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STUDIES
IN THE
SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

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CONTENTS

Enemies	1
Exposition of John's First Epistle	4
<i>18. The New Commandment (2:7-8)</i>	
The Life and Times of Joshua	10
<i>70. Conquests Summarized (11:12-12:24)</i>	
The Doctrine of Human Depravity.....	16
<i>7. Its Enormity, Part 2</i>	
Interpretation of the Scriptures.....	22
<i>Part 11</i>	

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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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ENEMIES

“Why so much about enemies in the Psalms?” is a question raised in some articles upon that book by a recent writer in the U.S.A., to which he returned the significant answer, “Because in the covenant God put enmity between the wicked and the righteous.” Undoubtedly that is the basic, true, and satisfying explanation of why the saint is assailed and menaced by so many foes, though it scarcely accounts for the numerous references thereto in the Psalter itself. From the beginning (Gen 3:15), the Lord Himself placed an inveterate enmity between the serpent and the Saviour and those belonging to the one or the other, and in proportion as the disciples of Christ follow His example—walk as He walked, reflect His image—will they be opposed by Satan and his seed. “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you....The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (Joh 15:18, 20). God has predestinated His children “to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom 8:29)—first in holiness, then in suffering, afterward in glory.

Scripture reveals the solemn fact that the Christian is menaced by deadly foes, who will show him no quarter¹ nor relax in their efforts to destroy him. It may surprise the reader to hear that the Hebrew and Greek words for “enemies” (occasionally rendered “foes” and “adversaries”) occur over four hundred times in the Bible! Subtracting the allusions to the natural enemies of the Jews in the historical books, a large proportion of them are found in the Psalms. Nor is that difficult to account for, for that portion of God’s Word describes in more detail the various *experiences* of His children, especially their inward conflicts, than any other part of it. And a considerable percentage of those references occur in Psalms of Davidic authorship, for none was more suited to write thereon. Here too we see how the divine Potter moulded the vessel for the particular service it was to render Him and His people. Who so well fitted to say so much upon the oppositions and persecutions encountered by God’s people than he who was assaulted by a lion and a bear in his shepherd days (1Sa 17:34), whose life was so persistently sought by Saul, who fought so many battles against the enemies of Israel, whose friendship was betrayed by Ahithophel (2Sa 15:31), and from whose hands his own son sought to wrest the kingdom (2Sa 15)? Thus was the instrument trained for his task and equipped to become the principal mouthpiece in voicing the complaints of God’s people against those who hate them.

It is very needful for those just starting out on the Christian course to know that they will be hotly opposed and sorely oppressed both from within and from without, that there will be many ill-wishers (often posing as friends) tempting them to return unto the world. Nevertheless, full armour is provided, and they are required to use the same (Eph 6:11), to resist the devil (Jam 4:7), and fight the good fight of faith (1Ti 6:12). As another has said, “You will never pluck the Rose of Sharon if you are afraid to be pricked by the thorns

¹ quarter – mercy.

which surround it. You will never reach the crown if you flinch from the cross in the way to it." His business is to "please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2Ti 2:4). This world is our battlefield, and instead of lying down and waiting to be carried to heaven on flowery beds of ease, our orders are "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1Co 16:13). Ever keep in mind these two things: that Christ regards your enemies as *His*, and therefore will not suffer you to perish at their hands; that He has given express assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2Co 12:9)—then appropriate that promise.

It is also necessary to remember that your foes were all conquered by Christ upon the cross. That there He "spoiled principalities and powers. He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col 2:14). Christ overcame him whom He termed the "strong man," and took from him all his armour (Luk 11:22), destroying or annulling "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14). At His resurrection, His foes were dispersed. As it was foretold, "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him" (Psa 68:1). As that same Psalm goes on to say, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive" (verse 18)—a figure taken from the ancient custom of conquerors having chained to their chariots prisoners caught in battle, thereby making an open display of their victory. While Psalm 110:2 goes on to inform us that the Lord now rules "in the midst of his enemies," and Psalm 2:9 assures us that in due course He will "dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Because all of this has been, is being, and shall be done *for us*, "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom 8:37).

But since all this be so, why are there so many and such powerful enemies still active against the believer? For good and sufficient reasons. Not only that the members of Christ's body may be experientially conformed to their Head, but also that their graces may be called into exercise. All that was pointed out in the above paragraph is addressed unto *faith*, and can only now be apprehended and enjoyed by the same. Not yet have Christ's foes been made His footstool, but they certainly shall be (Psa 110:1), and for that foreordained moment, He sits at God's right hand in full expectation (Heb 10:13). Not yet has God trodden Satan beneath the feet of His people, but He has given them the unfailing promise that shortly He will do so (Rom 16:20), and therefore are they to live and fight in confident anticipation of the same. God suffers us to be assailed by our adversaries for our spiritual profit, to test and prove us, to develop our graces. He would keep us wide awake, and if He permits us to be sorely wounded at times, it is to humble us. Nevertheless, we have the divine guarantee that nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ (Rom 8:35).

God would hereby demonstrate the miracle and marvel of His preserving grace. Adam in paradise had no corrupt lusts within him to entice and no evil world under the curse to seduce him from his allegiance to God, yet, at the first assault of Satan, he fell. Whereas not only are saints surrounded by external foes, but they are indwelt by sin, which is part and parcel of their very beings, claiming the use of all the faculties of their souls and bodies. It is an innate enemy which there is no getting rid of in this life, and when they would fain shake it off and do good, evil is ever present with them (Rom 7:21). Its power is so great that no effort of theirs can subdue it. It is called a *law* in their members (Rom 7:23),

commanding and demanding, a remorseless tyrant which often causes them to cry, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Yet not only does it destroy them not, it is unable completely to prevent them returning the triumphant answer to their own query, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 7:25).

Our foes are many (Psa 25:19), deadly (17:9), lively and strong (38:19), mighty (69:4), scornful (80:6), wrathful (138:7), and often found in our own household (Mat 10:36), in view of which how well suited are these *prayers*. “Consider mine enemies” (Psa 25:19)—“Weigh them, check them, defeat them” (C. H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892). “Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God” (Psa 59:1)—in Thy covenant faithfulness. “Preserve my life from fear of the enemy” (64:1)—that dread of him may not mar my rest in Thee. “Hide me under the shadow of thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about” (17:8-9), which probably alludes to the wings of the cherubim shadowing the mercy seat. “Let me be taken under the protection of that glorious grace which is peculiar to God’s Israel” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). “O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me” (Psa 25:2). “Suffer no wicked mouth to make blasphemous mirth over my distress by asking, Where is thy God?” (Spurgeon). “Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face” (Psa 5:8). Preserve me from straying, and grant a clear apprehension of Thy providential will (compare 27:11).

Blessed is it to mark the Psalmist’s *assurances*. Oh, that writer and reader may be enabled to make them his own. “Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee” (69:19), and therefore Thou knowest their designs and my danger. Blessed is it for the believer to realize that. “By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me” (41:11). Note, he did not say because he hath not harassed me, nor that I triumphed over him. “Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us” (44:5). That is the confident language of faith. “God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies” (59:10)—in measure here, fully so hereafter. “Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies” (60:12). Success should be expected, and every measure thereof ascribed wholly unto Him.

Observe too David’s *acknowledgments*. “Thou hast known my soul in adversities; and hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy” (31:7-8), though he may often have gained a temporary advantage over us. “We are like men in prison with the door open—God always provides a way of escape” (Spurgeon). “Thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy” (61:3). What abundant cause have all of us thankfully to own that; then let us not be remiss in doing so.

EXPOSITION OF JOHN'S FIRST EPISTLE

18. The New Commandment (2:7-8)

"Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth."

In order to an understanding of these verses it is necessary to seek answers to the following questions. What is the relation between them and the context? What is the "old commandment" which is not immediately and formally defined? What is "the beginning" here referred to? Why the seeming repetition in the last two sentences of verse 7? What is the "new commandment" and how is the first clause of verse 8 to be understood, in view of the first clause of verse 7? What is meant by "which thing is true in Him and in you"? What is the precise bearing of the "because" on what precedes, in view of the remainder of the sentence? What is referred to in "the darkness is past and the true light now shineth"? Finally, why is the whole introduced by the term "brethren"? Obviously, the interpreter and teacher is called for here.

