The Righteousness of God

William Kelly

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The Righteousness of God: what is it?

Rom. 3:21-26

It is known very generally that a serious question has been raised on the righteousness of God, and that it has given occasion to keen controversy. Nor is it too much to say, that those who have betrayed their feeling most have little understood its bearings. Such, certainly, is the fact with those who have made themselves conspicuous by violent language on the point. Their discussions, or rather their denunciations, are the strongest possible evidence that, far from having settled the question aright, they do not even know what it is that has to be settled. On the other hand, there are many who reject false views, and yet would find themselves at a loss, were they asked to explain what “the righteousness of God” really means. They know what it does not mean, better than what it does — better than what God intended us to gather from the phrase throughout His word. Souls in such a state experience considerable difficulty in explaining divine righteousness to others, and have little clearness and decision as to its positive, proper character in their own minds.

As there is but one occasion on which it is now proposed to enter upon this large and weighty theme, it will be my business to begin at once in the simplest way, reviewing some, at least, of the chief scriptures, if not all those in the New Testament, which take it up. This only is to be premised, that it is from no indisposition to look at the Old Testament if I say less about it; for, in point of fact, singular as it may appear to some, it is clear beyond controversy that the view which prevails among many

modern theologians is not found there. For instance, nothing can be plainer than the passages in Isaiah, where Jehovah speaks of His righteousness as being near to come, and His salvation as that which was about to be established for His people. Who can say that there is any question here of the Lord Jesus Christ's walk upon earth? It is Jehovah, as such, who alludes to His own moral consistency with Himself; it is Jehovah who proclaims His own salvation. In short, Jehovah speaks of His righteousness, and the blessing of His people — not of the ground, real or supposed, on which He displays His righteousness, and they are thus blessed.

Understand me well: the question is not at all whether there be not the absolute need of a basis on which there should be a display of divine righteousness in favour of His people. All agree in this — all who love the truth. There is no debate among believers, that without Christ, and without a work on His part which vindicates God in showing His infinite mercy, there could be no such thing as the justification of the ungodly. Further, it is to me no question between inherent righteousness, on the one hand, and God's imputing righteousness, on the other. For a sinful man all turns on this, whether in very deed God does reckon righteousness to him on his faith without works; and Scripture emphatically declares that He does. How He does, on what righteous ground, remains to be seen.

I will endeavour to make as little reference to passing controversies as is desirable. The word of God, which judges the question, must not be avoided for the simple reason that these controversies exist. The rather is it of importance that the children of God should know simply, clearly, unhesitatingly, what His mind is, by virtue of

which they may detect and refuse that injurious leaven of tradition, which men so ardently contend for.

It may be, perhaps, more satisfactory to begin with Romans 3 rather than chap. 1, because the one is as explicit as the other is brief and abstract. In Romans 1:17, the Holy Ghost merely states the leading truth in the fewest possible words, as introductory of the subject. In chap. 3, He deals with it freely; not all at once, but laying down the grand foundation of God's righteousness. Inasmuch as this so far unfolds the subject, we do well to weigh the larger development of the Spirit of God, and to read the more concise statement in the light of that which is more completely opened. Error habitually takes advantage of an expression, which to some might seem obscure, to darken the clearer explanation by. It is our wisdom to accept all which the Spirit of God affords us. We have a right to assume, that the fullest statement of this or any other doctrine is the best help to the understanding of communications made in fewer words elsewhere.

