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No. 6

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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“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink

NO MARVELS

“If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, *marvel not* at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth” (Ecc 5:8). In the midst of his soliloquizings and moralizings, Solomon interjected an occasional counsel or exhortation. He duly observed in his day “the place of judgment, that wickedness was there, and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there” (Ecc 3:16), and now he bids his readers not to be surprised or stumbled thereat. It was a timely word, for such passages as Job 12:6 and 21:7; Psalm 73:2-12; Jeremiah 12:1 show that the Old Testament saints were deeply exercised over the prosperity of the wicked and the adversity of the righteous. Solomon, therefore, seeks to remove this stumbling-block and prevent their taking offence at or murmuring against the divine government. Fallen human nature being what it is, we should not think it strange that the strong oppress the weak, or that justice should be corrupted by those in high places. Man is made to reap the bitter harvest of his apostasy from God. Yet, however perplexed we may be over the success which so often rewards the workers of iniquity, let us be assured that nothing escapes the notice of the Most High, that *He “regardeth”* and has wise reasons for permitting the frequent miscarriage of human justice by the magistrates and rulers of earth. There is One infinitely above to whom they must yet render an account, and from whom they will receive “a just recompense of reward” (Heb 2:2).

“*Marvel not* that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). Nicodemus was nonplussed by Christ’s statement that “except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:3). Though a master in Israel, he was unable to grasp our Lord’s meaning. The new birth is indeed a marvel, for it is a miracle, a supernatural thing. It is a marvel of divine grace, for it is entirely unmerited by those who experience the same; yea, is unsought by them (Isa 65:1), undesired. It is a miracle of divine wisdom; that the Holy

One should act in mercy unto a vile rebel, and lift up the beggar from the dunghill and set him among princes (1Sa 2:8), without compromising His justice or sully any of His perfections. It is a marvel of divine power that one who is dead in trespasses and sins should be quickened into newness of life—for that is an even greater display of God's might than is the raising of a physical corpse. But, if regeneration be such a wonderful thing, why did Christ say to Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (Joh 3:7)? He was not forbidding him to be amazed and awed at the new birth itself, but was rebuking him for his dullness in failing to see the necessity of it.

The imperativeness of the new birth is evident from the fact that man is a fallen creature. Originally he was made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26), fitted to enjoy fellowship with Him. But upon his apostasy, he was alienated from his Maker, became unsuited unto the Holy One, and fled from Him. The natural man is totally depraved, a slave of Satan, dead in sin, and, therefore, it is no marvel that *he* needs to be born again. He is devoid of any love to God, any delight in Him, any relish for heavenly things, any ability to perform spiritual acts. A miracle of grace, then, must needs be wrought upon him before he is qualified to enter the Father's house. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, for those who have been made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col 1:12), for without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb 12:14). An unregenerated person would be entirely out of harmony with the ineffable purity of the celestial courts, and could no more enjoy their company and activities than could a deaf man an oratorio or a blind one the beauties of an exquisite sunset. A spiritual kingdom requires a spiritual nature, and in order to the acquisition of that the natural man must be regenerated—divinely regenerated, for the creature can no more quicken himself than he could give himself a natural being. Why not? Because regeneration is no mere outward reformation, process of education, or even religious cultivation. No, it consists of a radical change of heart and transformation of character, the communication of a gracious and holy principle, producing new desires, new capacities, a new life. Then, marvel not that in order thereto a man must be born from above.

"For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. *Marvel not at this*" (Joh 5:26-28). It should occasion us no surprise to be informed that the Father has invested the Mediator with the right to execute judgment in connection with both the present and the future order of things—in the churches now (Rev 2:3), and in His kingdom then (Mat 13:41). Not because the Father has relinquished the government, but that He is pleased to bestow this high honour upon His Son. Christ has been elevated to the utmost conceivable dignity, and had conferred upon Him the glory of adjudicating at the grand Assize, and this because He is "the Son of man." It is the just recognition of His voluntary abasement. Because He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, God has "highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Phi 2:9-10). Even now, He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and is upholding all things by the word of His power (Heb 1:3). But the authority to dispense judgment in the last great day is the culminating point of His exaltation, the suitable recompense of His curse-bearing life and death. This makes manifest the Father's valuation of Christ—acquits Him from the charge of blasphemy in

making Himself equal with God (Mar 14:64; Joh 5:18), and demonstrates that He is “over all, God blessed for ever” (Rom 9:5).

God “hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained” (Act 17:31). What a stupendous undertaking that will be! All mankind summoned before His tribunal to receive every one according to his works. The discharge of such an office calls for one who is possessed of infinite integrity and justice, of omniscience also, for he must be capable of reading the secrets of the heart and bringing to light the hidden things of darkness, acquainted with all the circumstances of each life. In John 5:27, Christ affirmed that the Father has committed all judgment unto Him because He is His Son. Here, He adds, “because he is the Son of man.” Because the Son of God assumed human nature, tabernacled here in the same, He was despised and rejected. How fitting then that the slighted One should occupy the place of supreme authority. At His first advent, He was in the form of a servant (Phi 2:7), at His second, He will be seen as the King of kings (Rev 19:16). Formerly, He invited men to repentance, then, He comes to take vengeance on the scorers of His grace. There, fishermen were His ambassadors, here, angels are His attendants. Then, He stood before human tribunals, now, He sits upon the throne of His glory. “Marvel not at this” (Joh 5:28), for the same was promised Him before He became incarnate (Dan 7:13-14). It is suitable that the Judge should be visible and men be sentenced by one in their own nature. Full proof will be given that He is qualified for such a task, for “All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth” (Joh 5:28), and then will it be universally known that He is none other than the Almighty clothed with flesh and blood.

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And *no marvel*; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2Co 11:13-14). The devil is the prince of duplicity as well as of wickedness. He has always worked secretly, endeavouring to hide his true identity. When beguiling Eve, he did so through a serpent (Gen 3:1). When he appeared to accuse Job, he waited until a day when “the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also *among them*” (Job 1:6). When he sowed his tares, he did so at night, “while men slept” (Mat 13:25)—not thistles, but imitation wheat! When he betrayed Christ into the hands of His enemies, he employed an apostle and used a kiss for the sign (Mat 26:48). He is the arch-imposter, “which deceiveth the whole world” (Rev 12:9), and in so doing he assumes many characters and plays many parts. In the religious world, he appears not as the dragon of darkness, but as an angel of light (2Co 11:14)—light being the emblem of purity and blessedness. He pretended to have regard for the authority of Scripture, and quoted from it when tempting Christ (Mat 4:6). He never shows himself openly for what he really is. Therefore, we need not be astonished that his ministers sail under false colours, occupy pulpits, and pose as the champions of the truth. They are as zealous and industrious in their labours as are the servants of God. Often they are of unblemished moral character, of apparent piety and real love for souls. Yet are they “wolves in sheep’s clothing” (Mat 7:15). But they do not deceive God; He will yet unmask them and consign them to the everlasting burnings.

“*Marvel not*, my brethren, if the world hate you” (1Jo 3:13). Rather should we be amazed if it were otherwise, especially in view of Genesis 3:15. If the world despised and

rejected the Head, we cannot expect that it will fawn upon His members. He has plainly warned us to the contrary, John 15:18-21. The unregenerate hate the regenerate because their lives condemn them.

EXPOSITION OF JOHN'S FIRST EPISTLE

30. Our Anointing (2:20)

*“But ye have an unction from the Holy One,
and ye know all things”*

From what was before us in the last article, it is clear that the preaching of the apostles themselves did not result in the conversion of all who were convinced of its verity. From a very early date God made it appear that the gospel net enclosed bad fishes as well as good ones (Mat 13:47-48), that not all who took upon them the name of Christ were His disciples indeed. What Paul predicted in Acts 20:30-31 was soon fulfilled: nominal Christians apostatized from the faith, disturbed the peace and harmony of the churches—prejudicing many against God's faithful servants, alluring such to follow them and organize themselves into heretical sects and schisms. Yet both 1 John 2:19, and Jude 1:19 furnish conclusive proof that such men were devoid of true piety. It is therefore a mark of God's goodness and mercy unto His people when His providence so orders it, that those who are not one with them at heart, but who in fact hate all that is holy, should withdraw from them. It is a blessing to the churches when those who are determined to walk after their own lusts forsake their fellowship, for while they remain they are but Achans who draw down the judgment of God upon the whole congregation (Jos 7:20 ff.).