It is a mistake made by several of the commentators to suppose that 2:7 begins a new division of the epistle. It does not. Verses 7 to 11 are closely related to those immediately preceding. John is continuing to press for holiness of life, but passes from the general to the particular. In verses 3 to 6 the apostle had shown that the keeping of God's commandments and following the example left His people by Christ are proofs of the genuineness of their love unto the Father and His Son, and therefore assurances for their hearts of their being and abiding in Him. Tacitly these verses contain an exhortation unto obedience to God and imitation of the perfect walk of Christ, and thus are an amplification of the opening sentence of the chapter. "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not." In what follows he had intimated what was the positive implication of that prohibition—that his design was to inculcate and promote practical piety in the lives of the saints. Verse 3 had laid the foundation in a general statement, by mentioning the keeping of God's commandments at large; now, he singles out and dwells upon a more specific commandment, which was at once both old and new.

As to precisely what commandment John had reference to, there does not seem to us the slightest room for doubt. With the great majority of the commentators we consider it is the precept which enjoins the exercise of brotherly love that is here in view. Robert Candlish (1806-1873) and one or two others who were prone to strain after "originality" dissented on the ground that such an interpretation is awkward and unnatural, it being contrary to the apostle's usual simplicity to spend two verses in describing a commandment which he had not yet mentioned, and brings in only at verse 9. But in 3:23, John tells us we should "love one another, as he gave us commandment," and in 4:21, "This commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." While in his second epistle he declares, "not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that

which we had from the beginning, that we love one another” (verse 5), which surely removes all uncertainty. But that which settles the matter once and for all with the writer are the words of our Lord unto His apostles, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (Joh 13:34).

This will be the best place (though we put it last in our list of questions) to consider why our present passage is addressed “brethren.” That is an endearing term. They had all been born again of the same Spirit, had one and the same Father, even the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and had been delivered by the same Redeemer, and were alike interested in one complete and everlasting salvation. They were bound up in the same bundle of life with Christ, and so were in the highest and truest sense His brethren (Heb 2:11, 17), and therefore brethren one of another—united to each other by the sacred tie of blood, even the blood of the Lamb. Since the apostle was about to address them more immediately on the subject of being “kindly affectioned one to another,” most appropriate was it that he should here address them as “brethren”—thereby reminding them of the obligations involved by such a relationship. Only once more in this epistle does he employ this particular form of address, and that most significantly, when bidding them marvel not at the world’s hatred, when assuring them that love to the brethren is a proof of having passed from death unto life, and when pointing out that, if occasion required it, they were to seal their love by laying down their lives for their brethren (3:13-14, 16).

It is through our failure to examine carefully and weigh thoughtfully every detail of Scripture that we miss so many of its finer shades of beauty. Not only are we at a loss to understand much of that which passes so rapidly before our eyes, and still more so to retain it in our memories, but the minute perfections of the Word are unperceived by us. As we cannot enjoy the delicious flavour of fruit if it be eaten hurriedly, neither can we value the workmanship of the Spirit if we rapidly scan the sacred page. A pertinent illustration of this is found in the appellations² employed by John when addressing his readers upon different parts of his message to them, for they are used, not simply for the purpose of variety, but in strict accord with his change of subject. Thus it was most fitting that he should begin this chapter, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not,” for older Christians ought not to need such a dehoration.³ Equally suitable was it that now, when, for the first time, he was to write upon brotherly love, he should address them as “brethren.”

“Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning.” Let us consider the wider bearing of this statement here, taking up its more specific reference. John was introducing no novelty or innovation of his own. He desired to make it clear that in pressing a divine commandment he was not adopting a hitherto unheard-of policy in this Christian dispensation or following a strange procedure. He was acting in no wise inconsistently with a regime of pure grace, for grace ever works through righteousness (Rom 5:21) and never at the expense of it (Ti 2:11-12). Privileges do not release from the discharge of duty, but impose additional obligations, or at least furnish motives thereunto. It is a serious mistake to suppose that “commandments” are out of place

² **appellations** – names; titles.

³ **dehortation** – dissuasion; advice against something.

where love dominates (Eph 5:24; 1Pe 3:6), as it is to argue that the pressing of them upon God's people in this era is "legalistic." Such reasonings are once and for all refuted by Christ's words in John 15:10, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

In declaring that he wrote no new commandment unto his readers, John was emulating his Master. At the beginning of His public ministry Christ had said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Mat 5:17). It was the desire both of the supreme Teacher and of His beloved disciple to allay the prejudices of hearers and readers, by preventing them from supposing they were bringing in something new. The apostle delighted to pattern himself after his Master, not only in his conduct, but also in the methods and manner of his teaching. Nor was there any need whatever for him to invent something new, for the Lord Jesus Himself had delivered all that was ever to be given as from Him: His ministers being required to teach others only those things which He had commanded them (Mat 28:20; Heb 2:3). What a lesson there is here for present day preachers, not to pander to those who, like the Athenians, "spent their time in nothing else, but to tell, or hear some new thing" (Act 17:21). Do not be ashamed to be dubbed "old-fashioned."

J. Reynolds (in Henry's commentary) pointed out, "The precept of love must be as old as human nature; but it might admit of divers enactments, enforcements, and motives. In the state of innocence, had human nature then been propagated, men must have loved one another, as being of one blood, made to dwell on the earth as God's offspring, and bearing His image. In the state of sin and promised recovery, they must love one another as related to God their Maker, as related to each other by blood, and as partners in the same hope. When the Hebrews were peculiarly incorporated, they must accordingly love each other as being the privileged people, whose were the covenants and the adoption, and of whose race the Messiah and Head of the Church must spring; and the law of love must be conveyed with new obligations to the new Israel of God to the gospel-church; and so it is the old commandment or the word which the children of the gospel-Israel had heard from the beginning."

Though that is all doctrinally and historically true, and while the great majority of the commentators since then have, substantially, adopted this explanation of the new-old "commandment," yet we personally consider it misses the mark exegetically, and that through failing rightly to understand what is meant in the repeated expression "from the beginning." It should be carefully noted that the apostle did not say "an old commandment which was from the beginning," but instead, "which ye had" and "which ye have heard from the beginning." As we showed in our exposition of 1:1-2, this expression "the beginning" is used in the New Testament in quite a number of distinct senses, though in this epistle we regard it as having one uniform meaning, namely the beginning of this Christian era, and more particularly the commencement of our Lord's public ministry, when He was openly revealed before the eyes of men, when it was made manifest that none other than Immanuel was tabernacling in their midst. This we are convinced is the reason why the Holy Spirit moved John to add the final clause to verse 7 to explain to us the meaning of the preceding one, and let us know he referred to the "beginning" of their saving knowledge of God, to the time of their conversion—the start of their spiritual lives.

John Calvin (1509-1564) pointed out that some explained the “old commandment” as referring back to Sinai, saying, “that Christ now proclaims no other rule of life under the gospel than what God did formerly under the Law,” adding, “this is indeed most true, nor do I object.” Alas that so many who now call themselves or at least regard themselves as “Calvinists” do object thereto, that they emphatically deny the Moral Law is the Christian’s rule of life, and denounce subjection thereto as a species of “bondage”—a view which is not only falsified by Matthew 5:17, but the plain teaching of the epistles also (Rom 3:31; 7:22, 25; 1Co 9:21). Then, with his usual perspicuity, the justly renowned reformer and expositor gave it as his opinion that John “calls it the old commandment, not because it was taught the fathers ages before, but because it had been taught them on their very entrance into the religious life. This was one of the first elements of the gospel that they had been thus taught from the beginning; and it served much to claim their faith that it had proceeded from Christ Himself, from whom they had received the gospel.”

With the above view we heartily concur, though we would supplement the fact that, not only had Christ proclaimed this commandment (Joh 15:17), but had Himself perfectly exemplified the same (Joh 13:14-15). Now, since the apostles had themselves experienced such a blessed commendation of it in their beloved Master’s treatment of them, we may be sure that they emphasized this law of fraternal benevolence wherever they ministered unto the saints. As others have pointed out, John himself here gave an instance of the same in his own example, and placed it on record in the intimate appellation he here employed, for his “brethren” signified that those to whom he wrote were near and dear to him, united by that bond of Christian charity unto the practice of which he was soliciting them. Thus in declaring, “I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning,” he assured them it was no novelty he was enjoining, but something they had been familiar with from the day they became Christians. Nor had this precept originated with him, for he had received it from Christ; it was thus a disclaimer that he was broaching any strange doctrine.