Now, in the portion read, we have clearly the righteousness of God contrasted with law. He had said immediately before, that "what things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." The law, instead of justifying those that are under it, brings them in, if possible, more guilty. We can all understand it. Man being a sinner, the law, wherever it operates, cannot better his case: it can but prove his guilt; it can only pronounce upon it; for it measures each violation of God's commands. The law of God is "holy, just, and good;" and it is impossible that a good law could save or acquit a bad man. The law of God,

therefore, has for its only effect in dealing with the evil to condemn them without hope to death. Not, of course, that this is all that God can do, but it is the only conceivable direct effect of God's law upon the guilty. A law which an evil man might escape could not be the law of God. It is to be regretted that a criminal should escape man's law - God's law he never can. The law, therefore, closes all up in condemnation. The Jew had no difficulty at all about the Gentiles; for these worshipped idols, and wallowed in every kind of fleshly lust, caring little about either. Many sins were lightly regarded; fleshly uncleanness and drunkenness were connected with the very worship of their gods. On all this, accordingly, the Jew looked down with no small self-complacency.

But, argues the apostle, how is it with you? What does Scripture say about yourselves? What does your own law declare about your ways? God looks down from heaven, and says that "there is none righteous, no, not one; none that doeth good, no, not one," as it is summed up most emphatically. Now for the masterly line of proof (if I may use such a word about the apostle, remembering that the Holy Ghost employs that blessed man as the vessel of His reasoning; for the Spirit of God does reason here): "What the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law." You cannot throw that solemn sentence of God at the Gentiles. You boast of your law: be it so. But "what the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law." God, when He declares so strongly that "there is none that doeth good — none that is righteous, no, not one," speaks not of Gentiles but Jews. Hence, every mouth is stopped, and the whole world becomes guilty before God. For the Gentiles had been shown to be evidently

guilty in chapter 1; the philosophers were proved to be no better in the beginning of chapter 2; and now the Jews, who had the law and thought themselves righteous, are brought in more guilty than any in the end of chapter 2. and in chapter 3. The very law it was that manifested and proclaimed their exceeding iniquity in God's sight. Thus every mouth is stopped.

But, beloved friends, when man's mouth is closed in guilt, God can open His in grace; and so He does. He was entitled to ask for righteousness. Though knowing perfectly there was no good in man, none to be got out of man, He had demonstrated that His law, instead of producing righteousness among the Jews, on the contrary, only proved their evil more plainly, if there was a difference.

Now it becomes a question of another kind of righteousness altogether. Man is all wrong; there is no righteousness in him. That has been proved already. The only righteousness, therefore, is God's. What it fully means, what its basis is, and how it avails for the blessing of man, are other questions. But the first great truth asserted is, that man, as a whole, man in every grade and variety, being put down as destitute of righteousness according to God, it becomes a question of God showing His righteousness, if so it pleases Him. This He does, and most worthily of Himself.

But how is it done? If God were simply to act in His righteousness without Christ, what must be the effect on man? The whole race at once swept into hell! What does He, then? He has acted in another way, and most righteously, that He may not consign the guiltiest to hell. How can this be? Hearken, then. There is no doubt man

has deserved judgment. This has been proved unmistakably by the law in the favoured people that were under it, as well in the Jews as in the lawless Gentiles. But now bursts forth the glorious truth — “The righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ.” As he says here: “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin,” not the putting away, or the pardon of sin, for the law never pretended to do either. “But now,” says he, “the righteousness of God” — mark the strength of the language — “without the law,” etc. That the Saviour came down from heaven and accomplished the law is the certain truth of God. But is this what the Holy Ghost here presents as God’s righteousness? Where is there a word about Christ’s keeping the law for us, in order that this should be accepted in lieu of man’s failure? In truth, the Jews only are meant by “those under law,” and in contrast with the Gentiles, who knew nothing about it. But, waiving this for a moment, surely here was the place to explain the importance of Christ’s accomplishing the law for man, had God’s righteousness meant anything of the sort. How comes it that there is no trace of such a thought? Are we to believe the Scriptures? Directly or indirectly shall we presume to mend them? Are we to supplement the written word, as if God did not know the truth better than we? Has it not come to a strange pass, that men now, instead of seeking to understand what the righteousness of God means, turn aside from the plain truth that the Holy Ghost here insists on, and interpolate a doctrine not found here, and, I venture to add, very hard to find anywhere else in the Bible? Indeed, my conviction is, that it is unknown and opposed to the word of God.

