is not for us to ask the why or the wherefore, but to comply with His demands without demur or delay. But sometimes it pleases the Lord to elucidate, as He expounded His parables unto the apostles. Such is the case here: in support of the prohibition of His “love not the world,” He adds that all that pertains to it is evil, corrupt, and therefore to set our affections upon it is quite incompatible with devotion to God; equally so does love for such a world make clear demonstration that the love of the Father is not in such a person.

Here are the contents and sum of the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It is clear that the apostle is not referring to the natural world, which is full of the glorious handiwork of its Creator; but to the corrupt world of sense and sin, all in it which is esteemed by its carnal citizens, which shapes their thoughts, moves their affections, directs and consumes their energies. Those evil propensities and principles are said to be “in the world,” yet it is evident that they are principally in the subject rather than in the object. They are said to be “in the world” because the world gets into the heart, incorporates itself in the affections, and occupies its throne. As faith and God’s promises should be “mixed” (Heb 4:2), so temptations twine themselves around men’s lusts. Thus we do not have to go very far in order to frame a Scriptural definition of what constitutes the corrupt “world”: it is not something outside us, but within ourselves. It is not that which our natural hand can touch or our natural eyes see, but that which fallen man carries in his own bosom. The world is simply the aggregate of all the hearts of unregenerate men that now dwell upon the earth. The external world only carries into practice the principles acting in its subjects, putting into operation the sin, which is ever working in them.

The things that are both in and of the world are divided into three classes, according to the three dominant inclinations of depraved human nature. “The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” are the three harpies of man’s polluted soul to which the things of the world minister. Those are the prolific wombs from which issue all our sinful acts: the roots which convey life and sap unto that which appears openly above the ground; the branches on which grow all the evil fruits which abound in human life. Those are the “strongholds” of Satan, which command all about them. They are the mighty conquerors of all mankind. It was so at the beginning, for it was through those avenues that the serpent attacked and overcame Eve. The inspired account is very brief, but its language corresponds exactly to what is here before us. First, we are told that, “the woman saw that the tree was good for food”: there was “the lust of the flesh” at work. Second, “and that it was pleasant to the eyes”: there was “the lust of the eyes” operating. Third, “and a tree to be desired to make one wise”; there was “the pride of life” active, and yielding to the same, she disobeyed her Maker and took of the fruit.

Let us now take a separate look at each of these evil propensities: “evil” we say, for sin has so vitiated the whole of man’s being that though the objects that God has provided for his needs be wholesome, yet the affection with which men crave them is impure.

When the term “*flesh*” is employed in the Scriptures with a moral force, it is commonly used in the larger sense, as taking the whole of that corrupt nature which we inherited from Adam and bring with us into this world. So in its wider signification “the lusts of the flesh” is an expression which usually takes in all the works of our corrupt nature, whether in the understanding, by vain imaginations and evil thoughts; in the affections, by inordinate longing or unlawful inclinations; or in the will, by perversity and stubbornness. But here, since they are distinguished from the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, the “lusts of the flesh” are to be taken more strictly and narrowly for the sensual appetite: the immoderate craving for soft and sumptuous living, the intemperate use of pleasures, meats and drinks, all such things as gratify the body. While it be true that in the catalogue given in Galatians 5:19-21, the horrible products of the flesh are headed by different forms of immorality, yet they are by no means confined thereto.

“*The lusts of the flesh,*” then, include the giving way to any form of intemperance, as well as uncleanness: the craving for and responding to any of the things which excite the irregularities and inordinate hankerings of the animal appetites, as in the case of Esau, who made a god of his belly. They comprehend every form of pampering the body, whether it be a feeding of it more than is required for its natural sustenance, or spending more time in sleep than is necessary. When God created man, He endowed him with an appetite for food, for marriage, for the beauties of Eden; but sin perverts those appetites and carries them to excess, so that their gratification becomes, only too often, gluttony, uncleanness, covetousness. Everything that pleases either the body or the mind, and gives us pleasure distinct from God Himself, may be included therein. Though men differ considerably in their constitutions, interests, pursuits, habits, and objects of desire, yet from first to last it all comes to the same thing; it is not of the Spirit or of grace; whatever be craved, whether something gross or refined, it is for the pleasing of carnal self. We have had but two common fathers, Adam and Noah, and both fell by indulging their fleshly appetites: Adam by eating, Noah by drinking.

“*And the lust of the eyes*”; that is the second main avenue by which the world gains entrance into the heart. We contract far more sin through our visive¹ organs than any of us are aware of, for they are the inlets to the mind, setting objects before the fancy which leave an impression and taint which are very difficult to get rid of. It is not so much the object beheld as the pleasure felt in seeing it, and the longing to possess the same. This then is the spring of wantonness, covetousness, and avarice. But as from the lust of the flesh proceed not only the gluttony, drunkenness, and immorality which the baser and more brutish part of mankind is taken up with, but also the inordinate love of pleasure, vain company, and carnal delights with which the more refined are so often bewitched, so the lust of the eyes is not to be restricted to an evil gazing upon unlawful objects, but from it spring all forms of earthly-mindedness, and immoderate yearnings for the acquisition of a thousand things, such as costly apparel, jewels, elaborate home furnishings, sight-seeing, etc. In the mental

¹ visive – visual; pertaining to vision.

realm, it creates a curiosity to pry into the unseen and tamper with things which pertain to the darkness rather than to the light.

Scripture abounds in solemn examples of those who fell into grievous and fatal sins through indulging the lusts of the eyes: Lot's wife (Gen 19:26), Shechem (Gen 34:2), Potiphar's wife (Gen 39:7), Achan (Jos 7:21), Samson (Jdg 16:1), David (2Sa 11:2). Like children, we can scarcely see a pleasant object without wanting to possess it: Ahab, not content with his palace gardens, fell sick for Naboth's vineyard (1Ki 21:4). What need is there, then, for us to pray, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way" (Psa 119:37). That is a request for restraining grace, that we may be enabled to look away from whatever entices us to evil. It is by our optics being fastened upon the world's attractions that the heart is infected with the love of them, and thereby alienated from divine things. But prayer is not sufficient: there must also be a walking circumspectly and cautiously. If we pray "lead us not into temptation," we are also required to watch that we do not enter into it (Mat 26:41). The more we are engaged with the beauties of the Lord of glory, the more will our hearts be delivered from the glittering toys of the world, and the less envy shall we have when beholding "the prosperity of the wicked" (Psa 73:3).

"*And the pride of life,*" which is the last of the evil triad. The word for "life" here is not *zoe*, which expresses essential being, but *bios*, which has to do more with the eternal life of man as pertaining to the natural world. The pride of life consists of vying with and outvying one another; in every possible way. It gives rise to a conceit of ourselves and a contempt of our neighbours, producing a spirit of self-superiority and arrogance. It grasps after power, seeks the chief places in the world, coveting positions of elevation, authority and influence, so that one may have dominion over his fellows. It may assume the extreme form of the tyrannical dictator, but it is just as truly active in the woman who aspires to be the mistress of a few servants. It thirsts after admiration, adulation, and applause. It strives after the honours and dignities of the world, craves a position in society which will convey prestige and repute. It therefore seeks a variety of situations and circumstances, which have in them an appearance of happiness and satisfaction in self-advancement. It loves pomp and parade, is fond of flattering titles and a glittering show. It covets a name or renown, eagerly pursues popularity, so that one may be distinguished above others.