Some of the very worst sins men are guilty of may be committed under the purest preaching of the gospel and the most spiritual administration of its ordinances. The anti-christs referred to by John are a definite case in point. None can be supposed to have clearer light externally into the doctrine and practice, worship and discipline, of genuine Christianity than those apostates enjoyed; yet none ever sinned more willingly and perversely. We too have beheld those who departed from the truth: men like blazing comets for a season, professing to have superior light and sanctity, who are greatly admired and secure a large following, yet who are of their father, the devil (Joh 8:44). Yet such occurrences should not shake the saints. When Paul made mention of two heretics of his day, “who concerning the truth have erred...and overthrow the faith of some,” he at once added, “nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure” (2Ti 2:18-19)—the combined effort of Satan and all his agents cannot shake it. “The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations” (Psa 33:11). His Church is built upon the Rock of ages and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!

Paul then went on to say, “The Lord knoweth them that are his,” which means not only that He recognizes them amid the mass of professors (which we are not always able to do), but that He loves them and makes all things work together for their good. Then the apostle added, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” The fact that God overrules the perfidy of apostates to His own glory and the good of His people, by

making manifest hypocrites on the one hand and those who are approved of Him on the other, does not excuse the former—nor must we palliate their awful guilt, but shun them as a plague. And while those who by grace remain steadfast to Christ and His gospel are not to be stumbled by the infidelity of graceless professors, yet they are to take the same to heart and turn it into earnest prayer, crying, “O let me not wander from thy commandments” (Psa 119:10). Say not in a spirit of fatalism, “If I have been born again I shall never perish,” for God gives warning: “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1Co 10:12). God has not promised to preserve the reckless. To affirm that He will preserve us whether or not we use the means of grace is not the language of faith, but of presumption and impiety. True faith produces a spirit of humility and self-distrust. True faith causes us to work out our own salvation “with fear and trembling” (Phi 2:12).

“*But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things*” (verse 20). This is in sharp and blessed contrast with what has been before us in the preceding verses, and shows the gracious provision that the Lord has made for “His own” to preserve them from embracing fatal error. The antichrists had formerly been admitted to communion with the saints, but their subsequent apostasy proved that (like Judas) they had been hypocrites from the beginning. They were of the world and not of God, for His truth dwelt not in their “inward parts” (Psa 51:6). Had they been born of Him, they would have remained faithful to Christ and His Gospel. God permitted them to forsake the assemblies of His saints, to make it evident that they had never received the anointing, which is from above. By their defection they only made more apparent the real people of God, who will not sell the truth at any price. Many appear to take the yoke of Christ upon them, but afterwards fall away and return to their wallowing in the mire; but those who are effectually called persevere unto the end—for the Spirit has been given to be with them “for ever” (Joh 14:16), and the prevalent intercession of Christ ensures their preservation (Heb 7:25). Thus the distinction between the two classes is made to be seen more clearly.

The relation of our present verse to the one immediately preceding, which mentions the going out of certain ones from the churches, was well expressed by James Morgan (1799-1873):

“They had been exposed to the temptation of false teachers, and they did not endure the test. They were drawn away by the speculative errors presented to them, and so evidenced that they were not ‘rooted and grounded’ in the truth. On the contrary those whom the apostle commends in our text had remained firm in the midst of all attempts to seduce them from the faith.”

Thus the blessedness of our present verse is greatly enhanced by the sharp antithesis presented in the foregoing: the former supplying a dark background to bring out into clearer relief the excellence of this gift of the Saviour’s—the antichrists, the anointing. Those words clearly intimate that John entertained no fear that any of the saints would apostatize and bring reproach upon the cause of Christ. They had received such an unction from above as enabled them to understand and lay hold of those things which belonged to their everlasting peace, and which insured their perseverance in the faith.

Brief though our present verse be, it possesses a fullness that no expositor or commentator can exhaust. It treats of that which in our day receives but scant attention. It speaks of one of the outstanding benefits and blessings that God bestows on His people.

“*But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*” What is meant by the “unction” (or “anointing,” for that is the meaning of *chrisma*, and it is so translated in verse 27) that believers are here said to have? Who is meant by “the Holy One” from whom it comes? What is signified by “and ye know all things”? In what sense or senses do they “know” them? Important questions are these, yet none of them is difficult to answer. We shall, however, consider the second one first and ponder the Anointer, then the anointing, and last the anointed.

The Anointer

Who is the Anointer or “Holy One?” It is surprising that one of Albert Barnes’s¹ acumen should say it is the Holy Spirit, for there is not the least room for doubt that it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is here in view. As the Son of God, He is essentially holy, as appears by comparing Isaiah 6:1 with John 12:41. In His humanity, impeccably² holy (Luk 1:35). In His life upon earth, ineffably³ holy (Heb 7:26). In His official character He was prefigured by Israel’s high priest, who wore upon his forehead a plate of pure gold on which was inscribed “Holiness to the Lord” (Exo 28:36). In Old Testament prophecy He was designated the “Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel” (Isa 41:14, cf. 54:5). In the days of His flesh the demons owned Him as “the Holy One of God” (Luk 4:34). After His ascension the apostles referred to Him as “the Holy One” (Act 3:14). Thus it is abundantly clear from the Scriptures that “the Holy One” is one of the Redeemer’s divine titles; for as none but God is essentially holy, and Christ is the Holy One, then He must be God!

Further, that the Lord Jesus is the person from whom God’s people receive an unction, appears from the fact that not only is He the “Holy One,” but He is also “the Christ” or the Anointed One. He was not only chosen and ordained to the mediatorial office, but furnished for the same by anointing. During the Old Testament economy, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed unto and confirmed in their office by anointing (Lev 8:12; 2Sa 5:3; 1Ki 19:16), pointing forward to Him who should be, in His own person, Prophet, Priest, and Potentate alike. The anointing of the Redeemer was announced in Messianic prophecy: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach glad tidings unto the meek” (Isa 61:1). That was fulfilled at His entrance upon His public ministry, when “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil” (Act 10:38)—the historical reference being to what is recorded in Matthew 3:16, when the Spirit of God descended like a dove and lighted upon Him. It was the furnishing of the God-man Mediator with all the necessary gifts for the discharge of His office (Isa 11:1-2). Immediately after, He was said to be “full of the Holy Ghost” (Luk 4:1).

¹ **Albert Barnes** (1798-1870) – American theologian; born in Rome, New York; graduated from Hamilton College and Princeton Theological Seminary. He was the pastor successively of the Presbyterian Church in Morristown, New Jersey and of the First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia. He was an eloquent preacher, but his reputation rests chiefly on his expository works, which are said to have had a larger circulation both in Europe and America than any others of their class. Of the well-known *Notes on the New Testament*, it is said that more than a million volumes had been issued by 1870.

² **impeccably** – sinlessly.

³ **ineffably** – inexpressibly.

The Lord Jesus is denominated the *Messiah* (the Hebrew term) and the *Christ* (the Greek) from this unction of the Spirit, for each of those two titles signifies "The Anointed One." At the triumphant completion of His work, when He ascended into heaven, the Saviour was again anointed by God—anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows (Heb 1:9)—when He received the Spirit to pour out upon His disciples; there termed "the oil of gladness" to celebrate His victory and exaltation, and to denote His deliverance from any further trouble and distress. As Peter declared of Christ on the day of Pentecost, "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this" (Act 2:33). "I beheld...a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (Rev 5:6). In each of those passages the ascended Christ is seen dispensing this gift, conferring the Spirit on His people. In His mediatorial work, Christ fully met all the claims of God upon His people, and in proof thereof He has been given the Spirit to communicate to them. This is clear from Galatians 3:13-14: Christ's gift of the Spirit is the result of His removing God's curse from us, and thereby putting away our sins. His forerunner declared, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost" (Mar 1:8).

Christ had referred to the Comforter thus: "whom I will send unto you from the Father" (Joh 15:26). And again, "If I depart, I will send him unto you" (Joh 16:7). Such passages as those contain the balancing truth to Isaiah 11:1-3 and 61:1-2, where the Mediator is viewed as subordinate to the Spirit; but in Revelation 3:1, He has the Spirit, in John 15:26, He promises to send the Spirit, and in Acts 2:33, He actually bestows Him—so there we see the Spirit subordinate to the Son. Put the two together, and we learn that there is a conjoined mission in which the Son and the Spirit act in unison for the salvation of God's elect: the Son *effecting* their redemption, the Spirit *applying* it. Moreover, while the Spirit is from Christ, likewise His great mission is to direct souls to Christ. "As the Spirit never acts but in and through Christ with respect to His people, so Christ is never received but by and with the influences of the Spirit. They are as united in Their operations as in Their essence" (Ambrose Serle, 1742-1812). That Christ received the Spirit to bestow upon His redeemed was blessedly prefigured in the anointing of the high priest, of which we read, "The precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments" (Psa 133:2)—reaching to the lowest of his members!