But to what does he refer in his “*Again, a new commandment I write unto you*”? Not to an entirely different one, or he had said, “And yet again.” The adverb “again” intimates that the same subject was being considered, but under another aspect. In the New Testament two Greek words are used for “new”: *kainos*, which refers especially to quality, and *neos* which alludes principally to time. It is the former one here. One commandment is in view throughout, but considered from different angles, namely that of brotherly love—not formally named, for all his readers would know the one he referred to. The same object may be at once both old and new—old in itself, new to us. Probably the reader heard the gospel for years, but when the Holy Spirit applied it unto his heart in power it was thoroughly new in his experience. Some have illustrated this commandment’s being both old and new by the grand Reformation. That which was proclaimed by Luther and Calvin was “old,” for it had been taught by Christ and His apostles; again, it was “new,” as purged from the adulterations of Rome. A more scriptural example is found in the Sermon on the Mount, where we hear our Lord enunciating no absolutely new law, setting up no different standard of conduct, but renewing the Decalogue, freed from the glosses and corruptions of the rabbis and Pharisees.

The apostle had in the former verse explained what he meant by the old commandment, declaring it to be the very same as they had been taught and had received “from the beginning”—that which respected brotherly love, as the verses which follow prove. As S. E. Pierce (1746-1829) well expressed it, “It was the old commandment in the same sense as when we read of the old covenant and the new. There ever was but one and the same everlasting covenant, yet the different administrations thereof have been such as to give the denominations of the old and new covenant thereto.” That analogy is both pertinent and illuminating. It is on the basis of the everlasting covenant of grace made by God with Christ, that His elect were saved during the former economy (2Sa 23:5) and that they are so now (Heb 13:21), yet different privileges have been enjoyed by and different duties required from them under Judaism and Christianity. Likewise as our Lord’s commandment to His disciples to love one another required the names of old and new—from the distinct periods of His delivering it unto them—so also it is invested with higher privileges, enforced by superior motives, and contains different enactments from the former.

Some commandments are old in the sense of being antiquated, like the ceremonial laws of Judaism; others are new absolutely, as the Christian ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Some are both old and new, as those given at Sinai, renewed by Christ and His disciples. At the beginning of His ministry Christ enforced the Decalogue, the sum of which is loving God with all our hearts and our neighbours as ourselves. At the close He said to His disciples, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you.” The Law required that I love my neighbour, which was a natural relationship; but the gospel requires me to love my “brethren” in Christ, which is a spiritual relationship. The Law required me to love my neighbour as myself—to be as zealous in protecting his interests and forwarding his welfare as I am my own. Christ commands us, “That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (Joh 15:12), with a fervent, sacrificial and enduring love. His words in John 13:34, “as I have loved you,” are to be interpreted in the light of their context (verses 14-15), where we behold the incarnate Son of God performing a slave’s part, washing the feet of His disciples. His was a self-renouncing, self-denying love which shrank not from the meanest office.

Several broad hints have been given above, but we must now furnish a more definite and fuller answer to the question, Why is the old commandment of verse 7 called a new one in verse 8? The terms are used relatively and not absolutely. The old commandment is now considered in a new light and is to be laid hold of with a new vigour. Love for the brethren is now urged on grounds on which it was not under the Mosaic economy. First and foremost, from the example supplied by Christ. He not only expressly ratified the original precept, but had given a pattern of charity such as had never been seen in this world before. In Him it was supremely and sublimely personified. The Lord Jesus displayed a love which was superior to all the faults and failings of its objects, a love which never varied or cooled, which deemed no service too menial and no sacrifice too great. It was new then not in its substance, but in the form given to it by the Redeemer. Perfectly exemplified by Him, it shone with additional luster and appeared with new beauty. Thus we see how intimately this linked with verse 6. In exhorting Christians to walk as their Master walked, the apostle singled out one particular feature thereof—how He conducted Himself toward His brethren.

So far is Christianity from rendering the exercise of love and the performance of good works needless, it imposes additional obligations unto the same, and at the same time furnishes new incentives thereto. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples," said Christ, "if ye have love one to another" (Joh 13:35). And as the example of Christ so plainly exhibited, love is very much more than a nebulous ideal or flowery expression, being an intensely practical thing—more than a beautiful sentiment, namely a mighty force and impelling dynamic. The followers of Christ are required to love one another for His sake, as bearing His image, and as imitating the copy He set before them of compassionate, patient, disinterested affection. They are to have a genuine regard to each other's interests and comforts, a sympathy with their sorrows and a part in their joys. They are to delight in one another's company, to live in peace and harmony, to bear and forbear with each other's frailties. They are to unite together in prayer and worship, to bear each other's burdens, to spare no pains in seeking to build them up in faith and holiness. This new commandment is to be kept forever fresh in the hearts and minds of the saints.

But there are many other respects in which the old commandment is now a new one. It is given to a new society or corporation,⁴ the Christian "brotherhood" (1Pe 2:17). It has received a new exemplification in the Head of that corporation, being abundantly and perfectly realized in Him who "loved the church and gave himself for it" (Eph 5:25). It is addressed unto those who are new creatures in Christ Jesus, and therefore are they to love one another for His sake. Thus it is kept from a new principle or nature, received at regeneration. It has come to them with a new power: under the old covenant it was inscribed upon tables of stone, but the Spirit writes it on the hearts of those who are under the new covenant, and it was for this reason that Paul said to the saints, "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1Th 4:9). It is invested with new force, even the mediatorial authority of Christ, who, after His resurrection from the dead, was given all power in heaven and in earth (Mat 28:18), and "gave commandments unto the apostles" (Act 1:2). It is to be obeyed in a new manner, according to its multiform application in the precepts found in the Epistles, which are given for the directing of brotherly love.

⁴ **corporation** – group of people acting as one.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

70. Conquests Summarized (11:12-12:24)

Before turning to the next section of our book (chapters 13-18), which treats of the apportioning of the land unto the tribes of Israel and their actual entrance into their inheritance, one more article is called for on chapter 11, with a few supplementary remarks upon the twelfth, where we have a breviate⁵ of Israel's conquests. A report is made of the protracted fighting which the complete subjugation of the Canaanites entailed, and this is followed by a list of the thirty-one kings who were vanquished by Joshua. There are a number of details in the former chapter which, despite the five articles we have already written thereon, have not yet been noticed, and which are much too important for us to pass over, for they are details which adumbrate⁶ and illustrate various aspects of that good fight which Christians are called upon to wage. They concern things which, if success is to crown our efforts, contain valuable lessons that we do well to take to heart. Since they be included in the "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom 15:4), we cannot afford to ignore them.

When our Lord had miraculously fed the multitude with the five barley loaves and two small fishes, we are told that He bade His disciples to "gather up the fragments...that nothing be lost" (Joh 6:12). A word that needs to be pressed much upon God's people today, for some of them are following the evil example of this wasteful and wanton generation by being guilty of throwing away much that could well be used or reused. It is in the spirit and according to the general principle contained in that precept of Christ's that we turn again to Joshua 11, for though we have again and again feasted from its contents in our more or less general survey of them, yet quite a few scattered "fragments" therein claim our attention, and these we shall now endeavour to "gather up" into this present article. Though we lack the ability to do as the apostles did and "fill twelve baskets" with the same, yet we trust that by divine assistance we shall be able to provide sufficient to meet the needs of some hungry souls. The Lord graciously grant it.

"And all the cities of those kings, and all the kings of them, did Joshua take, and smote them with the edge of the sword, and he utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the LORD commanded" (11:12). Most express orders had been given to him by his predecessor to do these very things (Deu 7:2; 20:16-17); he was to show no mercy and spare none, for they were drinking in iniquity like water is by the parched. And Moses, in turn, had received these instructions from the Lord Himself. Thus, in the slaughtering of the idolatrous and immoral Amorites, Joshua and his men were not actuated by a spirit of bloodthirstiness or malice, but instead were having regard to the divine precepts. The practical application of this detail unto ourselves should be obvious. Some of God's statutes

⁵ **breviate** – short account.