This "pride of life" expresses itself in many ways. It evidences itself in an ostentatious display, like the strutting of a peacock, so that there may be an outshining of our neighbours. It induces many to attempt the keeping up of an appearance which they can ill afford. It leads to much hypocrisy, a pretending to be and have what is possessed not: seen in facial make-up, the wearing of imitation jewelry, etc. It causes people to become the slaves of fashion and to be in bondage to the foolish conventions of the world, as, for example, extravagant and expensive funerals far beyond their means. Nor is this affectation of repute, lust for power and love of ostentation by any means confined unto those who have the largest incomes and most opportunity for gratifying themselves. It works just as powerfully in the poor and humble as it does in the rich and exalted. The peasant may be loud in his condemnation of the greed of the capitalist and denounce his prodigalities, but place him in the same position of affluence and influence, and often he proves to be worse than those whom he formerly censured: it is only the force of his present circumstances which prevents him from making the show he would like to.

The “pride of life” includes much more than either the lust of the flesh or the lust of the eyes. They are restricted either by their end—the satisfying of our carnal desires, particularly those of the body—or by their instruments—the gratifying of the senses. But pride is not thus restricted. Man is ever prone to be puffed up by conceit of his own excellence: his strength, beauty, wisdom, talents, graces, and achievements. It is, then, accurately designed, for it spreads through all the enjoyments and comforts of life: the entire span of our mortal existence, from the cradle to the grave, being its sphere. As **Thomas Manton (1620-1677)** remarked, “He ascribes a universal and unlimited influence, and calls it ‘the pride of life’ because it taints every action, it serves itself of every enjoyment, it mingles with other lusts. Other vices destroy only their contraries: covetousness destroys liberality, drunkenness sobriety; but pride destroys them all. There is nothing so low but it yields fuel to pride: the hair, which is but an excrement, is often hung as a bush and ensign of vanity. And there is nothing so high and sacred but pride can abase it; like mistletoe, it grows on any tree, but most upon the best.”

It will therefore be evident that these springs of evil are set forth in a climactic order: sensuality, covetousness, pride. Little as the majority may suppose, the last one is more heinous than the others. Sensuality is the corruption of the lower part of man’s being, an unlawful gratifying of his bodily appetites; but pride is the corruption of the higher part of his nature—the lifting up of his understanding and spirit. By sensuality man sinks to the level of the beasts, but by pride he rears up against God, and enters into fellowship with the devil, for “being lifted up with pride” was his condemnation (1Ti 3:6; and cf. Isa 14:12-14). It was bad enough for the conceited king of Babylon to exclaim, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?” (Dan 4:30), but it was far worse when the haughty monarch of Egypt asked, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?” (Exo 5:2). Thus does this abominable pride inflate puny creatures of the dust and cause them to exalt themselves against the Most High.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

78. Dividing the Land

“And these are the countries which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for inheritance to them. By lot was their inheritance, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes and for the half tribe” (Jos 14:1-2). Joshua was now old and stricken in years, and before the time came when no man can work (Joh 9:4), the Lord had bidden him engage in the most important task of superintending the apportioning of Israel’s heritage (13:1, 6-7). Invested with divine authority to act as Israel’s head, manifestly enjoying the favour of the Lord, possessing the full confidence of the people as their tried and faithful leader, none other was so well suited to perform this particular work. But like all the other duties which he

had discharged, this one called also for the exercise of *faith*, for Joshua was now required to assign the entire country of Canaan which lay on the western side of Jordan—not only those portions of it which Israel had already conquered and taken possession of, but also the extensive sections which were still occupied by the Canaanites. This called for the most implicit confidence in the Lord—that He would grant the tribes possession thereof.

The land of Canaan had already been conquered, so far as its standing armies had been completely routed, its principal strongholds destroyed, and its kings slain. Yet much of its actual territory was still in the hands of its original inhabitants, who remained to be dispossessed. It is important to distinguish between the work which had been done by Joshua and that which still remained for Israel to do. He had overthrown the ruling powers, captured their forts, and subdued the Canaanites to such an extent as had given Israel firm foothold in the country. But he had not exterminated the population in every portion of it, yea, powerful nations still dwelt in parts thereof, as is clear from Judges 2:20-23 and 3:1-4, so that much was still demanded from Israel. Therein we behold again the accuracy of the type. The antitypical Joshua has secured for His people an inalienable title to the heavenly Canaan, yet formidable foes have to be overcome and much hard fighting done by them before they enter into their eternal rest. The same is true of the *present enjoyment* thereof. Faith and hope encounter much opposition ere there is an experiential participation of the goodly heritage which Christ has obtained for them.

The method appointed for the dividing of the land is deeply interesting and instructive. Two distinct principles were to operate, yet the giving place to the one appears to rule out the other. The first had been laid down by the Lord through Moses, “Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names. To many thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to few thou shalt give the less inheritance: to every one shall his inheritance be given according to those that were numbered of him” (Num 26:53-54—repeated in 33:54). There was the general rule which was to be followed in the dividing of Canaan and the quartering of the people—the size of the section allocated was to be determined by the numerical strength of the tribe to which it was given. Yet immediately after Numbers 26:54, a second law was named, “Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot: according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. According to *the lot* shall the possession thereof be divided between many and few.” That is to say, the disposition of the inheritance was to be determined by the sovereign will of God, for the lot was regulated by Him and made known His pleasure.

Those two principles seem to be mutually incompatible, and we are not acquainted with any attempt to show the agreement of the one with the other. It is the age-old problem of the conjunction of the divine and human elements. In this instance, the human by the dimensions of the several tribes, the divine by God’s determining their respective portions. Yet, in the case now before us, no real difficulty is presented. The larger tribes would still obtain the biggest sections, but the “lot” specified the *particular* situation in Canaan which was to be theirs. Neither Joshua, Eleazar, nor the heads of the tribes were free to dispose of the land according to their own ideas or desires. The final locations were reserved to the providence of God, to whose imperial will all must acquiesce, howsoever contrary to their thoughts and wishes. Such an arrangement not only accorded unto God His proper place in the transaction, but it also precluded the exercise of any spirit of partiality or favoritism

on the part of Israel's leaders, and at the same time served effectually to close the mouths of the people from murmuring.