The Anointing

"*But ye have an unction from the Holy One.*" Believers have nothing but what they have in and from Christ: it is "of His fullness" that all of them receive "and grace for grace" (Joh 1:16). The Spirit is given to Christ *immediately*, [and] to us *derivatively*, for in all things He has the pre-eminence. "For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (Joh 3:34), whereas in our case, "unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph 4:7). The Spirit dwells in Christ by *radiation*, in us by *operation*. Therefore, as communicating to us by the Saviour, He is denominated the "Spirit of Christ" (Rom 8:9) and "the Spirit of his Son" (Gal 4:6). This is one of the vital points on which "the Greek Catholic Church" errs, for she insists that the Spirit proceeds from the Father only. That is a most serious error, for there is no higher exhibition of the Godhead of the Saviour than the fact that He is represented in the Scriptures to be the Possessor and

the Sender of the Spirit to His redeemed; nothing more clearly demonstrates the full equality of the Son with the Father. It is a decisive proof of His deity; for no mere servant of God, however exalted his station, could possibly confer such a gift as the Spirit Himself.

There was a peculiar propriety in saying that the believer's unction is "from the Holy One," for the purpose of the same is to make him holy. As Haupt rightly pointed out, "The fundamental idea of anointing in the Old Testament is the setting apart of an object from a common use to the service of God—from the world to holy fellowship. It must be remembered that things as well as persons—the vessels of the tabernacle, etc. (Lev 8:10-11)—were anointed in order for a separation from a profane to a sacred use. The stone which Jacob anointed was set apart as the place where God had manifested Himself (Gen 28:18)." Thus, here, the anointing is both the communication of a spiritual gift and an operation, which separates the individual from the world and all that is opposed to God, consecrating him to Him. It was so with the Lord Jesus Himself, for the coming of the Spirit upon Him was both the endowing of Him for His mediatorial work (Isa 61:1) and the divine setting apart of Him unto His mission (Mat 3:16-17). Thus it is with His members. The unction He received He imparts to them. He is the Anointer, they are the anointed ones, and as such the christs of the Christ, He being designated "the Christ" (Mat 16:16), "the Christ of God" (Luk 9:20), "the Lord Christ" (Col 3:24) by way of eminence.

The Holy Spirit is the vital bond of union with Christ. The One cannot be without the Other. If we have Christ as our Saviour, we have the Spirit for our Indweller. When Christ takes possession of anyone, He puts the Spirit within him; if he lacks the latter, he has no saving interest in the former. That is unmistakably clear from, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom 8:9). He who claims to belong to the Lord Jesus and gives no evidence of being indwelt by the Spirit of Christ lacks the only irrefragable⁴ proof that establishes the validity of his claim, and thus his profession is falsified. We cannot be Christ's "fellows" (Heb 1:9) unless we are His brethren or companions, and that cannot be without partaking of His anointing. This it is that distinguishes "the wise virgins" from the foolish ones, the actual possessors from graceless professors,⁵ the former having "oil in their vessels" (Mat 25:4). In due course, all of God's elect receive this unction: "Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God" (2Co 1:21)—a decisive proof that Christ, our Anointer, is divine. At regeneration we are made members of Christ's mystical body, partakers in our measure of those gifts and graces that our Head received without measure.

The Anointed

Both Christ and His Church come under this office-act of God the Spirit, for as the Redeemer could not have been the Messiah without His unction, neither could the Church have been His spouse without the same. As it was from the Spirit's unction that the Lord Jesus received His name "the Christ," so it is from their being anointed ones that believers receive their name "Christians" (1Pe 4:16), signifying that they are anointed with the Spirit. This it is which is the distinguishing mark of every truly born-again soul: he is made the

⁴ **irrefragable** – incontestable; undeniable.

⁵ **graceless professors** – those who make a profession of faith but who are not truly saved by the grace of God.

temple of the Holy Spirit. Yet we say again, it is not the Spirit who anoints us; rather is He the unction wherewith we are anointed by Christ. Even where the Saviour Himself was concerned, the Spirit was not the Anointer, but His anointing, for He was anointed by the Father (Act 4:27). Our anointing is by a holy Saviour (Rom 8:2) to fit us for holy converse and walking with Him. It is received out of His fullness (Col 2:9-10). We can have no gift or grace but in and by and from the Lamb of God. The love of the Father centers in Christ Jesus our Lord, and flows through Him to us (Rom 8:39). The apostle, then, would keep our eyes fixed on Christ, the Holy One; then let us praise Him for this “unction,” which is the fruit of His death for us.

The anointing of believers sanctifies and consecrates them as kings and priests unto God (Rev 1:6) as those persons were typically during the Old Testament era. “Whereas, therefore, those titles denote the dignity of believers in their especial relation unto God, by this unction they are peculiarly dedicated and consecrated unto Him” (John Owen⁶). The Spirit then takes up His abode within their hearts with all His graces, operations, gifts, and enablings. He does so on a twofold basis. First, on the ground of redemption: in the types, the oil (emblem of the Spirit) was always placed upon the blood (Lev 14:14, 17)—it is on the ground of *atonement accomplished* that the Spirit comes to believers, which at once sets aside human merits. Yet, second, there must be a moral fitness as well. The Spirit of God will not dwell within unbelieving rebels: “After [or “when”] that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph 1:13). When we repudiate all idols, surrender to Christ as Lord, and trust in the efficacy of His sacrifice, the heart is prepared for the Spirit to enter and take possession for Christ’s use. When we give up ourselves to Christ, He owns the dedication by making our bodies the temples of the Holy Spirit, there to maintain His interests against all the oppositions of the devil.

“*But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*” The first benefit that believers have by this anointing is an *illumination of their minds*. Not that the Spirit imparts any superior mental endowment, or that anything over and above what is contained in Holy Writ is revealed to them; rather does He enable them to perceive what the natural man cannot discern (1Co 2:14), by His effectual application of the truth to their hearts. In order to see, two things are necessary: the organ of vision within, and light from without—the Spirit imparts the former, the Scripture furnishes the latter. Their knowledge is such as to deliver from fatal delusions and preserve them from apostasy. As Levi Palmer aptly declared, “The departure of the antichrists [verse 19] shows the supreme importance of our abiding discipleship. But in order thus to abide, it is necessary to have what may be called a divine tuition, whereby we may be able to detect error. Neither heart nor intellect will do—nothing can be sufficient less than the ‘seven eyes, which are the Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth’ (Rev 5:6; R. V. margin). It is this power of spiritual discernment that all believers receive in the gift of the Spirit.”

⁶ **John Owen** (1616-1683) – called “The Prince of the Puritans.” He was a chaplain in the army of Oliver Cromwell and vice-chancellor of Oxford University, but most of his life he served as a minister in congregational churches. His written works span forty years and run to twenty-four volumes representing among the best resources for theology in the English language. Born to Puritan parents in the Oxfordshire village of Stadhampton.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

82. Tribal Portions

We turn now to those chapters (Jos 15-19) which offer the least scope to the expositor, the presence of which has probably deterred not a few from attempting to write a connected commentary on this sixth book of the Word. Those chapters contain, for the most part, a geographical description of the different portions of Canaan which were allotted unto Israel's tribes. They consist largely of a list of places, many of which are never referred to again in the Scriptures, and which cannot now be identified. Nor can we be sure, in the majority of instances, of the precise meanings of the names of those towns and villages, though in those cases where such is obtainable, the typical and moral significance thereof is more or less apparent. That nothing has been recorded in the Bible without divine design must be believed by every reverent heart—the genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1-9 not excepted—and that all is of real value to the people of God is not to be questioned. Yet, so far as we are aware, the Holy Spirit has not yet “opened” their purpose and spiritual contents to the Church. Acknowledging our ignorance and refusing to speculate thereon, we can but single out a few of the more prominent details found in this section, and offer some remarks thereon.

“This then was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah by their families” (Jos 15:1). The first two of the tribes to have made known to them their allotments were Judah and Joseph, that being detailed here, the other in the next chapter. Upon which Matthew Henry (1662-1714) said, “Judah and Joseph were the two sons of Jacob on whom Reuben's forfeited birthright devolved. Judah had the dominion entailed on him, and Joseph the double portion, and therefore the two tribes were first seated—Judah in the southern part of the land of Canaan, and Joseph in the northern part. And on them, the other seven did attend, and had their respective lots as appurtenances to these two. The lots of Benjamin, Simeon, and Dan were attendant to Judah, and those of Issachar and Zebulon, Naphtali, and Asher to Joseph. These two were first set up to be provided for, it should seem, before there was such an exact survey of the land as we find afterward (Jos 18:9).