⁶ **adumbrate** – prefigure; foreshadow.

enjoin that which is painful unto flesh and blood (Mat 16:24; Phi 3:10), yea, quite contrary to our fallen natures (Mat 5:29-30), yet we must not pick and choose only those which are agreeable to us, but conform to the most trying and disagreeable of them. And, even though it involves antagonizing those nearest and dearest to us (Mat 10:34-35; Luk 14:26), we must, like David, “have respect to all God’s commandments” (Psa 119:6).

“As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua: he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses” (11:15). That is to be regarded first as a general statement, summarizing his obedience unto such enactments as Exodus 23:24; 34:11-13; Numbers 33:52; Deuteronomy 12:3, in which he was bidden to overthrow their idols and quite break down their images, to destroy their altars and cut down their groves, to destroy all their pictures and pluck down all their high places, to break down their pillars and burn their groves with fire—in short, so thoroughly to make an end of all the monuments of their religion that the very names of their false gods should be “destroyed out of that place.” Thus, Joshua was not free to follow his own caprice,⁷ nor left to the exercise of his own judgment, but was required to carry out the detailed orders which he had received from his Master. How conscientiously and thoroughly he did so appears from this inspired record of the Holy Spirit, “He left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded.”

“Would we approve ourselves upright, then we must leave nothing undone which the Lord hath commanded. For though omissions are not so scandalous, either in the world or in the Church, as commissions, they are as certainly acts of disobedience and effects of a will unsubjected to the divine authority” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). As our Lord told the Pharisees, who were very punctilious in paying tithe of mint and anise, yet omitted the weightier matters of the Law—judgment, mercy, and faith—“these ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone” (Mat 23:23). Sincere obedience is impartial. He who from a right principle obeys any of God’s commandments will have respect unto all of them. Here is one of the radical differences between gracious souls and empty professors. The latter act for themselves and not for God, and will do no more than what they consider promotes their own interests or enhances their reputation before their fellows. Like the Pharisees, they usually lay stress on the “least” commandments, especially those things which distinguish them from other denominations, and neglect those which relate to moral duties, attending to such externals as the washing of their hands, yet making no serious attempt to cleanse their hearts.

What a searching word is this for both writer and reader to measure himself by, “He left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded”! Therein he conformed to that fundamental injunction, “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it” (Deu 12:32). For men to *add* anything to the precepts of God, as binding upon the conscience or as being essential to personal piety, is an affront upon His wisdom, for it is tantamount to charging Him with an oversight. Equally so, to *diminish* aught from the divine commandments, to ignore or render any of them void, is to despise God’s authority and goodness. If we be wise, even a regard to our own interests will cause us to render unqualified obedience, for God has enjoined nothing but what is for our good, and

⁷ **caprice** – whim; sudden, unaccountable change of mood or behavior.

therefore none of His commandments can be neglected but to our injury and loss. What a solemn word too is this to the preacher! Oh, that he may be able to look his congregation in the face and say truthfully at the close of a pastorate, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you" (Act 20:20).

"Joshua made war a long time with all those kings" (11:18). Though the account of his conquest of Canaan be a very brief one and his numerous victories are packed into a small compass, yet it is not to be thought that they were all obtained within a few days (or even weeks) as was the case at Jericho and in the campaign described in chapter 10, but rather occupied a considerable period. Yet, after all, the expression "a long time" is a *relative* one, for the swiftness or slowness of time's passing is not always to be gauged by the clock. When its span is filled with stress and strain, its flight seems much slower—as it would to the mothers and wives, more than to the fighting men of Israel themselves. Hence in the Hebrew it reads "many days." But, as a matter of fact, that span of time comprised only seven years, as may be seen by a comparison of Joshua 14:1-10 with Deuteronomy 2:14. For in the former, we learn that Caleb was only eighty-five when Canaan was conquered and but forty when sent forth by Moses to spy out the land; while the latter informs us that thirty-eight of those years had been spent in the wilderness before Israel crossed the Jordan. Thus the whole of Canaan was subdued and occupied by Israel within the space of seven years.

Those words, "And Joshua made war a long time with all those kings," tells us of his *constancy*, and the stability of those who served under him. They did not take things easy after Jericho was captured, nor relax their efforts when Ai fell before them, but continued steadfast until they had completed the task assigned them. What a noble example for the Christian to follow in the prosecution of his spiritual warfare! Let him not be appalled by the obstacles confronting him, deterred by the number of enemies to be overcome, nor disheartened by his failures along the way. Patience and fortitude must be earnestly sought from above. Though the fight of faith lasts "a long time," for it is to be without any intermission while we are left in this scene, yet, "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal 6:9). It is just because we are so prone to flag in our efforts during the performance of duty that this exhortation is addressed unto us and *repeated* in 2 Thessalonians 3:13! Then let us watch and guard against this evil tendency and persevere unto the end.

"And at that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities" (verse 21). Apparently a special campaign was made against *them*, and particular notice is here made of the same. Nor is the reason for this far to seek. It will be remembered that when Moses sent forth the twelve men to spy out the land of Canaan and upon their return ten of them threw cold water upon the prospect of Israel's occupying it. They emphasized the formidable strength of its walled cities and made mention of the Anakims as being of "great stature" in their own sight (Num 13:28-33). But mighty as those men were, and taking refuge as they now did in their fastnesses, Joshua and his men—notwithstanding the difficulty of the mountain passes and attacking these giants in their caves—hunted them out and completely routed the very ones who had originally inspired their unbelieving fathers with such terror.

“Even that opposition, which seemed invincible, was got over. Never let the sons of Anak be a terror to the Israel of God, for even *their* day will come to fall. Giants are dwarfs to Omnipotence; yet this struggle with the Anakims was reserved for the latter end of the war, when the Israelites were become more expert in the arts of war and had had more experience of the power and goodness of God. God sometimes reserves the sharpest trials of His people, by affliction and temptation, for the latter end of their days. Therefore, ‘Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off’ (1Ki 20:11). Death, that tremendous son of Anak, is the last enemy to be encountered, but it is to be destroyed (1Co 15:26). Thanks be to God who will give us the victory” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). The words “Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities” are *not* to be understood absolutely, as the later Scriptures show, for both of the books of Samuel make it clear that the race of these giants had not been completely exterminated, that some of their number succeeded in escaping and either concealed their presence from Israel or took refuge in the surrounding countries. This is more than hinted at in the verse that follows.

“There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained” (verse 22). This was one of the passages used by J. J. Blunt (1794-1855) as an illustration of his striking book, *Undesigned Coincidences*. He pointed out that 1 Samuel 17:4 informs us that the Philistine champion whom David vanquished was “Goliath, of Gath,” whose height was six cubits and a span—ten feet—and then bids the reader mark the value of that description, which though quite casual serves to authenticate its historicity. Next, he reminds us of the testimony of Moses in Numbers 13:32-33, where we are told that certain of the original inhabitants of Canaan were “men of great stature...giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants.” Those details are to be carefully borne in mind in connection with Joshua’s final feat of arms, when, as we have seen, he “cut off the Anakims from the mountains,” and none of them were left in the land of Israel “only [observe the exception] in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod.”

Thus, when we find in the book of Samuel that Gath is most incidentally named as the country of Goliath, that fact squares most unmistakably with the two other independent facts chronicled by two other authors, Moses and Joshua; the one that the Anakims were of gigantic size, the other that some of that almost-exterminated race, who survived the sword of Joshua, actually continued to dwell at Gath! Thus in the mouths of those three witnesses is the Word established, concurring as they do in a manner the most artless and satisfactory, in confirming one particular at least in that remarkable exploit of Israel’s shepherd boy. Since this one particular, and that like a hinge upon which the whole incident moves, is discovered to be a matter of fact beyond all question, and in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we have good reason to regard the other particulars of the same history to be authentic too. But there are also many providential circumstances involved in it which argue the invisible Hand by which David slew his adversary. His being on hand to hear and accept the haughty challenge, his bag with five small stones opposed to the helmet of brass and the coat of brazen mail and the spear like a weaver’s beam, the first sling of a pebble, the panic of the whole host of the Philistines and their overthrow, combine to show that it was no ordinary event, and that “the LORD saveth not with sword and spear,” but that the battle is the Lord’s, and that He gave it into Israel’s hand (1Sa 17:47).