Here, again, let us understand each other. Do we deny for a moment the subjection of the Lord Jesus to the law of God? God forbid! He did fulfil the law, of course; He glorified God in every possible way in the fulfilment of it. This is no matter of controversy for Christian men. He is no believer who supposes that Christ in any act of His life failed, that He did not entirely and blessedly accomplish the law of God (under which, as we are told, He was made), or that the result could be of small moment to God or man.

The question is, Has His accomplishment of the law of God the place which a certain school gives it? Is it God's righteousness as here taught of Him, or its revealed ground? Assuredly, here we have the doctrine unfolded, and this for the permanent instruction of the Christian. It is the most elaborate statement of this truth that God's word contains. How comes so absolute a silence, where, if true, we could not but look for a clear, decisive introduction of Christ's fulfilment of the law in place of our breach of it? For it is a question not of pardon only, but of justification. To foist something in looks like a fable. Does it not suggest the suspicion, to say the least, that man invented the opinion? There may have been the best intention.

Do I deny that the ways, the walk, the life of Jesus, the magnifying of God in all His ways, are anything to our account? God forbid! We have Jesus wholly, and not in part; we have Jesus everywhere. I am not contending now at all against the precious truth that, Christ being our acceptance, we have Christ as a whole. We have His obedience unbroken through His entire life, and its savour unto God is part of the blessing that belongs to every child of God. I believe it, rejoice in it, thank God

for it, I trust, continually. But the question is wholly different. God does use for His own glory and for our souls all that Jesus did, and all that Jesus suffered.

The question is, what is the righteousness of God? It must be settled not by notions, feelings, fancies, traditions, not by what is preached or received, but by what is written — by the word of God. Are you afraid of this test? Do you shrink back from the word which searches out what you hold as to the righteousness of God? It is to be supposed you have reason to fear the scrutiny. When a man shrinks from the Bible, depend upon it it is because the Bible condemns him. It does not support speculations which he is not yet prepared to abandon. Certainly, I do not ask you to abandon anything that is of God. By all means hold fast Christ in all His ways magnifying God, and the blessedness of this for our acceptance before God. Still the question recurs, What is God's righteousness? Is there a legal ground laid for justification, as some suppose?

Here is God's answer. "Now," it is said, "the righteousness of God without the law." No language can be more absolute and precise. What the Holy Ghost employs is an expression which puts the law entirely aside, as far as divine righteousness is concerned. He had been speaking about the law, and the law condemning man. He had shown that the law required righteousness, but could not get it. This is another order of righteousness, not man's but God's, and this, too, absolutely exclusive of law in any shape. How suitable a time to say, had it been the good news of God, that Jesus came to obey the law for us, and that God substitutes this as His righteousness for every man to stand in! Why is it not said, then? Because it is not the ground, nor

character, nor nature of the righteousness of God. That righteousness is wholly apart from law.

Accordingly, this is what is here said, “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.” Observe the exceeding accuracy of the language. The law and the prophets did not manifest the righteousness of God: yet the law, in various forms, pointed to another kind of righteousness that was coming; the prophets brought it out, if possible, still more clearly in respect of language. The one furnished types, the others assured that Jehovah’s righteousness was near to come. But now the gospel tells us it is come. Now divine righteousness is a revealed fact. The righteousness of God without the law was not only witnessed by the law and the prophets, but is actually manifested. There is no veil now; there was once, but the death of Christ rent it from top to bottom. The righteousness of God, therefore, is no longer a shadow of coming good, no longer a blessing locked up in promises or looming in a prediction, however truly the law and the prophets bore their witness all the way through, from the time that man broke down and his righteousness entirely failed. Now there is far more than a witness to it: there is a standing manifestation of it since the cross. Such is the present result of that great fact. Divine righteousness is not only being revealed (ἀποκαλύπτεται) in the gospel; it has been and is manifested (πεφανέρωται).