The more those two apparently conflicting principles be pondered, the more shall we admire the wisdom of Him who appointed the same. Obviously, it was most equitable and advisable that the larger tribes should be accorded more extensive quarters than the lesser ones, for their requirements would be the greater. Yet, fallen human nature being what it is, it is equally evident that had Israel been left entirely unto themselves, the weaker tribes would have been deprived of their rightful portions. For if not entirely denied a separate heritage, they would most probably have been obliged to submit unto having the least desirable sections of the land. Nor would there have been any redress, for in such a case (numerical) might would be right. It was therefore necessary for there to be a divine supervision, not only in fixing the exact boundaries of each allotment, but also in determining their several locations, so that the mountainous sections and the fertile valleys should be fairly distributed. This is one of many examples where we see how the divine legislation protected the welfare of the weak, and how the Lord ever manifested a concern for the poor and needy.

Side by side with Joshua 14:1-2 should be placed Leviticus 25:23-28, "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land. If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold. And if the man have none to redeem it, and himself be able to redeem it; then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold it; that it may return unto his possession. But if he be not able to restore it to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it until the year of jubile: and in the jubile it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession." That was the divine law respecting the real estate of the Hebrews and the transferring of the same. A law by which the rights of rich and poor alike were fully and equitably safeguarded. In cases of need, property might be sold conditionally, but not absolutely so that the same should never again return to its original owner.

The above passages set forth a remarkable and unique *law of property*, displaying a wisdom wherein righteousness and mercy were blessedly intermingled, encouraging as it did individual enterprise, and yet also curbing greed. That disposition and arrangement was the very reverse of "state ownership," for the land was portioned out to the twelve tribes, and within the territory of each tribe the land was divided among its families. If hardship and poverty required a family to mortgage or sell its property, thereby an opportunity was offered unto the thrifty and ambitious to enlarge their holdings. But in the jubilee year, that property reverted to its seller, and thus the cupidity of "capitalists" was restrained, and thereby were they prevented from taking undue advantage of the distress of others by a permanent acquirement of their estates. Thus, the Bible not only teaches the right of the individual to own his own house (cf. Joh 19:27) and possess real estate (Act 4:34), but, by clear and necessary implication, condemns state ownership, which is a manifest violation of the rights and liberties of the individual. How many-sided and far-reaching is the teaching of Holy Writ!

“The Israelites had acquired the land by conquest, but they were not allowed to seize upon what they could, nor to have it all in common, nor to share it out by consent or arbitration; but, with solemn appeal to God Himself, to divide by lot; for Canaan was His land, and Israel were His people. This was likewise the readiest way of satisfying all parties, and preventing discontent and discord” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). Yet it should be pointed out that the basic law that operated here has also obtained all through human history. The Lord God is the Proprietor as well as the Governor of both heaven and earth, the sovereign Disposer of all the affairs of the children of men. He is the One who controls the courses of empires and determines the lives of dynasties, and has also decided the limits of each person’s territory. That principle is clearly enunciated in Deuteronomy 32:8, “When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he *set the bounds* of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.” And none of those nations ever has or will exceed those “bounds” which the Almighty originally prescribed.

As truly as the divine “lot” assigned the particular parts of Palestine which the different tribes of Israel should possess, so has God predestined the precise portions of the earth which each nation shall occupy. “When He gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment” (Pro 8:29), He gave a similar edict unto the nations. And military leaders impelled by the lust of conquest, and aggressive dictators aspiring to world dominion, have discovered that, like the restless sea (which is the scriptural symbol of the nations: Dan 7:2 and cf. Rev 17:15), God has set a bound which they “could not pass,” “and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it” (Jer 5:22 and cf. Job 38:11). Men like Napoleon, the Kaiser, and Hitler might be dissatisfied with the allotments of providence, chafe against the restraints it had placed upon their greed, rage, and roar against their neighbours, and attempt to acquire their divinely-given portions, but vain were their efforts. Thus will any present or future aspirant yet find out.

Deuteronomy 32:8 informs us that God had before His mind the children of Israel when He divided to the nations their inheritance, for, as the apostle told his saints, “All things are for *your sakes*” (2Co 4:15). Thus, there was a partial reference to the seven nations whose place and portion were assigned them in Canaan, so that the Hebrews found it in a high state of cultivation, provided with towns and houses, all prepared for their use! In like manner, the favoured land in which the writer and the reader live, with all its natural and national advantages, and the temporal provisions we enjoy therein, is as much the special appointment and gift of God as Canaan was to Israel, and as truly demands our gratitude. God has the sole disposing of this life and the interests thereof, as truly as He has of the life to come. No man has a foot of land more than God has laid out for him in His all-wise providence. So whatever of this world’s goods he obtains, let him bear in mind, “Thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is *he* that giveth thee power to get wealth” (Deu 8: 18). This world is not governed by blind chance, but by divine wisdom. However possessions come to us, they are from God as the first cause.

God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and *the bounds* of their habitation” (Act 17:26). As Augustus Toplady (1740-1778) remarked thereon, “The very places which

people inhabit are here positively averred to be determined and fore-appointed by God. And it is very right it should be so, else some places would be overstocked with inhabitants, and others deserted....Whereas by God's having fore-appointed the bounds of our habitations, we are properly sifted over the face of the earth, so as to answer all the social and high purposes of divine wisdom." God has appointed where each person shall reside, the particular country in which he should be born, and the very city, town, village, and house in which we shall dwell, and how long he shall remain there—for our times are in His hand (Psa 31:15). A striking illustration of that is seen in connection with both the birthplace and the subsequent abode of the Saviour. It was ordained that He should be born at Bethlehem, and though circumstances appeared to prevent, God set in motion a Roman census throughout the whole of its empire, requiring Joseph and Mary to journey unto Bethlehem (Luk 2:1-6). Later, they resided at the appointed Nazareth (Mat 2:23).

The distribution of Canaan was *by lot*. To ascertain precisely what it consisted of and how the mind of God was made known therein, Scripture has to be carefully compared with Scripture, and even then we cannot be quite certain of the exact method followed. The first time (which is always of most importance) the lot is mentioned is in Leviticus 16:8, "And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat", i.e., to determine which of them should be used for the Godward side of the atonement (propitiation) and which the manward (the removal of sins). Thus, the first occurrence of "the lot" associates it with Israel's high priest, and shows that it was employed in determining the will of God. So too "Eleazar the priest" is expressly mentioned both in Numbers 34:17 and Joshua 14:1, in connection with the transaction we are here considering. Likewise, when the claim was made by the daughters of Zelophehad to a portion of Canaan, their case was determined before Eleazar the priest, Joshua, and the princes of the tribes (Jos 17:3-6), because the use of the lot was there involved, as the word "fell," or more literally "came forth" (verse 5) indicates.