“So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war” (11:23). It is clear from Joshua 13 and the book of Judges, that those words are to be regarded as a *general statement*, probably meaning “the far greater and better part, all before described; all that he went against—he failed not in any of his attempts; no place stood out against him that he besieged or summoned; all yielded to him” (John Gill, 1697-1771). Thus did God make good His promises unto the patriarchs (Deu 1:8), to Moses (Deu 3:18), and to Joshua (Jos 1:6). And now, for a season, the land “rested from war”—those Canaanites who had escaped, fearing to attack and remaining quiet; the surrounding nations invading them not. The spiritual application of this unto ourselves is both apparent and blessed. However unpleasant and irksome the spiritual warfare of the Christian may be, his patience in tribulation should ever be encouraged by the joyful expectation of hope (Rom 12:12). For ere long, perfect rest above shall be his portion, and that not for a season, but forever.

The twelfth chapter forms a fitting conclusion to the military campaigns of Joshua, containing as it does a summary of his numerous victories and a list of the thirty-one kings which were smitten by him. A short account is there given of the conquests made by Israel both in the times of Moses and of Joshua. The land which the Lord gave unto Israel consisted of two parts, for though it was but a single country, yet its terrain was divided by the Jordan. Thus the conquest of Canaan was a single enterprise, though it was actually accomplished in two distinct stages. That portion on the eastward side of Jordan was subdued by Moses, and given to the two and a half tribes, but the much larger half lay on the western side, and was subjugated by Joshua and allotted unto the nine and a half tribes.

Typically,⁸ that probably has a threefold significance or application. First, *redemptively*, the fruits of Christ’s mediatorial work: far more have benefited therefrom since His death (the Jordan) than those who were saved by Him during the days of His public ministry. Second, *dispensationally*,⁹ in connection with the Church and its members: most probably a much greater number of them being sinners taken out from the Gentiles than those who had formerly been from the Jews.

Third, *spiritually*, in connection with the believer’s salvation: a portion of his inheritance is entered into and enjoyed by him before the Jordan is crossed, but the principal part of it lies on the farther side of death. But while looking for the mystical meaning of this, let us not overlook the practical lesson. “Them did Moses the servant of the LORD and the children of Israel smite: and Moses the servant of the LORD gave it for a possession unto the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh. And these are the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of Israel smote on this side Jordan on the west...which Joshua gave unto the tribes of Israel for a possession according to their divisions” (12:6-7). The linking together of those two things is instructive. “The enjoyment of present blessings should revive the grateful remembrance of former mercies, and the benefit derived from the labours of the living servants of the Lord should remind us to re-

⁸ **typically** – as a type or an emblem.

⁹ **dispensationally** – in God’s “dispensation,” or ordering, of affairs in this world.

spect the memories of those who have hitherto served Him in their generation. The national covenant mediated by Moses engaged many temporal advantages to Israel" (T. Scott).

"And these are the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of Israel smote on this side Jordan on the west...all the kings thirty and one" (12:7, 24). It may be thought strange that there should have been so many kings in such a small country. In reality, it supplies evidence of the accuracy and veracity of this historical record, for it is in perfect accord with the ancient practice followed in various countries, namely that many of their principal cities had their own separate kings. Historians inform us that when Julius Caesar landed in Britain, he found four kings in the single county of Kent—then how many more would there be in the whole island?

How blessedly did Joshua's conquest of all those kings illustrate the truth that the more entirely our hearts be fixed upon the Lord, our strength (11:6-7), the more certainly will our foes—however powerful or numerous—be subdued before us! According to its gematria (the use of letters instead of figures—for our modern numerals were unknown to the ancients), thirty-one equals EL—the name of *God*. If then He be for us, who can be against us?

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

7. *Its Enormity, Part 2*

In our last, we showed that the heart of the natural man is filled with a secret and unsuspected, yet a real and practical, spirit of atheism—that whatever theological notions he may hold, by his attitude and conduct, he repudiates the very being of God. Even that fearful aspect of man's state does not fully express the desperate and deplorable condition to which the fall has reduced him. Not only is he living in this world "without God" (Eph 2:12)—without any due acknowledgment of or practical subjection to Him—but he has a disposition which is directly contrary to Him (Rom 8:7). With no desire for communion with the true God, he devises false gods and is devoted to them—mammon, pleasures, his belly. Fallen man has cast off all allegiance to God and set up himself in open and undisguised opposition to Him. Not only has he no love for God, but his very nature is wholly averse to Him. Sin has wrought in the whole of his being a radical antipathy to God, to His will and ways, for divine things are holy and heavenly, and therefore bitter to his corrupt taste. He is alienated from God, inveterately opposed to Him.

As an operative principle in the soul, sin is virtually the assertion of self-sufficiency and self-supremacy, and thus it cannot but produce opposition to God. Sin is not only the negation but the positive contrary of holiness, and therefore it can bear naught but antagonism to the Holy One. He who affirms and asserts himself must deny and resist God. The divine claims are regarded as those of a rival. God is looked upon as an enemy, and the carnal mind is enmity against Him; and enmity is not simply the absence of love—a condition of mere indifference—but is a principle of repugnance and virulent resistance. Hence, as John Owen (1616-1683) said (*Indwelling Sin*, chapter 4), "Sin's proper formal object is *God*. It hath, as it were, that command from Satan which the Assyrians had from their king, 'Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel.' It is neither great nor small, but God Himself, the King of Israel, that sin sets itself against. There lies the secret, the formal reason of all opposition to good, even because it relates unto God...The law of sin makes not opposition to any duty, but to God in every duty." Thus, sin is nothing less than high treason against the absolute sovereignty of God.

Terrible beyond words is it that any creature of His hands should harbour enmity against such a glorious being as the great God. He is the sum of all excellency, the source of all good, the spiritual and moral Sun of the universe (Psa 84:11). And yet fallen man is not only His enemy, but his very mind is "enmity against God" (Rom 8:7). Enemies may be reconciled, but *enmity* cannot be. Yea, the only way to reconcile enemies is to destroy their enmity. In Romans 5:10, the apostle spoke of enemies being reconciled to God by the death of His Son, but when he makes reference to enmity, he says, "having abolished in his flesh the enmity" (Eph 2:15). There is no other way of getting rid of enmity except by its abolition or destruction.

Now enmity operates along two lines: aversion and opposition—God is detested and resisted. Sin brings us into God's debt (Mat 6:12), and this produces aversion of Him. As debtors hate the sight of their creditors and are loath to meet them, so do they who are unable to meet the just claims of God—exemplified at the beginning, when fallen Adam fled as soon as he heard the voice of his Maker.

Sin is a disease which has ravaged the whole of man's being, rendering God obnoxious to him. As an inflamed eye cannot endure the light, the depraved heart of man cannot endure to look upon God. He has a deeply rooted and inveterate detestation for Him, and therefore against everything that is of Him. The more spirituality there is in anything, the more it is disliked by the natural man. That which has most of God in it, is the most unpalatable to him. Concerning those in whom enmity is most dominant, God says, "Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof" (Pro 1:25)—not simply this or that part of His revealed will was unacceptable to them, but the whole thereof.

This enmity is universal in its manifestations. Not only is the unregenerate heart indisposed to all holy duties, finding them irksome and burdensome, but it hates God's Law and rejects His Christ. It abuses His mercies, and despises the riches of His goodness and long-suffering. It mocks His messengers, resists His Spirit, flouts¹⁰ His Word, and persecutes those who bear His image. Those at enmity with God serve His adversary the devil, and are heartily in love with that world, of which he is prince (Eph 2:2).

Enmity is a principle which ever expresses itself by opposition against its object. It contends with what it loathes. As in the regenerate the flesh lusts against the spirit, so in the unregenerate it fights against God. Enmity is the energy behind every sinful act. Though the interests of particular sins may be contrary to one another, yet they all conspire in a joint league against God Himself. As an able expositor expressed it, "Sins are in conflict with one another: covetousness and profligacy, covetousness and intemperance agree not. But they are one in combining against the interest of God. In betraying Christ, Judas was actuated by covetousness, the high priest by envy, Pilate by popularity, but all shook hands together in the murdering of Christ. And those varied iniquities were blended together to make up one lump of enmity" (W. Jenkyn on Jude, Part II, 1665).