The matter is more fully explained as “the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ.” Here, then, was another place to have affirmed the value for our justification of what the Lord Jesus was doing when here below. Not one word is said about it. All that is added in

the passage is the statement that God's righteousness (in contrast with man's, which is by his accomplishing the law) is "by faith of Jesus Christ." Still, one can understand the objection raised that this is not conclusive. Believing in Christ does not settle the point, they say; for all hold that it is by faith of Jesus Christ. But is it the value of what He was doing in His life, or is it the efficacy of His atonement — of His death? Is Scripture silent? It is, on the contrary, explicit against mixing up the law. It is most express against turning away the eye from Christ in His death.

Thus, at the very outset, if the object had been to withdraw attention, in the matter of righteousness, from the active life of Christ, and to fix it by faith upon His blood, how could the task have been accomplished more effectually than in the passage? Is not this an extraordinary way of handling the truth, if the ground of God's righteousness were Christ's obedience to the law? If it be the all-important point in order to justifying, if it be the great indispensable preparation, and the only solid ground, on which a man is righteous before God, how comes it that Scripture preserves such absolute and singular silence in the fullest passage where the Holy Ghost discusses the ground and means of justification before God?

It is not so that reasonable men would act. When we have to bring out a truth dear to us, and important for those to whom we are about to explain it, do we hide the most characteristic portion? do we omit the smallest reference to the very turning-point? Surely not. And does not God reveal His own truth infinitely better than we can explain it, or convey our own thoughts? Listen to the man who holds the popular doctrine on the subject:

does he conceal the distinctive feature? Does he keep back Christ's observance of the law for us? On the contrary, it is the uppermost idea, and continually pressed in his discourses. It is the law kept by Christ, he tells you, which specially and alone constitutes the righteousness of the believer before God. He does not deny that the blood of Christ is the means of the sinner's pardon: but then it will never do, he argues, to approach heaven with pardon merely; one must have righteousness also, and this for him is found in the legal obedience of Christ. Thus, if it is a question of justifying (and in general the popular theologian sharply distinguishes between the two things), his justification is made to depend on the fact that Christ kept the law for him, which he could not keep for himself — that Christ omitted no duty of his, and performed all perfectly in which he himself failed.

But how comes it to pass that God does not put the matter thus? Because it is not the truth. Nothing more simple, if it be not the truth. It is the truth that man has failed in every way; it is the truth that Christ obeyed the law of God; it is not the truth that even His keeping of the law is the real sense of God's righteousness, or the ground of our justification before God. Let me press this upon every candid mind among our adversaries, who contend for this theory. Account for it if you can; account for it with the maintenance of the inspired character of God's word; account for it, that the Holy Ghost, who certainly understands justification in perfection, does not treat the subject as your system demands. Why? Because He and you do not agree. How awful that believers should, on so fundamental a truth, differ from the mind of the Spirit, and that man should prefer his

own thoughts, because they are the common quasi-evangelical tradition, and a sort of “short cut” to understanding how a man is justified!

Now, it is the invariable fact, that where we are subject to God as to any truth, no matter what, God’s way is always the best, although it may not be the most obvious way of bringing a soul into comfort and blessing to His own glory. Thus, in the present instance, the first thing that God proclaims when He is presenting His own righteousness, is this: “By faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” “Unto all” is the direction which the righteousness of God takes. It is not limited to a particular people, as the law was to the Jew. Divine righteousness goes out, as far as its tendency is concerned, to every one without exception. So the Lord Himself said, “Preach the gospel to every creature.” His message is just the manifestation of the righteousness of God. Accordingly, it is here said to be “unto all.” But, then, every creature does not believe it, and consequently, we have the other side of the truth, that God’s righteousness by faith of Jesus Christ is only “upon all them that believe;” “for,” again, “there is no difference” — all have sinned and do come short of the glory of God. Hence grace is the only hope: “being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Thus, on the one hand, it is clear and certain that there is not a word about the keeping of the law; and, on the other, what the apostle does expatiate on is justification freely by God’s grace (not law-keeping), and this through the redemption that is in Christ, not His legal observance. Hence, it is said further, “Whom God hath set forth a propitiatory.”