Personally, we incline strongly to the view taken by the author of *The Companion Bible* (unprocurable today) that God's will in "the lot" was obtained by means of the mysterious "Urim and Thummim," which were probably two precious stones, for there was no commandment given to "make" *them*, and which were "put in the breastplate" of the high priest (Exo 28:30). Apparently they were "put" in a bag in "the ephod" or robe of the high priest, which bag was formed by doubling a part of the garment—note "doubled" in Exodus 28:16, and "inward" (verse 26). In Proverbs 16:33, we are told, "The lot is cast into the lap [Hebrew "bosom," which is put for the clothing covering it—cf. Exodus 4:6-7]; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD." Thus, "the lot" was for the purpose of giving a judgment or infallible decision, and the breastplate is designated "the breastplate of judgment" (Exo 28:15), because by it God's judgment or verdict was given when the same was needed. Compare 1 Samuel 28:6, where the Lord refused to oblige the apostate Saul.

Thus, it seems that when the lot was needed the high priest placed his hand in the bag or pocket behind his breastplate, and drew forth either the Urim or the Thummim, the one signifying Yes, and the other No. For in Joshua 18:11, we are told that the lot "came up," in 19:1, that it "came forth," and in 19:17, that it "came out." Joshua 19:51 informs us that this important transaction took place at the entrance to the house of God, "These are the inheritances, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fa-

thers of the tribes of the children of Israel, divided for an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.” This casts light upon a number of passages treating of incidents in the later history of Israel. Thus, when they were uncertain as to whether or not they should go up against Benjamin again, they came to the house of God and inquired of the Lord, and it was Phinehas the high priest who obtained answer for them (Jdg 20:26-28). In Ezra 2:61-63, no verdict could be given unless the high priest were present, with his breastplate of judgment, with “the lot,” Urim and Thummim, which would give JEHOVAH’s decision—guilty or innocent.

It is to be duly noted that, in addition to Eleazar the priest and Joshua himself, “the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel” (14:1) were also present when the official distribution of the land was made. This was in obedience to the divine injunction given through Moses that “one prince of every tribe” (Num 34:18) should be taken to serve as commissioners on this occasion. They were entrusted with the oversight, to be witnesses that everything had been conducted fairly and properly in the distribution of the land according to the size of the tribes and in the casting of the lot. Thus would they protect the rights of the tribes, preclude all suspicion that any partiality had been shown, and be qualified authoritatively to determine any controversy which might later arise. “Public affairs should be so managed, as not only to give their right to all, but, if possible, to give satisfaction to all that they have right done them” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). It is very striking to note that God not only selected those commissioners during the lifetime of Moses, but actually *named* them all (Num 34:19-29), which thereby guaranteed their preservation from death during the long interval, either from natural causes or from the fighting in Canaan.

DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

10. Its Evidences, Part 2

The depravity of the Gentiles may not excite surprise, since their religions, instead of restraining it, furnished a stimulus to the most horrible vices, in the examples of their profligate gods. But were the Jews any better? In considering their case, we shall not only turn from the general to the particular, but also have before us that people which were designed by God to be a *specimen* of human nature. The divine Being singled out and separated them from all other nations, showered upon them His benefits, strengthened them with many encouragements, wrought miracles on their behalf, awed them with the most fearful threatenings, chastised them severely and frequently, and inspired His servants to give us an accurate account of their response. And what a wretched response it was! Excepting the conduct of a few individuals among them, which, being the effect of divine grace, makes nothing against what we are here demonstrating—in fact, only serves to intensify the sad contrast—the entire history of the Jews was nothing but a series of rebellions and contin-

ued departures from the living God. No other nation so highly favoured and richly blessed by heaven, and none made such a wretched return unto the divine goodness.

Provided with a Law which was drawn up and proclaimed by God Himself, which was enforced by the most winsome and also the most awesome sanctions, within a few days of its reception, the whole nation was engaged in obscenely worshipping a golden calf. Unto them were vouchsafed the divine oracles and ordinances, but they were neither appreciated nor heeded. In the wilderness, they greatly provoked the Holy One by their murmurings, their lustings after the flesh-pots of Egypt (Exo 16:2-3) when supplied with "angels' food" (Psa 78:25), their prolonged idolatry (Act 7:42-43), and their unbelief (Heb 3:18). After they received for an inheritance the land of Canaan, they soon evinced their base ingratitude, so that the Lord had to say to His sorrowing servant, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (1Sa 8:7). So averse were they to God and His ways that they hated, persecuted, and slew the messengers which He sent to reclaim them from their wickedness. "They kept not the covenant of God, and *refused* to walk in his law" (Psa 78:10). They declared, "I have loved strangers, and after them will I go" (Jer 2:25).

After furnishing proof in Romans 1 of the total depravity of the Gentile world, the apostle turned to the case of privileged Israel, and from their own Scriptures demonstrated that they were equally polluted, equally beneath the curse of God. Asking the question, "What then? are we better than they?" he answered, "No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin" (Rom 3:9). So too in 1 Corinthians 1, where the utmost scorn is thrown upon that which is highly esteemed among men, the Jew is placed upon the same level as the Gentile. There we are shown how God views the arrogant pretensions of the intellectual of this world. When he asks "Where is the wise?" (Rom 1:9) reference is made to the Grecian philosophers, who dignified themselves with that title. His very question is a pouring contempt on their proud claims. With all your boasted knowledge, have you discovered the true and living God? They are challenged to come forth with their schemes of religion. After all that you have taught others, what have you accomplished? Have you found out the way to eternal felicity? Have you learned how guilty sinners may have access to a holy God? So far from being wise men, God declares that such sages as Pythagoras and Plato were fools.

Then Paul asks, "Where is the scribe?" (1Co 1:20), who was the wise man, the esteemed teacher, among the Jews. He too was at just as great a distance from and just as ignorant of the true God. So far from possessing any true knowledge of Him, he was a bitter enemy to the same when it was proclaimed by His incarnate Son. Though the scribes enjoyed the inestimable advantage of possessing the Old Testament Scriptures, they were, in general, as ignorant of God's salvation as were the heathen philosophers. Instead of pointing to the death of the promised Messiah as the grand sacrifice for sin, they taught their disciples to depend upon the laws and ceremonies of Moses, and traditions of human invention. When Christ was manifested before them they were, therefore, so far from being the first to receive Him that they were His most bitter persecutors. Because He appeared before them in the form of a servant (Phi 2:7), that suited not their proud hearts. Though He was "full of grace and truth" (Joh 1:14), they saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him (Isa 53:3). Though He announced glad tidings, they refused to hearken thereto.

When Christ performed miracles of mercy before them, they would not believe in Him. Though He sought only their good, they returned Him naught but evil. Their language was, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luk 19:14).

The general neglect and even contempt which the Lord Jesus met with among the people affords a very humbling view of what our fallen human nature is, but the awful depths of human depravity were the most plainly evidenced by the scribes and Pharisees, the priests and elders. Though well acquainted with the prophets, and professing to wait for the Messiah, yet with desperate and merciless malignity, they sought His destruction. The whole course of their conduct shows that they acted *against* their convictions that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. Certainly they had full knowledge of His innocence of all which they charged against Him. This is evident from the plain intimation of the One who read their hearts, and who knew that they were saying within themselves, "This is the heir, come, let us kill him" (Mat 21:38). They were as untiring as they were unscrupulous in their malice. They, or their agents, dogged His steps from place to place, hoping that, in His more unguarded intercourse with His disciples, they might more readily entrap Him, or find something in His words or actions which they could distort into a ground of accusation. They seized every opportunity to poison the minds of the public against Him, and, not content with ordinary aspersions of His character, gave it out that He was ministering under the immediate inspiration of Satan.