“It is probable that the most considerable parts of the northern and southern countries, and those that lay nearest to Gilgal, and which the people were best acquainted with, were first put into two portions, and the lot was cast upon them between these two principal tribes, of the one of which Joshua was, and of the other Caleb, who was the first commissioner in this writ of partition; and by the decision of that lot, the southern country fell to Judah, of which we have an account in this chapter; and the northern to Joseph, of which we have an account in the two following chapters. And when this was done, there was a more equal dividend (either in quantity or quality) of the remainder among the seven tribes. And this, probably, was intended in that general rule which was given concerning this partition: ‘to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth’

(Num 33:54): that is, 'Ye shall appoint two greater portions, which shall be determined by lot, to those more numerous tribes of Judah and Joseph, and then the rest shall be lesser portions, to be allotted to the less numerous tribes.' The former was done in Gilgal, the latter in Shiloh." It should also be pointed out that, as the injunction was given that when Israel were on the march "these [i.e. Judah] shall first set forth" (Num 2:9), so the assigning of Judah's portion *first* was a prophetic intimation of the future pre-eminence of this tribe.

It is to be observed that the description given of Judah's heritage is broken into at 15:13, by mention being made of Caleb (who belonged to this tribe) receiving Hebron for his personal portion. This was before us in our last, but a further detail is here recorded which claims our attention. After informing us that he drove thence the three sons of Anak, we are told that, "Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife" (Jos 15:16). This should not be understood as an exhibition of any personal sloth on Caleb's part, still less of fear, but rather as his affording an opportunity for another to obtain some laurels as well as himself. It is to be borne in mind that in the East the father is regarded as having the right to dispose of his daughter, and it is the regular custom for him to select her husband without consulting her—compare 1 Samuel 18:17. Kirjath-sepher was a fortress of the Anakims, one that was difficult of approach, being situated on a hill (note "went up" in verse 15). The offer made by Caleb was an incentive to bravery. He knew that only a man of faith and courage would attack such a place.

In the above, we obtain a further insight into Caleb's character and see what a well-balanced one it was. He was not only a man of strong faith, an intrepid warrior, but a dutiful father as well. It was not only that he desired to stir up Israel generally to set about the tasks which still required performing (Jos 16:10 shows that some of them had already become slack in their duty), but that he desired to make sure that his daughter obtained a worthy husband. Caleb's challenge was accepted by his own nephew, for we read, "And Othniel the son of Kenez, the brother of Caleb, took it" (Jos 15:17). It is noteworthy that, years later, this same Othniel, who acted so admirably and valiantly on this occasion, became both a deliverer and a judge in Israel (Jdg 3:9), and, in fact, the first person who presided over the nation after Joshua's death. "It is good for those who are setting out in the world to begin betimes with that which is great and good, that, excelling in service when they are young, they may excel in honour when they are old" (Matthew Henry).

"And he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife" (Jos 15:17). It is to be borne in mind that there was nothing in the Mosaic Law which forbade the marrying of cousins. As others before us have suggested, it is highly probable that Othniel was in love with Achsah before her father made this proposal. It is also likely that Caleb was aware of it and looked favourably upon him, but decided thus to put him to the test before finally committing himself. It was both an honour to wed the daughter of the man who was the chief of his tribe and a great privilege for Othniel to marry into a family so marked by faith and piety, and to be united to one who, we cannot doubt, had been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Such a woman is to be desired far above one who is endowed with the riches of this world, or possesses little else than a pretty face.

"And it came to pass, as she came unto him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou?" (Jos

15:18). Here, we behold some of the becoming traits which marked the character of Caleb's daughter. The "as she came unto him" means to her husband, her father accompanying them from his house where they would be married. First, her meekness appears in the owning of Othniel as her head—desiring that he should be the one to present her request unto Caleb. Apparently Othniel considered that the request would come better from her direct, and, though contrary to her own inclination, she deferred to her husband's judgment. Second, her getting down from her mount betokened her respect and reverence for her father (compare Genesis 24:64 where Rebekah did the same when Isaac approached her), which showed that marriage had not "turned her head." She was as ready to honour her parents now as formerly.

Perceiving that his daughter desired to ask him for some favour, Caleb said to her, "What wouldest thou?" And she answered, "Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a southland; give me also springs of water" (Jos 15:19). We do not understand from the first clause that she meant the paternal benediction, or that he should supplicate JEHOVAH for a blessing upon her, but rather an inheritance over and above what he had already given her. She desired this bounty because it would add to the comfort of her settlement. Teaching us, thereby, that it is no transgression of the commandment, "Thou shalt not covet" (Exo 20:17), to desire those conveniences and comforts which may be obtained in an honest and honourable way. Caleb had already given her some land which was much exposed to the sun and poorly watered. Having married according to his orders, she felt he would the more readily grant what she now petitioned him for. Her modesty appears in the simplicity of her request, namely, some field with springs of water in it. She might have asked for jewels to adorn her person, or servants to make her lot easier in the home. Instead, she confined herself to bare necessities, for land without water could not be very productive.

"And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs" (Jos 15:18), probably bestowing upon her more than she had asked. Plain is the celestial lesson illustrated for us here. If earthly parents are ready to bestow upon their children that which is good for them, how much readier is our heavenly Father to give both spiritual and temporal blessings when we ask Him in faith! This is indeed a lovely domestic picture, and each of its features claims our admiration and imitation. Here, we see the wife in subjection to her husband, and he declining to take advantage of his authority. When husbands and wives mutually advise and jointly agree about that which is for the common good of the family, the domestic machinery will run smoothly. Here, we see a married woman despising not her father when he was old, and she lost not by honouring him. Here, we see how wise parents will not deem that lost which they bestow upon their children for their real advantage, especially when they are dutiful ones. "When the character of parents, the education of their children, and the children's consequent prudent and pious conduct combine, there is the fairest prospect that they will be settled in life to the mutual comfort and advantage of all the parties concerned" (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

There is one other detail recorded here of the tribe of Judah, and it is in marked contrast with the above. "As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day" (Jos 15:63). It is to be recalled that in the tenth chapter, we saw how that the king of Jerusalem persuaded four of his fellow monarchs or chieftains to join him in

launching an attack upon Gibeon (Jos 10:3-4) (which made peace with Israel), and how that Joshua completely vanquished their combined forces, slew the five kings (Jos 10:26), and took all their land (Jos 10:42). Judges 1:8 supplies an additional detail, informing us, "Now the children of Judah *had* fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire." However, it would appear that during the next few years, while Israel were occupied in conquering other parts of the country, the Jebusites recovered the fort of mount Sion at least, which remained in their hands till the time of David (2Sa 5:7). Matthew Henry suggested: "It may, therefore, be justly looked upon as the punishment of their neglect to conquer other cities which God had given them, that they were so long kept out of this." So today, if the Lord's people be slack in performing their duties, they need not be surprised if some important centres of Christendom remain under the control of the enemy, having the management of the same—how many of the denominational boards, seminaries, etc., are now governed by modern Jebusites!

"And the lot of the children of Joseph fell from Jordan by Jericho, unto," etc. (Jos 16:1). The order of procedure among the tribes of Israel was always Judah first, the sons of Joseph second, which is in full accord with that parenthetical, but important, statement in 1 Chronicles 5:1-2. "Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's)." As C. J. Ellicott (1819-1905) pointed out, "Accordingly, in the division of the land of Canaan under Joshua, there are three successive stages. First, the settlement of the tribe of Judah in the strongholds in the south of Palestine. Second, the estating of Ephraim and Manasseh in the centre of the country, and in some strong positions in the north. Third, the settlement of the remaining tribes, so as to fill up the gaps between Judah and Joseph, and also upon the outskirts of their territory, so as to be, as it were, under the shelter of their wings."

Reuben's portion was much inferior to that of Joseph, for it lay on the wilderness side of the Jordan (Jos 13:7, 15-21) separating them from the tribes on the western side, thereby exposing them to be attacked more easily by enemies. As a matter of fact, this tribe, with that of Gad (which adjoined it), was sorely stricken by Hazael (2Ki 10:32-33), and afterwards carried into captivity twenty years before the general seizure of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria (1Ch 5:26). Whereas, Joseph and his posterity were highly favoured in their lot, for their position lay in the very heart of the land of Canaan, extending from the Jordan in the east to the Mediterranean in the west. It is therefore very striking indeed to note how that, on the one hand, we behold in Reuben's heritage and its history a solemn demonstration of God's "visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate" Him (Num 14:18). And on the other hand, we see in the case of Joseph's posterity a blessed exemplification of the divine promise, "Showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments" (Exo 20:6). The disposings of divine providence are not capricious or arbitrary, but regulated by moral and spiritual considerations which accord with the principle of sowing and reaping.

