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William Parkinson (1774-1848)
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Parkinson's commentary on Deuteronomy 33 is without doubt his *magnum opus*. Particular Baptist Press has made a significant contribution in its recent re-printing of this work for the Newport Commentary Series. This massive work represents significant expansion of the sermons he preached on this passage. In preparing this work, Parkinson undertook extensive research in Hebrew and the history and culture of the Ancient Near East. Moreover, he submitted the notes of his research to experts in these fields. The commentary shows detailed and sustained interaction with contemporary biblical scholarship, with the author disagreeing with much of it.

As he begins the commentary, Parkinson describes the background of Deuteronomy. Replying to the higher criticism of the time, which denied the divine authorship of Deuteronomy, Parkinson forcefully defends the inspiration of the book. He does this by appealing to the Bible itself. Parkinson demonstrates that the prophets of the Old Testament and the Apostles of the New, and especially Christ himself, affirmed Deuteronomy as the Word of God. Furthermore, the divine origin of this book is demonstrated by "the numerous and explicit prophecies contained in it, and especially their undeniable fulfilment, both in the Jewish nation and its antitype, the Christian church."

Next, Parkinson calls attention to the importance of Deuteronomy chapter 33. It concludes the life and ministry of Moses. More importantly, it is his dying testimony concerning the manner in which he received the Law by God from Sinai, which he now restates to the generation about to enter Canaan, as well as confers his blessing upon those who for the present were still under his charge. Most significantly, this chapter contains "a *prophetic* history of national Israel and a *typical* history of spiritual Israel." This indeed is the distinctive feature of Parkinson's commentary—the emphasis on interpreting not only the immediate grammatical-historical meaning of the passage, but its dual prophetic meaning for national Israel and typological meaning for the Church as "the spiritual Israel."

A prime example of Parkinson's exegetical method is his treatment of the ministry of Moses. Using as his text,

Deuteronomy 33:1: “And this is the blessing wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death,” Parkinson’s proposition is “Moses, as *the gift of God*, was a great blessing to Israel, during his public life—and, as *the man of God*, he pronounced upon them, the blessing expressed in this chapter, just before his death.” The first part of the proposition is evidenced by the fact that Moses redeemed and delivered Israel. God through Moses redeemed Israel by a sacrifice, and delivered them by a rod through the plagues he inflicted upon Egypt. Commenting on the act of redemption, Parkinson notes that only Israel, and not Egypt, received this, suggesting the element of election as the basis for this deliverance.

Turning to the subject of Moses’ request to Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go, Parkinson first situates it in historical context, arguing that the entreaty was not in itself unusual. He then describes the nature of Pharaoh’s tyranny, and from there relates it to what he deems present-day papal tyranny. Like the ancient Pharaohs, Parkinson argues, the pope upholds his “ecclesiastical tyranny by means of idolatry. Beyond this, Parkinson provides erudite discussions on the Amalekites and Aaron’s making of the golden calf.

Having dealt with the pertinent background material above, Parkinson addresses the blessing of Moses itself. He notes first, that the blessing was both an “*invocation* and *prediction*.” Moses prays to God that he would bless the nation with the confident expectation that his prayer will be realized. Furthermore, Parkinson observes that Moses pronounces this blessing under the title “man of God.” Under this title, Parkinson maintains, Moses functioned as “a *prophet*, a *pastor*, and a *political father*.” As prophet, Moses declared God’s Word to his people; as pastor, Moses tended to their spiritual well-being; and as political father, although under divine inspiration, he was the human author of ancient Israel’s constitution, as well as the country’s civic leader, thereby making him the father of Israel’s commonwealth. Throughout this first sermon, Parkinson mostly expounded upon Moses’ ministry within its historical context. However, in keeping with his method, he next uncovers the Christological meaning of Moses’ person and work in his second sermon.

In the second sermon, Parkinson continues his discussion on Moses, but now with the view of explicating the Christological sense his role in the life of Israel conveyed. “In his ministry,” according to Parkinson, “Moses is chiefly to be viewed as a type of Christ.” The Christological typology of Moses can be discerned in the following respects. First, Moses typifies Christ as mediator. As Moses interceded for the people Israel on numerous occasions in

the face of looming judgment, so Christ does the same for his people, the Church on the basis of his own sacrifice. Secondly, Moses foreshadows Christ as to “the work he was called to accomplish; namely the redemption, the deliverance, and the subsequent government of Israel; also the erection of the tabernacle for their accommodation.” With regards to redemption, God sent Moses to redeem Israel, whom he adopted, in order to confer upon them “ceremonial privileges” and “the inheritance of Canaan.” In like manner, “the elect, whom Christ was called and sent to redeem, though ‘scattered abroad’ among all nations, were, by adoption ‘the children of God,’ and consequently his heirs— heirs of grace, of spiritual privileges and of eternal life.” Moreover, Moses redeemed with the blood of the lamb, Christ with his own blood. Moses’ work also typifies Christ’s in its aspect of deliverance. When Moses began delivering the Israelites, Pharaoh’s anger intensified, resulting in more severe afflictions upon them. Likewise, when Christ begins his work of grace in believers, Satan’s anger is aroused, and therefore seeks to oppress their consciences with legalistic teachers. Furthermore, as Moses brought the Israelites to the border of Canaan through numerous obstacles, Christ faithfully brings his people through countless trials and temptations to the completion of their sanctification. Moses’ subsequent government of Israel vividly points to Christ’s government of his church. Moses governed Israel in providing instruction, discipline, and sustenance as he led them through the wilderness. Likewise, Christ governs his people the church by giving it instruction, discipline, and sustenance through his Word and ordinances. Beyond this, Parkinson confirms the typological relationship between Moses and Christ by way of his exposition of the account of the bronze serpent in Numbers 21. Parkinson further expounds upon the typological meaning of Moses’ ministry by extracting from his construction of the Tabernacle Christ’s building of his temple, the church.

The above illustrates the exegetical method which Parkinson employs throughout the entire commentary. Every blessing upon every tribe ultimately reveals truth concerning Christ and his gracious ministry towards his true and elect Israel, his holy church. The commentary on Deuteronomy 33 as a scholarly and exegetical masterpiece truly stands as Parkinson’s greatest achievement while pastor of First Baptist.