Whence did such wicked treatment of the Son of God proceed? Whence but from the vile corruptions of their own hearts? "They hated me without a cause" (Joh 15:25), declared the Lord of glory. There was nothing whatever in either His character or His conduct which merited their vile contempt and enmity. They loved the darkness, and therefore hated the light (Joh 3:19). They were infatuated by their evil lusts and delighted to gratify the same. So too with their deluded followers, who gave a ready ear to false prophets who said, "Peace, peace" (Jer 6:14) to them, flattered them, and encouraged them in their carnality. Consequently, they could not tolerate that which was disagreeable to their depraved tastes and condemned their sinful ways, and therefore did "the people" as well as their chief priests and rulers cry out, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas" (Luk 23:13, 18). After they had hounded Him to a criminal's death, their ill will pursued Him to the grave, for they came to Pilate and demanded that he secure His sepulcher (Mat 27:64). When their effort was proved to be in vain, the high Sanhedrin of Israel bribed the soldiers who had attempted to guard the tomb, and with premeditated deliberation put a fearful lie into their mouths (Matt 28:11-15).

Nor did the enmity of Christ's enemies abate after He departed from this scene and returned to heaven. When His ambassadors went forth to preach His Gospel, they were arrested and forbidden to teach in the name of Jesus, and then released under threat of punishment (Act 4). Upon the apostles' refusal to comply, they were again thrown into prison and beaten (Act 5:40). Stephen, they stoned to death, James was beheaded, and many others were scattered abroad to escape persecution. Except where God was pleased to lay His restraining hand upon them, and those in whom He wrought a miracle of grace, Jews and Gentiles alike despised the Gospel, and willfully opposed its progress. In some cases, their hatred of the truth was less openly displayed than in others, yet it was none the less real. It has been the same ever since. However earnestly and winsomely the Gospel be

preached, it gains not those who hear it. For the most part, they are like those of our Lord's day—they "made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise" (Mat 22:5). The great majority are too unconcerned to seek after even a doctrinal knowledge of the truth. There are many who regard this sottishness of the unsaved as mere indifference, but actually it is something much worse than that, namely dislike of the heart for the things of God, direct antagonism to Him.

Their hostility is made evident by the way in which they treat the people of God. The closer the believer walks with his Lord, the more will he grate upon and be ill-treated by those who are strangers to Him. But "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake" (Mat 5:10). As one pointed out, "It is a strong proof of human depravity that men's curses and Christ's blessings should meet on the same persons. Who would have thought a man could be persecuted and reviled, and have all manner of evil said of him for *righteousness'* sake?" But do the ungodly really hate justice and integrity, and love those who defraud and wrong them? No, they do not dislike righteousness as it respects *their own* interests. It is only that species of it which owns the rights of God. If the saints would be content with doing justly and loving mercy, and could cease walking humbly with God, they might go through the world not only in peace, but with the approbation of the unregenerate, but "all that will *live godly* in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2Ti 3:12), because such a life reproves the ungodliness of the wicked. If compassion moves the Christian to warn his sinful neighbours of their danger, he is likely to be insulted for his pains. His best actions will be ascribed to the worst motives. Yet, so far from being cast down by such treatment, the disciple should rejoice that he is counted worthy to suffer a little for his Master's sake.

The depravity of men appears in their disowning of the divine Law set over them. It is the right of God to be the acknowledged Ruler of His creatures, yet they are never so well pleased as when they invade His prerogative, break His laws, and contradict His revealed will. How little is it realized that it is all one to repudiate His scepter and to repudiate His being. When we disown His authority, we disown His Godhead. There is in the natural man an averseness to having any acquaintance with the rule under which his Maker has placed him. "Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit should we have, if we pray to him?" (Job 21:14-15). That is seen in their unwillingness to use the means for obtaining a knowledge of His will. However eager they be in their quest for all other kinds of knowledge, however diligent in studying the formation, constitution, and ways of creatures, they refuse to acquaint themselves with their Creator. When made aware of some part of His will, they endeavour to shake it off. They do not "like to retain God in their knowledge" (Rom 1:28). If they succeed not, they have no pleasure in the consideration of such knowledge, but do their utmost to dismiss it from their minds.

If there be a class of the unregenerate who are exceptions to the general rule, those who attend church, make a profession of religion, and become "Bible students," they are motivated by pride of intellect and reputation. They are ashamed to be regarded as spiritual ignoramuses, and desire to have a good standing in religious circles. Thereby they secure a cloak of respectability, and often the esteem of God's own people. Nevertheless, they are graceless. They "hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom 1:18). *They* hold it, but *it* does

not grip, influence, and transform them. If they ponder it, it is not with delight. If they take pleasure therein, it is only because their store of information is increased, and they are better equipped to hold their own in a discussion. Their design is to inform their understanding, not to quicken their affection. There is far more hypocrisy than sincerity within the pale of the Church. Judas was a follower of Christ because he "had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (Joh 12:6), and not out of any love for the Saviour. Some have the faith or truth of God "with respect of persons" (Jam 2:1). They receive it not from the Fountain, but from the channel, so that very often the same truth delivered by another is rejected, which, when coming from the mouth (and fancy) of their idol, is regarded as an oracle. That is to make man and not God their rule, for though it be the truth which is acknowledged, yet it is not received in the love of the truth, but rather as what is given out by an admired instrument.

The depravity of human nature is seen in the sad and general *reversion to darkness* of a people after being favoured with the light. Even where God has been made known and His truth proclaimed, if He leaves men to the working of their evil hearts, they quickly fall back into a state of ignorance. Noah and his sons lived for centuries after the flood to acquaint the world with the perfections of God, yet all knowledge of Him soon disappeared. Abram and his father were idolators (Jos 24:2). Even after a man has experienced the new birth and become the subject of immediate divine influence, how much ignorance and error, imperfection and impropriety still remains!—just because he is not completely subject unto the Lord. The backslidings and partial apostasies of genuine Christians are an awful demonstration of the corruption of human nature. Our proneness to fall into error after divine enlightenment is solemnly illustrated by the Galatians. They had been instructed by Paul, and through the power of the Spirit had believed in the Saviour he proclaimed. So rejoiced were they that they received him "as an angel of God" (4:14). Yet in the course of a few years, many of those converts gave such ear to false teachers, and so far renounced their principles, that the apostle had to say of them, "I stand in doubt of you" (4:20). Look at Europe, Asia, Africa, after the preaching of the apostles and those who immediately followed them. Though the light of Christianity illuminated most sections of the Roman empire, it was speedily quenched, and gave place to the darkness. The greater part of the world fell victim to popery and Mohammedanism.