Mark the place that God takes in all this. It is not that Christ put Himself forward, but God set Him forth. Why so? and what its importance? Because it is a question of the righteousness of God. There is no doubt that Christ was righteous, as no other ever was; yet Christ's righteousness is not the truth here affirmed, but God's. There is not the smallest doubt, as we all agree, that He fulfilled all righteousness; but is this to be a reason why any man should pervert Scripture? Why are divines not content to take the word as God has written it; and if He speak of His righteousness, why should they read it as the righteousness of Christ? Is it not to eke out a peculiar school of doctrine? What plainer than the truth, that God accounts us righteous by virtue of Christ's work? Can they not understand, that divine righteousness in so justifying us goes far beyond the righteousness of the law, even if we could have done it?

It is not that Scripture never speaks of the righteousness of Jesus.1 In 1 John 2 we read, that "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." It would be wrong to alter that Scripture, and to understand the righteousness of God here. Equally erroneous is it to say, that we have got the righteousness of Christ in Romans 3. The advocacy of "Jesus Christ the righteous" is the important truth in 1 John 2, because it is a question of One that acts for me, that undertakes my cause, if, alas! I break down as a follower and confessor of the Lord here below. Hence, I want a living person, active in love for me, before the Father; and such an One grace has provided for the need, even "Jesus Christ the righteous." "The righteousness of God" would not suffice for me, or suit me in my failure; other truth is that which my soul then wants. "The righteousness of God" one

must know in order to be on the ground which, in case of inconsistency, needs “Jesus Christ the righteous;” but the two truths, though connected, are perfectly distinct and ought never to be confounded. Scripture does not sacrifice one to the other. In 1 John 2, we have Jesus Christ the righteous as our advocate with the Father — precious provision if any one sin; while in Romans 3, it is the character and application of God’s righteousness which is in question.

The more we weigh the passage, the clearer is its import. “Whom [Jesus] God hath set forth to be a propitiation,” [a propitiatory or mercy-seat. It is the same word that is so translated in Heb. 9,] “through faith in His blood.” Can any proof more conclusive be conceived? How, if it be the truth, comes the absence of that which men now-a-days plead for? To what can one attribute the presence of that only which they would put in the shade? Certainly God’s word is plain enough. Modern theology springs from the heart’s natural opposition to the truth of God. Why should not believers accept what the word presents so plainly and definitely? Is it that it would shiver some favourite thoughts? Is it that it would open out new views of the ways of God? And why should an enlarging knowledge of His word be a matter of suspicion? Why should the ways and thoughts of man be pleasanter to them than the precious truth of God? Let them answer it for themselves. Account for their liking or disliking as they may, this is what Scripture says: — “Whom [Christ] God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood.” Indeed, what God gives, what He could not do without, is precisely what man wants, as a sinner. It is not well-doing, were it even the blessed Lord’s, in place of our

sins and guilt. The sinner wants a propitiatory before God, and finds it through faith in the blood of Jesus. As man, He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. He was subject to the law; He wrought miracles; He walked in grace. But if we were to be justified, our ruin demanded a deeper dealing, even redemption, redemption through His blood.