Though there be not in all sins an express hatred of God, nevertheless in every sin there is an implicit and virtual hatred against Him. So deeply rooted is man's enmity that neither the most tender expostulations nor the direst threatenings will allay it. God may entreat, but men will not heed. He may chastise, but as soon as He lifts His rod, they, like Pharaoh, are as defiant as ever.

The language of men's hearts and lives unto God is, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways" (Job 21:14). Hence man is compared to a wild ass in the wilderness, that "snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure," rather than come under the yoke of God (Jer 2:24). Fearfully was that fact exemplified all through the long history of Israel, and the carriage of *that* people was but a reflection and manifestation of the nature of all mankind, for "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Pro 27:19).

The exercise of this enmity is continued without interruption from the very beginning of man's days to the end of his unregenerate life (Gen 6:5). It varies not at all, ever being

¹⁰ **flouts** – scorns; shows contempt for.

consistent with itself. Never does sin call a truce or lay down the weapons of its rebellion, but persists in its active hostility to God. Then, if divine grace works not a miracle in subduing such enmity and planting in the heart a contrary principle which opposes the same, what must be the doom of such creatures? "Thinkest thou this, O man...that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Rom 2:3). Vain imagination. Christ will yet say, "Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luk 19:27).

But so far from owning that they hate God, the vast majority will not only vehemently deny it, but affirm that they respect and love Him. Yet if their fancied love be analysed, it will be found to have respect only to their own interests. While one concludes that God is favourable and lenient with him, he entertains no hard thoughts against Him. So long as he deems God to be prospering him, he bears Him no ill will. He hates not God as One who confers benefits, but as a Sovereign, Lawgiver, Judge. He will not yield to His government or take His Law as the rule of his life, and therefore does he dread His tribunal.

The only God against whom the natural man is not at enmity is one of his own imagination. The deity whom he professes to worship is not the living God, for He is truth and faithfulness, holiness and justice, as well as being gracious and merciful. The soul of man is a complete stranger to holiness, even when his head be bowed in the house of prayer. But God is not deceived by any verbal acknowledgments or external homage. "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" (Mat 15:8). It is a god of their own devising and not the God of Holy Writ they believe in. It is an awful delusion to fancy they admire God's character while refusing His Son to reign over them.

This enmity against God is seen in man's insubordination to the divine Law. That is the particular indictment which is made against him in Romans 8:6-7, for in proof of the statement that "to be carnally minded is death," the apostle declared, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God," and then added by way of demonstration, "for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." It should be quite evident that that final clause was not brought in by way of extenuation¹¹ (for that had greatly weakened his argument), but instead to give added force unto the awful fact just affirmed.

A servant who performs not his master's bidding may or may not be guilty of revolt. He cannot be so charged if the task assigned be altogether beyond his physical powers (the absence of eyesight, or the loss of a limb, or the infirmities of old age); but if nothing but moral perversity (a spirit of malice and defiance) prevents the discharge of his duty, then he is most certainly guilty of open revolt. When we are told that the brethren of Joseph "hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him" (Gen 37:4-5), so far from excusing their evil conduct, that only intensified it. They bore him so much ill will as to be morally incapable of treating him amicably.

Such is the inability of fallen man to be in subjection to God's Law. Originally made upright, created in the divine image, given a nature in perfect harmony with God's statutes, endowed with faculties both mental and moral which fully capacitated him to meet their requirements, he is now so hostile to his Maker as to be thoroughly averse to His govern-

¹¹ **extenuation** – partial excuse or justification.

ment, so that he cannot cherish what he abominates. Our respect for God is judged by our conformity to His Law. As love unto God is to be gauged by obedience (Joh 14:21), so is hatred of Him both measured and manifested by disobedience (Deu 5:9-10).

The natural man knows that God opposes the gratification of his corrupt desires, and because His Law prohibits the indulging of his lusts with that freedom and security which he covets, he hates Him. God commands that which he loathes, and forbids what he longs after. Consequently, man's warfare against God is a double one: defensive and offensive. Defensively, he slights His Word, perverts His gifts, resists the motions of His Spirit (Act 7:51). Offensively, he employs all his members and faculties as weapons of unrighteousness against God (Rom 6:13). To slight and resist the divine Law is to hold God Himself in contempt, for the Law is an expression of His goodness, the transcript of His righteousness, the image of His holiness.

Here, then, is the ground of the enmity of the carnal mind: "it is not subject to the law of God." "The secret is now revealed. God is the moral Governor of the universe. Oh, this is the *casus belli*¹² between Him and the sinner! This constitutes the real secret of his fall, inveterate hostility to the divine being. The question at issue is: Who shall govern—God or the sinner? The non-subjection of the carnal heart to God's Law—its rebellion against the divine government—clearly indicates the side of this question which the carnal mind takes. You may, my reader, succeed in reasoning yourself into the belief that you admire, adore, and love God as your Creator and Benefactor, and only feel a repugnance, and manifest an opposition, to Him as a Lawgiver. But this is impossible in fact, however specious¹³ it may be in theory...God's nature and His office, His person and His throne, are one and inseparable.

"No individual can possibly be a friend to the being of God who is not equally friendly to His government. Why is the moral Law offensive to the carnal mind? Because of the holiness of its nature and the strictness of its requirements. It not only takes cognizance of external actions, but it touches the very springs of action, the motives that lie concealed in the human heart and regulate the life. It demands supreme affection and universal obedience. To this the carnal mind demurs"¹⁴ (Octavius Winslow, 1808-1878).

Alas, there are multitudes today, even in so-called Christian countries, who are almost totally ignorant of even *the terms* of God's Law—so intense is the darkness that has now settled upon us. The majority of those who have been brought up under a knowledge of the Law, so far from valuing such a privilege, despise the same. The language of their hearts against God's faithful servants is that which Israel used of old unto His prophet, "As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee" (Jer 44:16). They "refused to walk in his law" (Psa 78:10).

They had rather be their own rulers than God's subjects, and thereby guide themselves to destruction, than be directed by Him to blessedness. They desire unbridled liberty and will not tolerate the restraints of a command which checks them. Whatever compliance there may be—for the sake of respectability—to any divine precept which forbids a gross

¹² *casus belli* – event that causes or justifies a war.

¹³ *specious* – plausible but false; having the ring of truth while being a lie.

¹⁴ *demurs* – shows objection.

outward sin, the heart still rises up against the more spiritual part of the law which requires inward purity. The more man's inward corruptions be curbed and condemned, the more is he enraged. Therefore not only does God charge him with despising His judgments (precepts), but says that his soul *abhors* His statutes (Lev 26:43).

The contrariety there is between man and God appears in an unwillingness that His Law should be observed by any. Not satisfied with being a rebel himself, he would have God left without any loyal subjects in the world, and therefore does he employ both temptations and threats to induce his fellows to follow his evil example—now painting the pleasures of sin in glowing colours, then sneering at and boycotting those who have any scruples. Ordinarily the workers of iniquity consider such as walk with God to be freaks and fools, and take delight in railing at them (1Pe 4:4). Yet it is not because the righteous have wronged them in any way, but that the wicked hate them because they refuse to have fellowship with them in defying God. What proof is this of their awful enmity. Not only are they themselves angry at God's laws, but they cannot bear to see anyone else respecting them. Thus the apostle, after enumerating some of the vilest abominations, brought this indictment against the Gentiles, that they “not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Rom 1:32)—delighting in accomplishing the downfall of their fellows.

Another form taken by man's enmity is his manufacturing of false gods. Though this act be not so palpably committed by some, yet none is entirely clear of the setting up of something in the place of God, for this sin is common to all mankind, as history clearly shows. From the days of Nimrod until the appearing of Christ, the whole Gentile world was abandoned to this impiety, having “changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things” (Rom 1:23). Even Abraham originally, as well as his parents, was guilty of the same (Jos 24:2). From the making of the golden calf at Sinai until carried captives into Babylon, the Israelites repeatedly committed this crime.