Nothing more forcibly exhibits the sinfulness of man than his *proneness to idolatry*—no other sin so strongly denounced or so severely punished by God. Idols are but the work of men's hands, and therefore inferior to themselves. How irrational then to *worship them*! Can human madness go farther than for men to imagine they can manufacture gods? Those who have sunk so low as to confide in a block of wood or stone have reached the extreme of idiocy. As Psalm 115:5-8 points out, "They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not....They that make them are like unto them"—as stupid, as incapable of hearing and seeing those things which belong to their salvation. Romanists and their imitators are no better than Bible-less heathen, for they pervert the spirituality and simplicity of divine worship by childish performances. God requires the worship of the soul, and they offer Him that of the body. He asks for the heart, they give Him the lips. He demands the homage of the understanding, and they mock Him with altars and crucifixes, candles and incense, gorgeous vestments and genuflections.

The corruption of human nature discovers itself *in little children*. As our fathers were wont to say, "That which is bred in the bone comes out in the flesh." And at what an early date does it do so! If there were any innate goodness in man, it would surely show itself during the days of his infancy, before virtuous principles were corrupted, and evil habits formed by his contact with the world. But do we find infants inclined to all that is pure and excellent, and disinclined to whatever be wrong? Are they meek, tractable, yielding readily to authority? Are they unselfish, magnanimous when another child seizes their toy? Far from it. The unvarying result of growth in human beings is that as soon as they be old enough to exhibit any moral qualities in human action, they display *evil ones*. Long before they are old enough to understand their own wicked tempers, they manifest self-will, greediness, deceitfulness, anger, spite, and revenge. They cry and fret for what is not good for them, and are indignant with their elders on being refused, often attempting to strike them. Those born and brought up in the midst of honesty are guilty of petty pilfering before ever they witness an act of theft. These blemishes are not to be ascribed to ignorance, but to their variance with the divine Law—to which man's nature was originally conformed—to that horrible change which sin has wrought in human constitution. Human nature is seen to be tainted from the beginning of its existence.

The universal prevalence of *disease and death* witnesses unmistakably to the fall of man. All the pains and disorders of our bodies, whereby our health is impaired and our passage through this world rendered uneasy, are the consequents of our apostasy from God. The Saviour made plain intimation that sickness is the effect of sin when He healed the man with the palsy, saying, "Thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mat 9:2), as the Psalmist also linked together God's pardoning the iniquities of His people and healing their diseases (103:3). "There is one event that happeneth to all" (Ecc 2:14). Yes, but why should it? Why should there be wasting away and then dissolution? Philosophy offers no explanation. Science can furnish no satisfactory answer, for to say that disease results from the decay of nature only pushes the inquiry farther back. Disease and death are *abnormalities*. Man is created by the eternal God, endowed with a never-dying soul. Why, then, should he not continue to live here for ever? The answer is, "Because of the fall—death is the wages of sin" (Rom 6:23).

Man's ingratitude unto his gracious Benefactor is yet another evidence of his sad condition. The Israelites were a woeful sample of all mankind in this respect. Though the Lord delivered them from the house of bondage (Exo 20:2), miraculously conducted them through the Red Sea (Exo 14:29-30), led them safely across the wilderness (Exo 13:22), they appreciated it not. Though He screened them with a cloud from the heat of the sun, gave them light by night in a pillar of fire (Exo 13:22), fed them with bread from heaven (Exo 15:4), caused streams to flow in the sandy desert (Exo 17:6), and brought them into the possession of a land flowing with milk and honey (Exo 3:8), they were continually murmuring and repining. And *we* are no better. The mercies of God are received as a matter of course. The hand that so bountifully ministers to their needs is not acknowledged or even recognized by men. None is satisfied with the place and portion Providence has assigned him. He is ever coveting what he has not. He is a creature given to changes—stricken with a malady which Solomon termed "the wandering of the desires" (Ecc 6:9).

“Every dog that snaps at me, every horse that lifts up its heel against me, proves that I am a fallen creature. The brute creation had no enmity against man before the fall. Creation rendered a willing homage to Adam (Gen 2:19). Eve no more dreaded the serpent than we would a fly. But when man shook off allegiance from his God, the beasts by divine permission shook off allegiance from man” (John Berridge, 1716-1793, *The Christian World Unmasked*). What a proof of his degradation that the sluggard is exhorted to “go to the ant” (Pro 6:6) and learn from a creature so much lower in the scale of being! Consider *the necessity* of human laws, fenced with punishments and terrors to restrain men’s lusts. Yet despite the vast and costly apparatus of police forces, law courts, and prisons, what little success attends their efforts to repress human wickedness! Neither education, legislation, nor religion is sufficient.

Finally, take the unvarying *experience of the saints*. It is part of the Spirit’s office-work to open blind eyes, to discover unto souls their wretchedness, and make them sensible of their dire need of Christ. And when He thus brings a sinner to realize his ruined condition by imparting an experiential knowledge of sin, his comeliness is at once turned into corruption, and he cries, “Behold, I am vile” (Job 40:4). Though grace has entered his heart, his native depravity has not been expelled. Though sin no longer has dominion over him, it rages and often prevails against him. There is a ceaseless warfare within between the flesh and the spirit. There is no need for us to enlarge thereon, for every Christian groans within himself, and because of the plague of his heart cries, “O wretched man that I am” (Rom 7:24). Wretched because he lives not as he earnestly longs to do, and because he does so often the very things he hates, groaning daily over evil imaginations, wandering thoughts, unbelief, pride, coldness, pretence.

INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Part 19

26. *The origin of words*. An enormous amount of time, research and study has been devoted thereto, and men of great erudition have embodied the results of their labours in volumes which are massive and expensive. Yet in the judgment of the writer, they are far from possessing that value which has often been attributed to them, nor does he consider they are nearly as indispensable to the preacher as many have affirmed. Undoubtedly they contain considerable information of interest to etymologists, but as a means for interpreting the Scriptures, *lexicons* are greatly overrated. A knowledge of the derivation of the words used in the original Scriptures cannot be essential, for it is unobtainable to the vast majority of God’s people. Moreover, the attempts to arrive at such derivations are often not at all uniform, for the best Hebraists are far from being agreed as to the particular roots from which various words in the Old Testament are taken. To us, it seems very unsatisfactory, yea, profane, to turn to heathen poets and philosophers to discover how certain Greek words were used before they were given a place in the New Testament. But what is still

more to the point, such a method breaks down before the Holy Spirit's actual employment of various terms.