Such, then, in part at least, is God's righteousness; and large and rich is the comfort of the truth. But the language is precise also. We have very distinct statements on the subject here. If God has set forth Christ as a propitiatory by faith in His blood, it is "to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Thus was God declared to be righteous in His ways toward the Old Testament believers (ver. 25), as well as at present (ver. 26). In the first case His righteousness was shown forth on account of the passing by the sins that had been before. He could not have justly remitted their sins, strictly speaking, for the atoning work was not yet done; but He did pretermit them, and this through His forbearance. In the second case He shows forth His righteousness in the present time, without question of forbearance, because now the work of atonement is done. For who speaks of the creditor's "forbearance" when the debt is paid in full? By the actual accomplishment of redemption, instead of barely passing the sins by, God is just, and justifies him that is [not of law-works, but] of faith in Jesus.

May I not ask any fair mind, Who is here meant? "That he might be just and the justifier," etc., — that who

might be just? Answer uprightly, — if possible, without reference to your previous thoughts, and before that word which will judge in the last day. “That he might be just.” Who is He? Is it Christ just? or is it not God just by virtue of Christ? There can be no doubt in the world. No man who understands the Bible could give save one answer. It may seem a bold challenge, and some may think it too bold; but I am sure of my ground, and repeat that there is no man acquainted with the scriptures who would dare to say the assertion is wrong. It is, that God “might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” “It is God that justifieth.” (Rom. 8) It is, therefore, “the righteousness of God,” without a hint of transferring to us the legal righteousness of Christ. It is by virtue of Christ, or God could not be thus righteous in behalf of the sinner. Redemption is the righteous groundwork. The blood of Christ deserves at God’s hands that the believer should be justified, and God Himself is just in so justifying him.

Astonishing fact and truth! His is a new righteousness altogether. It is not God righteous apart from Jesus; it is the righteousness of God apart from law. It is God who has set Christ forth, but not merely as a righteous man, obeying Him in every thought, feeling, word, and way, manifesting perfect righteousness upon earth: even all this never made one sin of yours or mine a whit less in the sight of God. Our sins were as heavy after as they were before. I might almost venture to say that they pressed more heavily; for whatever we might say for ourselves, and however God might look down in pity upon poor sinful men upon the earth heaping up their sins before, what were those sins when Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, the righteous, dependent man,

the obedient servant, was here below? What was the effect of it? Light brought out the darkness of all others more conspicuously. It did not lighten their load; it rather proved how deep, dark, indelible, were the stains of sin. Had God merely acted after this sort, would it not have been comparing men in their sins with the perfect man without sin? How could He have such as we, or any others, companions of the Second Man, the Lord Jesus Christ? It could not be. This would have been very far from the righteousness of God. It might have been styled, if you please, the righteousness of Christ; but how could even this have availed to meet our desperate case? How could it have vindicated God as to sin? Christ was absolutely perfect; but “except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” There was nothing to save us in the fact of His being the righteous man that obeyed God all His life.2 There was nothing in this which could get rid of our sins. There was nothing in this which could give us a standing apart from sin in the presence of God.

Hence came in another thing. God set Christ forth, it is said here, as a propitiatory. Christ became the true mercy-seat. God gave Him up as a sacrifice for sin, that through His body, offered once for all, every soul that believes on Him might be sanctified — nay, more than that, “by one offering perfected for ever.” It is done in His death. He came to do, not merely the law, but the will of God, by the which will, the apostle carefully adds, we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Here, then, we have the righteousness of God developed in the simplest and clearest way. It means that God is just, and justifies in virtue of Christ. He is just, because

sin has been met in the cross: sin has been judged of God; it has been suffered and atoned for by Christ. More than that: the Lord Jesus has so magnified God, and so glorified His character, that there is a positive debt now on the other side. Instead of the obligation being, as it was, altogether on man's side, who was accumulating that which never could be paid for by him, God now has interposed, and, having been so magnified in the man Christ Jesus in His death, He is now positively just when He justifies the soul that believes in Jesus. It is consequently the righteousness of God. For God is now approving Himself righteous to the claims of Christ. It is God now that owns and discharges His debt to Christ. Christ has undertaken the cause for God, and also for man. Very God, still He was a man; and it was in human nature, not before its assumption, that the wonderful work of atonement was done. The consequence is, although it was the witness of God's love that He gave His own Son, and gave His Son to become a man and die for men, that now the scale is turned. The debt of man to destroy him is not so great as that which Christ has paid to deliver him. Scripture makes it a matter of God righteously justifying him that believes, in virtue of what Christ has suffered for sins. Thus nothing can be clearer or fuller, nothing more blessed and precious, than the meaning of this remarkable expression. It is, indeed, a priceless treasure. What Christ did, as living here, is not the point; or surely, where we have the great unfolding of divine righteousness was just the place to bring in what occupied Christ in His life, if it were the ground of this truth.