Even today, the whole of heathendom abounds with hideous idols, and those parts of Christendom now under the accursed dominion of the Papacy are given up to the worship of idols and the adoration of a woman who acknowledged her own need of a Saviour (Luk 1:47). Yet the awfulness of idolatry is perceived by but few. Satan himself cannot invent a more absolutely degrading and vilifying of the Most High, for it is a calling Him by the names of those senseless objects and repulsive creatures which men erect as representations of Him. The giving to an image that homage which belongs to God is making it equal to Him, if not above Him. It portrays the glorious One as though He had no more excellency than a block of stone or piece of carved wood.

Man's enmity against God is a practical repudiation of His *holiness*, for it cherishes what is directly contrary thereto. “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab 1:13). Since God be infinitely good, He has an infinite detestation of evil. But sin is the very element in which man lives, and therefore does he hate everything opposed thereto. Nothing is more distasteful to him than the company of the godly, and the stricter they be in performing the duties of piety, and the more the image of God is seen shining in and through them, the greater the longing of the unregenerate to be free from their presence.

So much is man in love with sin that he seeks to justify himself in the very commission of it; yea, he goes farther and charges it upon the Holy One. Thus it was at the beginning.

When arraigned by his Maker, instead of confessing the enormity of his offence, Adam sought to excuse himself by blaming it upon God, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen 3:12). John Gill and others thought (and probably rightly so) that when Cain was charged with the murder of Abel, and answered, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9), he blatantly threw the onus¹⁵ on the Lord—"Thou art the One who should have preserved him from harm." Holy David unholily charged the crime he had contrived upon divine providence (2Sa 11:25). And man still blames God by attributing his sins to his constitution or his circumstances.

This fearful hostility is exercised against the very *being of God*. That was clearly demonstrated when He became incarnate. The Son of God was not wanted here, but was despised and rejected of men (Isa 53:3). They provided no better accommodation than a manger for His cradle (Luk 2:7). Before He reached the age of two, such a determined effort was made to slay Him that Joseph and Mary had to flee with Him into Egypt (Mat 2:13-14). Though constantly engaged in going about doing good, both to the souls and bodies of men, He had to declare, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Mat 8:20).

They called Him the vilest names they could think of: a glutton and winebibber (Mat 11:19), a Samaritan (Joh 8:48), a devil (Mat 10:25). Again and again, they took up stones to cast at Him (Joh 8:59). His miracles of mercy allayed not their enmity, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him" (Mat 21:38), and no ordinary death would satisfy them. After heaping the worst possible indignities upon His sacred person and inflicting most barbarous suffering, they nailed Him to a convict's gibbet,¹⁶ and then mocked and reviled Him while He was fastened hand and foot to the cross (Mat 27:39). And as the Lord Jesus declared, "He that hateth me, hateth my Father also" (Joh 15:23).

Now such an attitude against God inevitably recoils upon ourselves. Alienated from the Source of all real good and purity, what can the consequence be but to be polluted in every part of our beings—a mass of putrefaction? Fearful indeed is the havoc that sin has wrought in the human constitution. Man's very nature is abased. No creature so degraded as man, for he alone has erased the image of God from his soul.

Man that was once the glory of creation is become the vilest of all creatures. He who was given dominion over the beasts is now sunk lower, for *they* are not guilty of mad and wicked intemperance, they are not without natural affection toward their offspring (as so many of the human species now are), nor do any of them commit suicide. Man's apostasy from His Maker could not result in anything less than the complete mutilation of his soul, depriving it of that perfect harmony and balance of its faculties (with which it was originally endowed), robbing them of their primitive excellence and beauty. The whole of our inner man has been seized by a loathsome disease, so that there is now no soundness in it.

Oh, what a mass of villainy is there in fallen man! No wonder that the Scriptures ask, "Who can know it?" (Jer 17:9). None but the very One against who it lifts its vile head. What an awful spectacle is this—to behold the finite in deadly opposition to the Infinite! The creature and the Creator are at direct odds, for while a serpentine nature and a devilish

¹⁵ **onus** – blame; responsibility.

¹⁶ **gibbet** – a stake or cross for publicly displaying an executed criminal.

disposition remain unsubdued within him, fallen man will no more seek to glorify the Lord than will Satan himself. The unregenerate detest Him who is light and love. The ox knows its owner, and the ass his master's crib, but the one who has been endowed with rationality and immortality deigns not to "consider" the hand that daily ministers in mercy throughout his life.

With what longsuffering does He bear with those who treat Him so basely! What abundant cause has the Christian to abhor himself and hang his head in shame as he contemplates the sinfulness of all the sin that still indwells him!

INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Part 11

15. *Non-literal language.* We have left this important canon of exegesis until a somewhat late stage, because maturity of judgment is called for in the applying of the same. There is considerable amount of non-literal language in the Word of God, and it is very necessary that the expositor should recognize the same. Great harm has been done through failure to do so, and not a few serious errors have been taught as the result of regarding what was figurative as literal.

Generally speaking, the words of Scripture are to be understood in their plain and simple meaning; yea, their natural and obvious signification is always to be retained unless some evident and necessary reason requires otherwise. As, for example, when Christ bids us pluck out a right eye and cut off a right hand if the same causes us to sin (Mat 5:29-30), or when He charged the scribes and Pharisees with "devouring widows' houses" (Mat 23:14), for manifestly such language is not to be taken at its face value. But there are many other instances which are not nearly so apparent as those, as when Christ said, "By chance there came down a certain priest that way" (Luk 10:31), meaning that he took that direction without any particular purpose or special design—for a literal understanding of those words would deny the orderings of Providence.

Keen discrimination, both spiritual and mental, is required for distinguishing between the literal and the non-literal in Scripture. That applies in the first place to *the translator*, as a few simple illustrations will show. He has to determine in each occurrence of the word *kelayoth*, whether to render it literally "kidneys" or figuratively "reins". Our Authorized Version gives the former eighteen times, and the later thirteen. In such passages as Psalms 16:7; 26:2; 73:21, "reins" has reference to the *inner man*, particularly the mind and conscience—as the kidneys are for eliminating the impurities of the blood, so the mind and conscience are to deliver us from evil.

The Hebrew word *ruach* literally means "wind," and is so rendered ninety times in the Authorized Version; yet it is also used emblematically of *the spirit*, often of the Holy Spirit, and is so over 200 times. Much spiritual wisdom and discernment is required by the

translator to discriminate. *Lachash* is rendered “earrings” in Isaiah 3:20, but “prayer” in Isaiah 26:16! The Greek word *presbuteros* literally means “an aged person,” and is so rendered in Acts 2:17 and Philemon 1:9, but in most cases it refers to “elders” or church officers.

Now if great care needs to be taken by the translator in distinguishing between things that differ, equally so of the expositor. Let him duly lay to heart the warnings supplied by the experience of the apostles. How often they failed to grasp the meaning of their Master’s language! When He declared, “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth,” they said unto Him, “Declare unto us this parable,” and He answered, “Are ye also yet without understanding?” (Mat 15:11, 15-16).

When He bade them “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees,” they reasoned among themselves and concluded that it was because they had taken no bread (Mat 16:6-7). When He told them that He had meat to eat that they knew not of, they imagined that someone had ministered to His bodily needs during their absence (Joh 4:32-33). When He said, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth,” they supposed (as any of us would have done!) that He referred to natural sleep. How often is it recorded that they “understood not” the words of Christ (Mar 9:32; Luk 18:34; Joh 8:27; 12:16). They quite missed His meaning when He asked, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” (Joh 21:22-23).

The figurative element is very prominent in the Scriptures, especially so in the Old Testament, where natural things are commonly used and accommodated to explain spiritual things, suiting its instructions to man’s present state, in which he cannot see the things of God except through the glass of nature. Every Hebrew word has a literal sense and stands for some sensible object, and therefore conveys a comparative idea of some impalpable object. While in the body, we must receive information via our senses. We cannot of ourselves form the least idea of any divine or celestial object but as it is compared to and illustrated by something earthly or material. Inward realities are explained by outward phenomena, as in “Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God” (Joe 2:13), and, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Mat 5:6). Spiritual mercies are set before our eyes under their familiar but expressive pictures in nature, as in “For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring” (Isa 44:3), and, “Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let them bring forth salvation” (Isa 45:8).