In view of what was said under the eighteenth canon of exegesis, we do not propose to write much upon this one. Instead, we will confine ourselves to a single example, which illustrates the closing sentence of the preceding paragraph, and which will at the same time give the lie to an error which is very widespread today. Many of those who deny that the wicked will be punished everlastingly appeal to the fact that the Greek adjective *aiōnios* simply signifies "age lasting," and that *eis ton aionā* (Jude 13) and *eis aionas aionon* (Rev 14:11) mean "to the age" and "to the ages of ages" and "for ever" and "for ever and ever." The simple reply is, Granted, yet that is nothing to the point at issue. True, those Greek expressions are but *time terms*, for the sufficient reason that the minds of the ancients were incapable of rising to the concept of *eternity*. Therefore, the language employed by those who were destitute of a written revelation from God makes nothing either pro or con concerning the endlessness of the bliss of the redeemed or of the misery of the lost. In order to ascertain *that*, we must observe how the terms are used in Holy Writ.

The connections in which the Holy Spirit has employed the word *aiōnios* leave no room whatever for any uncertainty of its meaning in the mind of an impartial investigator. That word occurs not only in such expressions as "eternal destruction" (2Th 1:9), "everlasting fire" (Mat 25:41), "everlasting punishment" (Mat 25:46), but also in "life eternal" (Mat 25:46), "eternal salvation" (Heb 5:9), "eternal glory" (1Pe 5:10), and most assuredly *they are timeless*. Still more decisively, it is linked with the subsistence of deity, "the everlasting God" (Rom 16:26). Again, the force and scope of the word are clearly seen in the fact that it is antithetical to what is of limited duration, "the things which are seen are *temporal*; but the things which are not seen are *eternal*" (2Co 4:18). Now it is obvious that if the temporal things lasted for ever, there could be no contrast between them and the things which are eternal. Equally certain is it that if eternal things be only "age long," they differ not essentially from temporal ones. The contrast between the temporal and the eternal is as real and as great as between the things "seen and unseen." Again in Philemon 1:15, *aiōnios* (rendered "for ever") is set over against "for a season," showing that the one is the very opposite of the other—"receive him for ever" manifestly signifies *never* banish or turn him away.

Before leaving this subject, it should be pointed out that the absolute hopelessness of the condition of the lost rests not only on the fact that their punishment is said to be eternal, but on other collateral considerations which are equally final. There is not a single instance recorded in Scripture of a sinner being saved after death, nor any passage holding out any promise of such. On the other hand, there are many to the contrary. "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that *without remedy*" (Pro 29:1), which would not be the case if, after "ages" in purifying fire, he was ultimately admitted into heaven. To His enemies, Christ said, "ye...shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come" (Joh 8:21)—death would seal their doom. That is equally certain from those fearful words of His, "the resurrection of damnation" (Joh 5:29), which excludes every ray of hope for their recovery in the next life. For the apostate, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Heb 10:26). "For he shall have judgment *without mercy*, that hath showed no mercy" (Jam 2:13). "Whose *end* is destruction" (Phi 3:19). Therefore is it writ-

ten at the close of Scripture, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still" (Rev 22:11)—as the tree falls, so will it for ever lie.

27. *The law of comparison and contrast.* While this rule be much less important to the expositor than many of the others, it is of deep interest, and though it be little known, yet this principle is accorded a prominent place in the Word. And in view of what has been termed "the pair of opposites" which confront us in every sphere, it should occasion us no surprise to find this canon receiving such frequent illustration and exemplification in the Scriptures, and that in several ways. God and the devil, time and eternity, day and night, male and female, good and evil, heaven and hell, are set one over against the other. "In the beginning God created the heaven *and* the earth" (Gen 1:1), and the earth has its two hemispheres, the northern and the southern. So also, there are the Old and New Testaments, the Jew and the Gentile, and after the days of Solomon the former were split into two kingdoms. While throughout all Christendom, we find the genuine possessor and the graceless professor. Whatever be the explanation, we are faced everywhere with this mysterious duality—the visible and the invisible, spirit and matter, land and sea, centrifugal and centripetal forces at work, life and death.

As pointed out on a previous occasion, truth itself is ever *twofold*, and hence the Word of God is itself likened unto a two-edged sword (Heb 4:12). Not only is it, first, a revelation from God, and, second, addressed to human responsibility, but a great many passages in it have a twofold force and meaning, a literal and a spiritual. Many of its prophecies possess a double fulfilment, a major and a minor, while promise and precept, or privilege and corresponding obligation are ever combined. Cases of *pairs* are numerous. The two great lights (Gen 1:16); two of every sort entering the ark (Gen 6:19); the two tables on which the Law was written; the two birds (Lev 14:4-7); the two goats (Lev 16:7); the two tenth deals of fine flour and the two loaves (Lev 23:13, 17); the repeated miracle of water from the smitten rock (Exo 17, Num 20), as Christ also duplicated the feeding of a great multitude with a few loaves and fishes (Mat 14, 15); the two signs to Gideon (Jdg 6); the two olive trees (Zec 4); the two masters (Mat 6:24); the two foundations (Mat 7:24-27); the two debtors (Luk 7:41); the two sons (Luk 15:11); the two men who went into the temple to pray (Luk 18:10); the two false witnesses against Christ (Mat 26:60); and the two thieves crucified with Him (Mat 27:38); the two angels (Act 1:10); the two "immutable things" of Hebrews (6:18); the two beasts (Rev 13).

As Christ sent forth His apostles in pairs (Mar 6:7), so all through the Bible, two individuals are more or less closely associated. In a few instances, the one complementing the other, but in the majority, there being a marked contrast between them. Thus, we have Cain and Abel, Enoch and Noah, Abraham and Lot, Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Moses and Aaron, Caleb and Joshua, Naomi and Ruth, Samuel and Saul, David and Jonathan, Elijah and Elisha, Nehemiah and Ezra, Martha and Mary, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod, Paul and Barnabas. Sometimes a series of marked antitheses meet together in the life of a single individual. Notably was this the case with Moses. "He was the child of a slave, the son of a princess. He was born in a hut, and lived in a palace. He was educated in the court, and dwelt in the desert. He was the mightiest of warriors, and the meekest of men. He had the wisdom of Egypt, and the faith of a child. He was backward in speech, and talked with God. He had the rod of the shep-

herd, and the power of the Infinite. He was the giver of the law, and the forerunner of grace. He died alone on mount Nebo, and appeared with Christ in Judaea. No man assisted at his funeral, yet God buried him" (I. M. Haldeman, 1845-1933).

A. T. Pierson (1837-1911) pointed out that another series of striking paradoxes is found in that remarkable prophecy of the Messiah in Isaiah 53. Though the Son of God, yet His report was not believed. He appeared unto God as "a tender plant" (Isa 53:2), but unto men as "a root out of dry ground" (Isa 53:2). JEHOVAH's Servant, in whom His soul delighted, but in the esteem of the Jews, possessed of no form or comeliness. Appointed by the Father and anointed by the Spirit, yet despised and rejected of men. Sorely wounded and chastised by sinners, yet believing sinners healed by His stripes. No iniquity found in Him, but the iniquities of many were upon Him. Himself the Judge of all, yet brought before the judgment bar of human creatures. Without generation, yet possessing a numerous seed. Cut off out of the land of the living, yet alive for evermore. He made His grave with the wicked, nevertheless He was with the rich in His death. Though counted unrighteous, He makes many righteous. He was spoiled by the strong, yet He spoiled the strong, delivering a multitude of captives out of his hand. He was numbered with and mocked by transgressors, but made intercession for them.