"And the separate cities for the children of Ephraim were among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages" (Jos 16:9). This was because the

tribe of Ephraim was now much more numerous than that of Manasseh. Matthew Henry appropriately called attention to the fact that “though when the tribes were numbered in the plains of Moab, Manasseh had got the start of Ephraim in number, for Manasseh was then fifty-two thousand and Ephraim but thirty-two thousand (Num 26:34, 37); yet, by the time they were well settled in Canaan, the hands were crossed again (Gen 48:13-14) and the blessing of Moses was verified: ‘They are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and there are the thousands of Manasseh’” (Deu 33:17). Since the Ephraimites were much more plentiful than the Manassites, additional cities were given them besides “the lot” which fell to them. Those cities were in the heritage of Manasseh. God having assigned them more than their own needs required. No doubt that was to *test them*, to afford an opportunity of showing kindness to their brethren, by giving of their abundance to those who lacked. This is one reason why Providence so orders things that “ye have the poor always with you” (Mat 26:11). Note that “always”—sure intimation that Socialism, the Welfare State, will never become universally and permanently established.

“And they drave not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer” (Jos 16:10), which marked the boundary of this tribe, and was close to the sea (Jos 16:3). Their failure to do so was much worse than that of Judah to recapture Jerusalem (Jos 15:63), for *they* made an attempt to do so, whereas *these* did not. No specific reason is given for their wanting in duty, whether it was because of cowardice, slothfulness, or something else. But, the fact remains, that they disobeyed the commandment in Deuteronomy 20:16. There is no intimation that these Canaanites renounced their idolatry and became worshippers of JEHOVAH. But the second half of the verse seems plainly to indicate that their disobedience was due to the spirit of greed, “But the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute” (Jos 16:10). Since the Ephraimites were strong enough to subject the Canaanites and compel them to pay tribute, no excuse can be made for allowing such to live with them. They considered their financial gain more than submission to God or the good of their country, which was in keeping with their general character—compare Hosea 12:8. They soon followed the ways of those heathen, and became idolators themselves (Jdg 17:1-5). The Canaanites continued to dwell in Gezer until the days of Solomon, when the king of Egypt took and gave it to his daughter who had married Solomon (1Ki 9:16-17).

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

12. Its Remedy, Part 1

Perhaps some of our younger and more impatient readers are inclined to demur, “Why devote a separate section to this? We already know all about it. The remedy for ruined man is to be found in God’s salvation.” But that is a very superficial view to take, and a wrongful one too, for the greatest and grandest of all the wonderful works of God ought never to be spoken of so lightly or dismissed so cursorily. Moreover, the matter is very far from being as simple as that, and since there be such widespread ignorance concerning the disease itself, it is needful to examine closely and enter into some detail upon a description of the

cure for the same. The fact needs to be deeply realized at the outset that to all natural wit the condition of fallen man is beyond repair, that so far as self-help or human skill is concerned, his case is hopeless. Yea, none other than the Son of God Himself declared, "With men this is impossible" (Mat 19:26), and it is only as we perceive, to some extent at least, the various respects in which that impossibility lays that we can begin to appreciate the miracle of grace which secures the recovery of lost sinners.

The deadly disease which has seized man is not a simple but a compound one, consisting of not a single element but a combination, each of which is fatal in itself. Look at some of them. Man's very nature is thoroughly corrupt, yet he is in no wise horrified because of it. Not only is sin part and parcel of his being, but he is deeply in love with it. He is filled with enmity against God, and his heart is as hard as a stone. He is wholly paralysed Godward, and completely under the dominion and sway of Satan. He is not only devoid of righteousness, but a guilty sinner, without a spark of holiness, a moral leper. He is quite incapable of helping himself, for he is "without strength" (Rom 5:6). The wrath of God abides upon him, and he is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). Fallen man is not merely in danger of ruin and destruction, but is already sunk in the same. He is like a brand on the very edge of a raging fire, which will swiftly be consumed unless the divine hand plucks him thence (Zec 3:2). His condition is not only wretched but desperate, inasmuch as he is altogether incapable of devising any expedient for his cure.

The sinner is guilty, and no creature can make an atonement for him. He is an outcast from God, terrified by His very perfections, and, therefore, does his best to banish Him from his thoughts. No tongue can express or heart be suitably affected with the woeful plight and abject misery of the natural man. And, such will be his case for ever, unless God intervenes. Yet all of this presents but one side of the problem—and the easier one—which stands in the way of man's recovery. To finite intelligence it would seem that a creature so vile and polluted, so wayward and rebellious, so obnoxious to the righteous curse of the Law, is beyond all hope—that it would not comport with the divine honour to save such a wretch. How a transgressor could be pardoned consistently with the requirements of that Law which he had despised and flouted, and be delivered from the penalty which it justly demands, and how he could be recovered unto God's favour in concord with the maintaining of the divine government, presented a difficulty which no angelic wisdom could solve. It was a secret hid in God till He was pleased to make it known.

There are those—with no regard to the Word of truth—who suppose that God must pardon and receive to favour those who throw down the weapons of their rebellion against Him and sue for mercy. But the solution to the problem is far from being as simple a matter as that. Meeting such people on their own ground, it is to be pointed out that human reason can advance no valid and sufficient argument why God should forgive the sinner merely because he repents, or that this could be done consistently with His moral government. Rather is the contrary evident. The contrition of a criminal will not exonerate him in a human court of law, for it offers no satisfaction and reparation for his crimes. Any sinner who cherishes the idea that his repentance gives him a claim to divine clemency and favour demonstrates that he is a total stranger to true repentance, and never will he repent until he abandons such presumption. Universal experience and observation, as well as Scripture, fully attest the fact that none of mankind ever repent while they be left to themselves, and

are not made the subjects of those divine operations to which they have no claim, and which mere reason is incapable of concluding that God will grant them.

That an adequate remedy for the complicated and fatal malady by which man is stricken must be *of God* is very obvious. It must needs be of His devising, His providing, His applying, His making of the same effectual. That is but another way of saying it must be *wholly of Him* from start to finish, for if any part thereof be left to the sinner, at any stage, it is certain to fail. Yet it requires to be pointed out once more that God was under no obligation whatever to make such provision, for when man deliberately apostatized from Him, he forfeited all favourable regard from his Maker. Not only might God now righteously inflict the full penalty of His broken law upon the entire human race, but, suitably unto His holy nature, He could have left all mankind to perish eternally in that condemnation whereinto they had cast themselves. Had He utterly forsaken the whole of Adam's apostate posterity and left them as remediless as the fallen angels, it had been no reflection whatever upon His goodness, but rather a display of His inexorable justice. Wherefore, whenever redemption is mentioned, it is constantly described as proceeding from sovereign grace and mere mercy (Eph 1:3-11).

Yet, something more than a gracious design was required on God's part in order for any sinner to be saved. Grace is indeed the source thereof, yet it was not sufficient of itself. One may be filled with the most amiable intentions, yet be unable to carry them out. How often is the fond love of a mother impotent in the presence of her suffering child! There has to be the forthputting of divine *power* also if the purpose of grace is to be accomplished. And no ordinary power either, but, as Scripture affirms, "the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power" (Eph 1:19). It calls for the exercise of far more might to re-create a fallen creature than it did to create the universe out of nothing. Why so? Because in *that* there was no opposition, nothing to resist His working. Whereas in the case of fallen man, there is the hostility of his will, the alienation of his heart, the inveterate enmity of his carnal mind to be overcome. Furthermore, there is the malice and opposition of Satan to be neutralized, for he endeavours with all his might to retain his hold upon his victims. The devil must be despoiled of the advantage which he had gained, for it consists not with the glory of God that he should be left to triumph in his success.