Others before us have pointed out that there is a divinely designed analogy between the natural and the spiritual worlds. God so framed the visible realms as to shadow forth the invisible, the temporal to symbolize the eternal. Hence the similitudes so often employed by Christ, drawn by Him from the natural kingdom, were not arbitrary illustrations, but pre-ordained figures of the supernatural. There is a most intimate connection between the spheres of creation and of grace, so that we are taught thereby to look from one to the other.

“By means of His inimitable¹⁷ parables, Christ showed that when nature was consulted aright, it spoke one language with the Spirit of God; and that the more thoroughly it is un-

¹⁷ **inimitable** – matchless; uniquely excellent.

derstood, the more complete and varied will be found the harmony which subsists between the principles of its constitution and those of His spiritual kingdom" (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874). Who can fail to perceive both the aptness and the sublimity of the parallel between that allusion from the natural realm and its antitypical¹⁸ realization: "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away" (Song 2:17), where the reference is unto both the first (Joh 8:56) and second appearing of God's Son in the flesh (Phi 1:6, 10)?

Words are used in a literal sense when given their plain and natural meaning, [but they are used] figuratively when a term is diverted to an object to which it does not naturally or normally belong. Thus, "hard" is the quality of a stone, but when predicated of the heart, it is employed figuratively. A figure of speech consists in the fact of a word or words being used out of their ordinary sense and manner, for the sake of emphasis, by attracting our attention to what is said. Not that a different meaning is given to the word, but a new application of it is made. The meaning of the word is always *the same* when rightly used, and thus figures carry their own light and explain themselves.

In the great majority of instances, there is no difficulty in distinguishing between the Word of God and His works in creation. For the most part, objects in the natural world are plain and simple, easily distinguished; yet some are obscure and mysterious. There are certain "laws" perceptible which regulate the actions of nature. Nevertheless, there are notable exceptions to most of them. Thus we may be sure that God has not employed language which could only confuse and confound the unlearned, yet the meaning of many things in His Word can be ascertained only by hard labour.

If all Scripture had been couched in highly figurative language and mysterious hieroglyphics, it had been quite unsuited to the common man. On the other hand, if all were as simple as the ABC, there had been no need for God to provide teachers (Eph 4:11). But how is the teacher to determine when the language is literal and when non-literal? Generally, plain intimation is given, especially in the employment of metaphor, where one object is used to set forth another, as in "Judah is a lion's whelp" (Gen 49:9).

More particularly. First, when a literal interpretation would manifestly clash with the essential nature of the subject spoken of, as when physical members are ascribed to God (Exo 33:23), or when the disciple is required to "take up his cross" (live a life of self-sacrifice) in order to follow Christ (Mat 16:24). Second, when a literal interpretation would involve an absurdity or a moral impropriety, as in "When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: and put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite" (Pro 23:1-2)—give no quarter to your lusts; and heaping coals of fire on an enemy's head (Rom 12:20). Third, refer to other passages, and interpret such a verse as Psalm 26:6 by Genesis 35:1-2 and Hebrews 10:22.

From all that has been said above, it is evident that we must avoid a stark literalism when dealing with sensory or material representations of immaterial things, and when bodily terms are used of non-bodily ones. "The sword shall devour" (Jer 46:10). To devour is the property of a living creature with teeth, but here, by a figure, it is applied to the sword. "Let my right hand forget her cunning" (Psa 137:5). Here "forgetting," which pertains to

¹⁸ **antitypical** – having to do with the fulfillment of a type or figure.

the mind, is applied to the hand—signifying “may it lose its power to direct aright.” “I turned to see the voice” (Rev 1:12) means Him that uttered it.

“Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God” (Ecc 5:1) may be taken in both a literal and a figurative sense. In the former, it would signify “Let your gait be demure and your speed unhurried and reverent as you approach the place of worship”; in the latter, “Pay attention to the motions of your mind and the affections of your heart, for *they* are to the soul what the feet are to the body.” It is unto the due ordering of our inward man that our attention should be chiefly directed.

It is also very necessary for the expositor constantly to bear in mind that many of the things pertaining to the new covenant are set forth under the figures of the old. Thus Christ is spoken of as “our Passover” (1Co 5:7) and as Priest “after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb 6:20). Paradise is described as “Abraham’s bosom” (Luk 16:22). The New Testament saints are referred to as “Abraham’s seed” and “the Israel of God” (Gal 3:7; 6:16), as “the circumcision” (Phi 3:3), and as “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation” (1Pe 2:9), while in Galatians 4:26 they are informed that “Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.” Again, the “For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched” (Heb 12:18) refers not to any material mount, but to that order of things which was formally instituted at Sinai, the moral features of which were suitably symbolized and strikingly adumbrated by the physical phenomena which attended the giving of the Law. Likewise, “ye are come unto mount Sion” (12:22) no more signifies a material mount than “we have an altar” (13:12) means that Christians have a tangible altar. It is the antitypical, spiritual, heavenly Sion which is in view—that glorious state into which divine grace has brought all who savingly believe the gospel.

Again, the expositor needs to be on the alert to detect *ironical language*, for it usually signifies the very opposite to what is expressed, being a form of satire for the purpose of exposing an absurdity and to hold it up to ridicule. Such language was employed by God when He said, “Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil” (Gen 3:22); and when He bade Israel, “Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen: let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation” (Jdg 10:14); by Elijah, when he mocked the prophets of Baal, “Cry aloud: for he is a god: either he is...in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened” (1Ki 18:27); by Micaiah, when he answered Jehoshaphat, “Go, and prosper for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king” (1Ki 22:15); by Job, “No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you” (12:2); in Ecclesiastes 11:9, “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth...walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes”; by Christ, when He said, “A goodly price that I was prised at of them” (Zec 11:13); and by Paul, “now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us” (1Co 4:8).

Nor are we to take literally the *language of hyperbole* or exaggeration, when more is said than is actually meant, as when the ten spies said of Canaan, “the cities are great and walled up to heaven” (Deu 1:28), and when we are told that their armies were “even as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude” (Jos 11:4). So too the description given of those that came up against Gideon, “like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels without number” (Jdg 7:12), and, “there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee” (1Ki 18:10).

Further examples are found in: “They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths” (Psa 107:26); “Rivers of water run down mine eyes” (Psa 119:136); “A little one

shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time" (Isa 60:22); "Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the seas" (Jer 15:8, which should be borne in mind when reading Revelation 7:9); "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (Joh 21:25).

16. *The elucidation of the types.* No treatise on hermeneutics would be complete if it ignored this important and interesting department of exposition. Yet such a vast field pertains thereto that it is impossible to do it justice in a few sentences. The New Testament plainly teaches that there is not a little in the Old which anticipated and adumbrated things to come. From earliest times, it pleased God to prepare the way for the grand word of redemption by a series of parabolical representations, and the business of the interpreter is to explain the same in the light of the fuller revelation which God has vouchsafed since then.

Types belong to that sphere which concerns the relation of God's earlier and later dispensations, and therefore a type may be defined as a model or sign of another object or event which it depicted beforehand, shadowing forth something which should later correspond to and provide the reality of the same. But the question arises, How are we to avoid the erroneous and the extravagant in our selection and unfolding of the types? Space will only allow us to offer the following hints and rules.

First, there must be a genuine resemblance in form or spirit between any person, act, or institution under the Old Testament and what answers unto it in the gospel. Second, a real type must be something which had its ordination from God, being meant by Him *to foreshadow* and prepare the way for the better things under Christ. Thus the resemblance between the shadow and the substance must be real and not fancied, and designed as such in the original institution of the former. It is that previous intention and pre-ordained connection between them which constitutes the relation of type and antitype. Third, in tracing out the connection between the one and the other, we have to inquire, What was the native import of the original symbol? What did it symbolize as a part of the then existing religion? And then the expositor is to proceed and show how it was fitted to serve as a guide and stepping-stone to the blessed events and issues of Messiah's kingdom. For example, by means of the tabernacle and its services God manifested toward His people precisely the same principles of government, and required from them substantially the identical disposition and character, that He does now under the higher dispensation of Christianity. Fourth, due regard must be had to the essential difference between the actual natures of the type and the antitype—the one being material, temporary, and external, the other spiritual, eternal, and often internal. ❧