It is indeed remarkable to find the twofoldness of things confronting us so frequently in connection with the plan of redemption. Based upon the work of the great federal heads, the first Adam and the last Adam, with the fundamental covenants connected with them—the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. The last Adam, with His two distinct natures, constituting Him the God-man Mediator. Two different genealogies are given of Him, in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. There are His two separate advents—the first in deep humiliation, the second in great glory. The salvation He has provided for His people is twofold—objective and subjective or legal and vital, the one which He did *for* them, and the other which He works *in* them—a righteousness imputed to them, and a righteousness imparted. The Christian life is a strange duality—the principles of sin and grace ever opposing one another. The two ordinances Christ gave to His churches—baptism, and the Lord's supper.

There are many points of contrast between the first two books of the Bible. In the former, we have the history of a family; in the latter, the history of a nation. In the one, the descendants of Abraham are but few in number; in the other, they have increased to hundreds of thousands. In Genesis, the Hebrews are welcomed and honoured in Egypt; whereas in Exodus, they are hated and shunned. In the former, we read of a Pharaoh who says unto Joseph, "God hath showed thee all this" (41:39); but in the latter, another Pharaoh says unto Moses, "I know not the Lord" (5:2). In Genesis, we hear of a "lamb" promised (22:8); in Exodus, of the "lamb" slain and its blood sprinkled. In the former, we have recorded the entrance of Israel into Egypt; in the latter, the exodus of them is described. In the one, we behold the patriarchs sojourning in the land which flowed with milk and honey; in the other, their descendants are wanderers in the wilderness. Genesis closes with Joseph in a coffin, while Exodus ends with the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle.

It is both interesting and instructive to compare the supernatural passages of Israel through the Red Sea and the Jordan. There are at least twelve details of resemblance be-

tween them, which we will leave the reader to work out for himself. Here we will consider their points of dissimilarity. First, the one terminated Israel's exodus from the house of bondage, the other initiated their entrance into the land of promise. Second, the former miracle was wrought in order that they might escape from the Egyptians, the latter to enable them to approach and conquer the Canaanites. Third, in connection with the one, the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind (Exo 14:21), but with reference to the other, no means whatever were employed—to demonstrate that He is not tied unto such, but employs or dispenses with them as He pleases. Fourth, the earlier miracle was performed at night-time (14:21), the latter in broad daylight. Fifth, at the Red Sea multitudes were slain, for the Lord made the waters to return upon the Egyptians so that they "covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them" (14:28), whereas at the Jordan not a single soul perished.

Sixth, the one was wrought for a people who just previously had been full of unbelief and murmuring (Exo 14:11), the other for a people who were believing and obedient (Jos 2:24; 3:1). Seventh, with the sole exception of Caleb and Joshua, all the adults who benefited from the former miracle died in the wilderness; whereas the great majority of those who were favoured to share in the latter "possessed their possessions." Eighth, the waters of the Red Sea were "divided" (Exo 14:21), those of the Jordan were made to "stand upon an heap" (Jos 3:13). Ninth, in the former, the believer's judicial death unto sin was typed out; in the latter, his legal oneness with Christ in His resurrection, followed by a practical entrance into his inheritance. Tenth, consequently, there was no "sanctify yourselves" before the former, but such a call was an imperative requirement for the latter (Jos 3:5). Eleventh, the response made by Israel's enemies unto the Lord's interposition for His people at the Red Sea was, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them" (Exo 15:9); but in the latter, "It came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites...heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan...their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more" (Jos 5:1). Twelfth, after the former, "Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore" (Exo 14:30); after the latter, a cairn of twelve stones memorialized the event (Jos 4:20-22).

Many examples of this principle are to be found by observing closely the details of different incidents which the Holy Spirit has placed *side by side* in the Word. For instance, how sudden and strange is the transition which confronts us as we pass from 1 Kings 18 to 19. It is as though the sun were shining brilliantly out of a clear sky, and the next moment, without any warning, black clouds draped the heavens. The contrasts presented in those chapters are sharp and startling. In the former, we behold the prophet of Gilead at his best; in the latter, we see him at his worst. At the close of the one, "the hand of the LORD was on Elijah" as he ran before Ahab's chariot; at the beginning of the other, the fear of man was upon him, and he "went for his life." There he was concerned only for the glory of JEHOVAH, here he is occupied only with self. There he was strong in faith, and the helper of his people; here he gives way to unbelief, and is the deserter of his nation. In the one, he boldly confronts the four hundred prophets of Baal undaunted; here he flees panic-stricken from the threats of a single woman. From the mountain top, he betakes himself to the wilderness, and from supplicating the Lord that He would vindicate His great name to begging

Him to take away his life. Who would have imagined such a tragic sequel? How forcibly does the contrast exhibit and exemplify the frailty and fickleness of the human heart even in a saint!

The work of Elijah and Elisha formed two parts of one whole, the one supplementing the other, and though there are manifest parallels between them, there are also marked contrasts. Both of them were prophets, both dwelt in Samaria, both were confronted with much the same situation. The falling of Elijah's mantle upon Elisha intimated that the latter was the successor of the former, and that he was called upon to continue his mission. The first miracle performed by Elisha was identical with the last one wrought by his master—the smiting of the waters of the Jordan with the mantle, so that they parted asunder for him (2Ki 2:8, 14). At the beginning of his ministry, Elijah had said unto king Ahab, “As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand” (1Ki 17:1), and when Elisha came into the presence of Ahab's son he also declared, “As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand” (2Ki 3:14). As Elijah was entertained by the woman of Zarephath, and rewarded her by restoring her son to life (1Ki 17:23), so Elisha was entertained by a woman at Shunem and rewarded her by restoring her son to life (2Ki 4).

Striking as are the points of agreement between the two prophets, the contrasts in their careers and work are just as vivid. The one appeared suddenly and dramatically upon the stage of public action, without a word being told us concerning his origin or how he had been previously engaged; but of the other, the name of his father is recorded, and an account is given of his occupation at the time he received his call into God's service. The first miracle of Elijah was the shutting up of the heavens, so that for the space of three and a half years there was neither dew nor rain according to his word; whereas the first public act of Elisha was to heal the springs of water (2Ki 2:21-22) and to provide abundance of water for the people (3:20). The principal difference between them is seen in the character of the miracles wrought by and connected with them. The majority of those performed by the former were associated with death and destruction, but the great majority of those attributed to Elisha were works of healing and restoration. The one was more the prophet of judgment, the other of grace. The former was marked by loneliness, dwelling apart from the apostate masses; the latter seems to have spent most of his time in the company of the prophets, presiding over their schools. The one was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire, the other fell sick in old age and died a natural death (22:9).