But something more than the exercise of God's power was still required. Omniscience must be exercised as well as omnipotence. Strength itself will not build a house. There must also be art to contrive and proportion the materials. *Skill* is the chief requirement of an architect. Let that faintly illustrate what we are here endeavouring to express. Those who are saved are not only the products of God's amazing grace and almighty power, but they are also "His workmanship" (Eph 2:10). Wondrously does God's *wisdom* appear in the beautiful fabric of His grace, in the spiritual temple which He erects for His own residence. He has "wrought us for the selfsame thing" (2Co 5:5). As stones are carved and polished, so believers are made "living stones" in that edifice in which God will dwell forever. Now, that which is exquisite in execution serves to make manifest excellent skill in the planning of the same. The counterpart of God's law in the hearts of His quickened children is no less the fruit of His wisdom than the writing of it on the tables of stone—wisdom in

the first framing of it, wisdom also in the imprinting of it upon the understanding and the affections.

It is neither in the marvels of creation nor in the mysteries of providence that the depths and riches of *God's wisdom* are to be found. Rather is it in the plan and fruits of redemption that they are most fully and illustriously revealed. This is clear from several Scriptures. It is in the God-man Mediator that "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3). Yea, He is expressly denominated "the wisdom of God" (1Co 1:24). "Unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places" is now being made known by means of "the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph 3:10). The devising of a method whereby a part of mankind should be recovered out of their miserable estate is indeed the masterpiece of divine wisdom. Naught but omniscience itself could have found a way to effect such a triumph in a manner suited to all the divine perfections. The wise men of this world are termed "princes" (1Co 2:6, 8), but angels are designated "principalities and powers in the heavenlies," because of their superior dignity, wisdom, and strength. Yet, though they be so great in intelligence, always beholding the face of the Father, yet a new and grander discovery of God's wisdom is made to them through the Church, for His work in the redemption of it far transcends their native understanding.

The celestial hierarchies had witnessed the dishonour which had been done to the authority of God and the discord brought into the sphere of His government by the sin and rebellion of Adam. It was therefore necessary, morally speaking, that that defiance of God's rule should be dealt with, and that that affront to His throne should be rectified. This could not be done except by the infliction of that punishment which, in the unalterable rule and standard of divine justice, was due thereunto. The dismissal of sin on any other terms would leave the rule of God under unspeakable dishonour and confusion. "For where is the righteousness of government if the highest sin and provocation that our nature was capable of, and which brought confusion on the whole creation below, should forever go unpunished? The first express intimation that God gave of His righteousness in the government of mankind was His threatening punishment equal unto the demerit of disobedience if man should fall into it: 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die' (Gen 2:17). If He revoke and disannul this sentence, how shall the glory of His righteousness in the rule of all be made known? But how this punishment should be undergone, which consisted in man's eternal ruin, and yet man be eternally saved, was a work for divine wisdom to contrive" (John Owen).

Not only was it necessary unto the honour of God's righteousness, as He is the moral Governor and supreme Judge of all the earth, that sin should be summarily punished, but it was required that there should be an obedience unto God, and such an obedience as would bring more glory unto Him than the dishonour and reproach which resulted from the disobedience of man. "This was due unto the glory of His holiness in giving the Law. Until this was done, the excellency of that Law, as becoming the holiness of God, and as an effect thereof, could not be made manifest. For, if it were never kept in any instance, never fulfilled by any one person in the world, how should the glory of it be declared? How should the holiness of God be represented by it? How should it be evident that the transgression of it was not rather from some defect in the Law itself, than from any evil in them that should have yielded obedience unto it? If the Law given unto man should never be complied with-

al in perfect obedience by any one whatever, it might be thought that the Law itself was unsuited unto our nature, and impossible to be complied withal” (John Owen). It did not become the Rector of the universe to give unto man a law whose spirituality and equity should never be exemplified in obedience. That law was not imposed, primarily, that man might suffer justly for its transgression, but rather that God should be glorified in its performance. But since Adam’s offence brought ruin upon all his posterity, so that they are incapable of meeting its requirements, how could a perfect obedience be rendered to it? Omniscience alone could supply the answer.

Oh, what a truly amazing thing it is, Christian reader, that the wisdom of God has, by our redemption, made that which is the greatest possible dishonour to Him the occasion of His greatest glory. Yet such is indeed the case. Nothing is so displeasing to the Most High as sin, nothing so dishonouring to Him, for it is in its very nature enmity against Him, contempt of Him. Sin is a reproach to His majesty, an insult to His holiness, an insurrection against His government. And yet, this “abominable thing” which He hates (Jer 44:4), upon which He cannot look but with infinite disfavor (Hab 1:13), is made the occasion of the greatest possible good. What a miracle of miracles that the Lord makes the wrath of man to praise Him (Psa 76:10), that the very evil which aims at dethroning Him is transmuted into the means of magnifying Him. Yea, that thereby He has made the grandest manifestation of His perfections that ever was. Sin casts contempt upon the law of God, yet, through redemption, that law is made supremely honourable. Never was the King of heaven so grievously slighted as when those made in His image and likeness broke out into revolt against Him. Never was such honour paid unto His throne as by the way He chose to effect the salvation of His people. Never was the holiness of God so slighted as when man preferred to render allegiance to that old serpent the devil. Never did God’s holiness shine forth so illustriously as in the victory He has gained over Satan.

Equally wonderful is it, Christian reader, that God contrived a way whereby a flagrant transgressor should become not guilty, and that he who is completely destitute of righteousness should be justified or pronounced righteous by the Judge of all the earth. Had such things as these been submitted for solution, they had forever appeared to be irreconcilable contradictions to all finite understandings. It seems to be utterly impossible for a condemned culprit to be cleared of any charge against him. Sin necessarily entails punishment. How then can any committer of it escape the “due reward” of his deeds (Luk 23:41), except by a manifest violation of justice? God has declared plainly that He “will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo 34:7). He has determined by an unalterable decree that sin shall be paid its wages. Then how can the guilty be exempted from the sentence of death? Nor is the problem any less formidable of how God can, with perfect equity, declare righteous those who have not themselves met the requirements of the law. To adjudge entitled to the reward of obedience those whose record is a lifelong disobedience appears to be something worse than an anomaly. Nevertheless, Omniscience contrived a solution to both of these problems, a solution which is, in every respect, a perfect and a glorious one.

Without that solution, the restoration of any of mankind into the favour of and unto fellowship with and the enjoyment of God Himself was utterly impossible. It was so not only because of the total depravity of man himself, but because of the concernment of the glory of the divine perfections in our sin and apostasy. Not only were they stricken with a fatal

disease, from which there was not the slightest hope of deliverance unless a supernatural remedy be provided, but the government of God had been so grievously outraged by our revolt therefrom that full compensation must be made to His insulted scepter, and complete satisfaction offered to His broken law, before the throne of heaven could be satisfied. Great beyond conception to finite intelligence as was the difficulty of repairing the damage wrought in the whole of our constitution and being by sin, yet greater far were the obstacles which stood in the way of the exercise of God's grace and mercy in the restoring of the outcast. That way of restoration must be one wherein God was magnified, His justice vindicated, His threatenings realized, His holiness glorified. The manner in which all of those ends were achieved and those results secured is the adoring marvel alike of the redeemed and of the angels.

As others before us have pointed out, if the divine government was to be vindicated, the whole work of our recovery must be performed *in our nature*, and the very nature of those who had sinned, and which was to be recovered from the ruins of the fall and brought to everlasting felicity—yet in human nature that was not only free of any pollution, but intrinsically holy. In order to the salvation of sinners, no satisfaction could be made unto the glory of God for the vitiation of apostate man's nature, with all the evil fruits thereof, but in the nature of those who had sinned and were to be saved. Since God's giving of the Law unto our first parents was itself an effect of His wisdom and holiness, wherein could the glory of them be exalted if that rule of righteousness be complied with by a nature of a totally different kind? Should *an angel* fulfil it, his obedience would be no proof that the Law was suited unto man's nature, whereunto it was originally prescribed. Rather would an angel's compliance with the Law have been a reflection upon the divine goodness in giving it to men. Nor could there have been the necessary *relation* between the nature of the substitute and those on whose behalf he acted and suffered, and therefore such an arrangement had not magnified the divine wisdom, but had been at best an unsatisfactory expedient.

The Scriptures are very explicit in their teaching about the necessity of the same nature in the surety and those whom he represented, as being condecant unto God's wisdom. Speaking of the way of our relief, the apostle declared, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he [the Deliverer] also himself likewise partook of the same" (Heb 2:14). It was human nature—here expressed by "flesh and blood"—that was to be delivered, and therefore it was human nature in which this deliverance was to be wrought. The apostle enters into considerable detail upon this point in Romans 5:12-21, the sum of which is, "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one ["by one man," verse 15] shall many be made righteous". The same nature that transgressed must work out the remedy for the same. Again, in 1 Corinthians 15:21, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." Our ruin could not be retrieved, nor deliverance from our guilt be effected, except by one in our own nature.

It is further to be observed that the deliverance to be secured must be wrought by one whose substance was derived from the common stock *of our first parents*. It had not met the exigencies of the case for God to create a second man out of the dust of the ground, or out of anything which was different in nature from ourselves, for, in such a case, there had been no nexus and relation between him and us, and, therefore, we could be in no wise

concerned in anything he did or suffered. That alliance depended solely hereon, that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men” (Act 17:26). But, at this point, a further difficulty was presented, one which, again, had proved insurmountable unto all created intelligences had not “the only wise God” (Rom 16:27) revealed His provision for the resolving of the same. Any deliverer of sinful men must derive his nature from their original stock, yet he must not bring along with it the least taint of corruption or the same liability as us unto guilt upon his own account. For if his nature were defiled, if it lacked the image of God, it could do nothing that should be acceptable unto Him. And were he subject to the penalty of the law on his own account, then he could make no satisfaction for the sins of others. But, since every descendant of Eve is shapen in sin and conceived in iniquity, how could any of *her seed* be sinless? Only Omniscience could bring an immaculately clean thing out of thorough uncleanness.

Nor must we lose sight of *the grounds* on which defilement and guilt adhere unto our nature, as they do in all individuals alike. First, our entire nature, as to the participation of it, was in Adam as our covenant head and federal representative. Therefore, his offence was ours also, and justly imputed unto us. Because we sinned in him, we became “by nature the children of wrath” (Eph 2:3)—the subjects of God’s judicial displeasure. Second, we derived our nature from Adam, by way of natural generation, so that his defilement is communicated to all his offspring. We are the degenerate plants of a degenerate stock. Thus, still another difficulty was presented. The nature of a deliverer for fallen man must, as unto its substance, be derived from our first parents, yet so as *not* to have been in Adam as a legal representative, *nor* be derived from him by natural generation. But, how could this be—that his nature should relate as truly unto Adam as does ours, yet so as neither to partake of the guilt of his transgression nor to participate in his pollution? Such a prodigy was utterly beyond the concept of every finite mind.

THE APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Part 1

Having written so much upon both the inspiration and the interpretation of Holy Writ, it is necessary, in order to give completeness unto the same, to supply one or two articles upon the application thereof. First, because this is very closely related to exegesis itself—if a wrong application or use be made of a verse, then our explanation of it is certain to be erroneous. For example, Romanism insists that “Feed My sheep” (Joh 21:15-17) was Christ’s bestowal upon Peter of a special privilege and peculiar honour, being one of the passages to which that evil system appeals in support of her contention for *the primacy* of that apostle. Yet, there is nothing whatever in Peter’s own writings which indicates that he regarded those injunctions of his Master as constituting him “Universal Bishop.” Instead, in his first epistle, there is plainly that to the contrary, for there we find him exhorting the elders or bishops, “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not be constraint, but willingly: not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (1Pe 5:2-3).

Thus, it is quite clear from the above passage that Christ’s precepts in John 21:15-17 apply or pertain unto *all pastors*. On the other hand, our Lord’s words to Peter and Andrew, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Mat 4:19) *do not* apply to the rank and file of His disciples, but only unto those whom He calls into and qualifies for the ministry. That is evident from the fact that in none of the Epistles, where both the privileges and the duties of the saints are specifically defined, is there any such precept or promise. Thus, on the one hand, we must ever beware of unwarrantably restricting the scope of a verse. And, on the other hand, be constantly on our guard against making general what is manifestly particular. It is only by carefully taking heed to the general Analogy of Faith that we shall be preserved from either mistake. Scripture ever interprets Scripture, but much familiarity with the contents, and a diligent and prayerful comparing of one part with another, is necessary before anyone is justified in dogmatically deciding the precise meaning or application of any passage.

But, there is a further reason, and a pressing one today, why we should write upon our present subject, and that is to expose the modern and pernicious error of dispensationalism. This is a device of the enemy, designed to rob the children of no small part of that bread which their heavenly Father has provided for their souls. A device wherein the wily serpent appears as an angel of light, feigning to “make the Bible a new book” by simplifying much in it which perplexes the spiritually unlearned. It is sad to see how widely successful the devil has been by means of this subtle innovation. It is likely that some of our own readers, when perusing the articles upon the interpretation of the Scriptures, felt more than once that we were taking an undue liberty with Holy Writ, that we made use of certain passages in a way altogether unjustifiable, that we appropriated to the saints of this Christian era

what does not belong to them but is rather addressed unto those who lived in an entirely different dispensation of the past, or one which is yet future.

This modern method of mishandling the Scriptures—for modern it certainly is, being quite unknown to Christendom till little more than a century ago, and only within recent years being adopted by those who are outside the narrow circle where it originated—is based upon 2 Timothy 2:15, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Very little or nothing at all is said upon the first two clauses of that verse, but much on the third one, which is explained as “correctly partitioning the Scriptures unto the different peoples to whom they belong.” These mutilators of the Word tell us that all of the Old Testament from Genesis 12 onwards belongs entirely to Israel after the flesh, and that none of its precepts (as such) are binding upon those who are members of the Church which is the Body of Christ, nor may any of the promises found therein be legitimately appropriated by them. And this, be it duly noted, *without* a single word to that effect by either the Lord or any of His apostles, *and despite* the use which the Holy Spirit makes of the earliest Scriptures in every part of the New Testament. So far from the Holy Spirit teaching Christians practically to look upon the Old Testament much as they would upon an obsolete almanac, He declares, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for *our learning*, that we through patience and comfort of the [Old Testament] scriptures might have hope” (Rom 15:4).

Not satisfied with their determined efforts to deprive us of the Old Testament, these would-be super-expositors dogmatically assert that the four Gospels are Jewish, and that the epistles of James and Peter, John and Jude are designed for a “godly Jewish remnant” in a future “tribulation period,” that nothing but the Pauline epistles contain “Church truth,” and thousands of gullible souls have accepted their *ipse dixit*—those who decline so doing are regarded as untaught and superficial. Yet God Himself has not uttered a single word to that effect. Certainly there is nothing whatever in 2 Timothy 2:15 to justify such a revolutionizing method of interpreting the Word. That verse has no more to do with the sectioning of Scripture between different “dispensations” than it has with distinguishing between stars of varying magnitude. If that verse be carefully compared with Matthew 7:6, John 16:12, and 1 Corinthians 3:2, its meaning is clear. The occupant of the pulpit is to give diligence in becoming equipped to give the different classes of his hearers “their *portion of meat* in due season” (Luk 12:42). To rightly divide the Word of truth is for him to minister it suitably unto the several cases and circumstances of his congregation—to sinners and saints, the indifferent and the inquiring, the babes and fathers, the tempted and afflicted, the backslidden and fallen.

While there be great variety in the teaching of the Word, there is an unmistakable unity underlying the whole. Though He employed many mouthpieces, the Holy Scriptures have but one Author: and while He “at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” and “hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” (Heb 1:1-2), yet, He who spoke by them was and is One “with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam 1:17), who throughout all ages declares, “I am the LORD, I change not” (Mal 3:6). Throughout, there is perfect agreement between every part of the Word. It sets forth *one system of doctrine* (we never read of “the doctrines of God,” but always “the doctrine”: see Deu 33:2; Pro 4:2; Mat 7:28; Joh 7:17; Rom 16:17, and contrast

Mar 7:7; Col 2:22; 1Ti 4:1; Heb 13:9) because it is one single and organic whole. That Word presents uniformly *one* way of salvation, *one* rule of faith. From Genesis to Revelation, there is one immutable Moral Law, one glorious Gospel for perishing sinners. The Old Testament believers were saved with the same salvation, were indebted to the same Redeemer, were renewed by the same Spirit, and were partakers of the same heavenly inheritance as are New Testament believers.

It is quite true that the Epistle to the Hebrews makes mention of a better hope (7:19), a better testament or covenant (7:22), better promises (8:6), better sacrifices (9:23), some better thing for us (11:40), yet it is important to recognize that the contrast is between *the shadows and the substance*. Romans 12:6 speaks of “the proportion [or “analogy”] of faith.” There is a due proportion, a perfect balance, between the different parts of God’s revealed truth which must needs be known and observed by all who would preach and write according to the mind of the Spirit. In arguing from this analogy, it is essential to recognize that what is made known in the Old Testament was *typical* of what is set forth in the New, and therefore the terms used in the former are strictly applicable unto the latter. Much needless wrangling has occurred over whether or not the nation of Israel were a regenerate people. That is quite beside the real point. Outwardly they were regarded and addressed as the people of God, and, as the Spirit through Paul affirmed, “who are Israelites: to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promise; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came” (Rom 9:4-5).

Regeneration or non-regeneration affected the salvation of *individuals* among them, but it did not affect the covenant relationship of the people *as a whole*. Again and again, God addressed Israel as “backsliders,” but never once did He so designate any heathen nation. It was not to the Egyptians or Canaanites that JEHOVAH said, “Return, ye backsliding *children*, and I will heal your backslidings,” or “Turn, O backsliding children... for I am *married unto you*” (Jer 3:22, 14). Now it is this analogy or similarity between the two covenants and the peoples under them which is the basis for the transfer of Old Testament terms to the New. Thus, the word “circumcision” is used in the latter not with identity of meaning, but according to analogy, for circumcision is now “of the heart, in the spirit” (Rom 2:29), and not of the flesh. In like manner, when John closes his first epistle with “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1Jo 5:21), he borrows an Old Testament term and uses it in a New Testament sense, for by “idols” he refers not to material statues made of wood and stone (as the prophets did when employing the same word), but to inward objects of carnal and sensual worship. So too are we to see the antitypical and spiritual “Israel” in Galatians 6:16, and the celestial and eternal “mount Sion” in Hebrews 12:22.

The Bible consists of many parts, exquisitely correlated and vitally interdependent upon each other. God so controlled all the agents which He employed in the writing of it, and so co-ordinated their efforts, as to produce a single living Book. Within that organic unity there is indeed much variety, but no contrariety. Man’s body is but one, though it be made up of many members, diverse in size, character, and operation. The rainbow is but one, nevertheless it reflects distinctly the seven prismatic rays, yet, they are harmoniously blended together. So it is with the Bible. Its unity appears in the perfect consistency

throughout of its teachings. The oneness yet triunity of God, the deity and humanity of Christ united in one Person, the everlasting covenant which secures the salvation of all the election of grace, the highway of holiness and the only path which leads to heaven, are plainly revealed in Old and New Testament alike. The teaching of the prophets concerning the glorious character of God, the changeless requirements of His righteousness, the total depravity of human nature, and the way appointed for restoration therefrom, are identical with the apostles' teaching.

If the question be raised, "Since the sacred Scriptures be a strict unit, then why has God Himself divided them into two Testaments?" Perhaps it will simplify the matter if we ask why God has appointed two principal bodies to illuminate the earth—the sun and the moon. Why, too, is the human frame duplex, having two legs and arms, two lungs, and kidneys, etc.? Is not the answer the same in each case? To augment and supplement each other? But, more directly, at least four reasons may be suggested. First, to set forth more distinctly the two covenants which are the basis of God's dealings with all mankind—the covenant of works and the covenant of grace—shadowed forth by the "old" from Sinai and the "new" or Christian one. Second, to show more plainly the two separate companies which are united in that one Body which constitutes the Church of which Christ is the Head, namely redeemed Jews and redeemed Gentiles. Third, to demonstrate more clearly the wondrous providence of God—using the Jews for so many centuries to be the custodians of the Old Testament, which condemns them for their rejection of Christ. And in employing the papists throughout the dark ages to preserve the New Testament, which denounces their idolatrous practices. Fourth, that one might confirm the other—type by antitype, prophecy by fulfilment.

"The mutual relations of the two Testaments. These two main divisions resemble the dual structure of the human body, where the two eyes and ears, hands and feet, correspond to and complement one another. Not only is there a general, but a special, mutual fitness. They need therefore to be studied together, side by side, to be compared even in lesser details, for in nothing are they independent of each other; and the closer the inspection the minuter appears the adaptation, and the more intimate the association....The two Testaments are like the two cherubim of the mercy seat, facing in opposite directions, yet facing each other and overshadowing with glory one mercy seat; or again, they are like the human body bound together by joints and bands and ligaments, with one brain and heart, one pair of lungs, one system of respiration, circulation, digestion, sensor and motor nerves, where division is destruction" (from *Knowing the Scriptures*, A. T. Pierson, 1837-1911).

ACCEPTANCE OF GOD'S WILL

Resignation to the divine will is one of the last and highest attainments of the Christian life. It is what is ultimately to be aimed at, as essential to comfort here and happiness hereafter. But it seems not by any means to be the first object of one who is desirous of becoming a Christian, nor even attainable, except some other necessary things are previously

required. For me to have my will in unison with the will of God, I must, in the first place, trust Him thoroughly, and love Him supremely. For it is impossible for me freely to give my will to another entirely while we are on bad terms, that is, as long as I cannot trust him and so long as I hate him. The conclusion is that all attempts at resignation will be vain without conversion and reconciliation with God, whom, when we are convinced of the sinfulness and misery of our natural state, it is a high point of wisdom to seek by prayer and diligent searching of the Word, that only right and effectual method of relief which God has provided.

Repent and believe the Gospel is the first thing. We should not stir from this direction till we have some good ground of evidence that we do repent and believe. Alas, our guilt and wickedness is much deeper and larger than we are apt to suspect, and our pride fights with inexpressible obstinacy against all just correction. But let us not be discouraged. Things impossible with men are possible with God. Let us pray, not only now and then, but constantly. Life is short, we have no other business that ought to interfere with this. It should be the perpetual, it is the most important, employment of the soul. The Scriptures, daily meditated on, will supply with instruction. And if we persevere, our business in godliness will doubtless be made in due time our chief pleasure; a thorough insight into human emptiness and worldly vanity—a complete conviction of the evil of sin, even in our own particular case, and a desire to forsake it altogether; a solid discernment of the complete sufficiency of Christ to save us in all respects—these things in seeking daily to God are to be attained.

We are not as ready to pray as God is to hear. He delights to magnify Christ, and to show what the Father can and will do for us through His Son. He calls us to nothing in our own strength. And, as we cannot have, so we need not think of having, any worthiness of our own, we may come and take freely what He bestows. And when once, in this way, you can steadfastly rely on the divine promises through Christ, so sure as faith worketh by love, you will find yourself enabled to love God. And it is in Christ Jesus that His love may be seen. A union and fellowship with Christ will take place, accompanied with the sweetest perception which the human mind can have. Though often the effervescence of it be but brief, yet its steady energy is real and powerful. To encourage us, we should remember the interest we have *in Him* by the ties of a common nature. Hebrews 2 and 4 represent this point strongly. You may think I deviate from the subject of resignation, but I know no other way of coming to it.

Once brought to love Christ above all, we shall love other persons in the best manner, but always in subordination. Even to part with dearest friends will be practicable, because “If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1Th 4:14). When we can feel any genuine love to God in Christ, we shall be led to such an acquiescence in His wisdom and goodness that we shall choose His will to take place rather than ours. And the thought of how soon all things shall be set right in a future life, and that He will make all things work together for good, will reconcile the mind to anything that God pleases. And though the dissolution of the soul and body be always a serious thing and against the feelings of nature, yet a mind whose hope and desires are with Christ, and which has a constant thirst for spiritual enjoyments as true felicity, and which is loosened from all worldly attachments, must *on the whole* wish for death rather

than life, as we all wish most for that which has most of our hearts. But the love of God will teach such a one to resign himself as to the *time* of his Father's will

You will not mistake me, I hope, as if I suppose all true Christians have learned all this completely. Far from it! These things are learned by them in measure, but not without much conflict, opposition from sinful nature all along, and much imperfection. And though it is not easy to confine by rules the order of the Spirit's operations, yet this seems the general order of Christian virtues: repentance, faith, love, resignation. In Christ Himself this resignation was perfect—"not My will, but Thine be done" (Luk 22:42), and as far as we can trust in Him for grace, so far we may receive grace out of His fullness. Among mere men, the apostle Paul seems the completest pattern of resignation. What a tremendous view is that of his sufferings in the latter part of 2 Corinthians 11! But how practicable did the love of God make everything to him! In Philippians 4:11-13, he tells us he has learned to be content in any state, and that he could do all things through Christ who strengthens him. The original word for "have learned" alludes to the Grecian mysteries and shows that the learning was of a mysterious nature.

I write in the fullness of affection, wishing you to make it your main business from day to day to learn these things. I am far from thinking that your long course of affliction has been against your acquiring them. Oh, let us beg for patience to lie as clay in the hands of Infinite Wisdom, who knows how to humble our pride, to bend our wills, and to form us to a conformity unto Himself. And may you be helped to a steady course of praying and of seeking God, with a willingness to give up all for Christ. May Christ Jesus visit you and lead you to true rest. (Joseph Milner, 1780)