But I go further. Show me anywhere an unambiguous portion of the word of God, where His fulfilling of the

law is treated as a part of the righteousness of God. You can produce none. I can tell you some of those Scriptures which, perhaps, you think about; but I affirm that there is no proof whatever. It is better to be plain about that which is certain. Let others venture to say, if they will, what can be contradicted; it were well, in such a case, not to speak at all. But really there is no Scripture which makes what Christ was doing as under law, — I will not say the exclusive ground, but — any ground at all, of God's righteousness. Why not produce one?

I will now refer for a moment to Rom. 1, having given my reason for beginning with the third chapter. There was no object beyond this, that it seemed to be the most straightforward course. But allow me to mention, by the way, that he who has been put forth as the most distinguished defender of the common view, is compelled to own that, in Rom. 3:25, 26, God's acting righteously through Christ yields the easier, better sense.3 Though arguing expressly in defence of the ordinary scheme, he is too candid to gainsay the evident bearing of the context. There need be no secret as to his name. He is a well-known person — the present Bishop of Ossory. He is supposed to have written the best modern book on justification by faith according to the theologians. Yet is he forced, by the plain, positive language of Scripture to admit, that in these verses "His righteousness" most naturally means, not a something that Christ did by keeping the law, but what God can be and is by virtue of redemption. His justice now justifies the believer. This, as far as it goes, is true. Not that Dr. O'Brien adequately understands the truth, still less is he able to develop it, according to the Scriptures. But he at

least confesses that “His righteousness,” in this palmary passage of the epistle to the Romans, points to the quality of divine righteousness, or God’s justice; and this, because of what follows — “that He might be just,” which, of course, means God being just, and not simply the Lord Jesus, or what He did as made of a woman, made under law. But this great passage, if conceded, seems at once to decide the question; because we have here not some text or phrase that can be debated. Whenever a doctrine claims examination, it is always a sign of weakness if men fly from the full and bright unfoldings of the truth in the word of God to supposed hints and obscure allusions. When you have got the truth, when you desire it and nothing else, you are not afraid to face the strongest assertions and the fullest communications of God’s mind. When men overlook or evade the large and distinct instructions of Scripture, and hide behind some scrap wrested violently from its real connection, the presumption is that it can only be, because the truth is too strong for them, and they are not prepared to abandon their dogma For are we really to conceive that “the righteousness of God” means one thing in Rom. 3:25, 26, and another thing in Rom. 1:17, if not also in Rom. 3:21, 22? The notion is suicidal. Let us then observe the way in which God’s righteousness first comes before us. The apostle says that he is not ashamed of the gospel; “for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.” Where is there any allusion to Christ’s keeping the law of God? God has not spoken of it: why should we insert it? Our business is not to put notions into scripture, but to gather what God conveys to our souls. We are taught here, that in the

gospel His righteousness is revealed from faith to faith. The expression may be somewhat difficult; but, in my judgment, there is no question whatever about law-keeping here, but a tacit contrast with legal requirement. The law demanded righteousness from man, but could get none. In the gospel God's righteousness is being revealed. What a change from the law, with its claim on man for a righteousness he had not! God's righteousness, he says, is revealed in the gospel, because the gospel supposes the redemption is accomplished; it therefore speaks of sin put away and forgiven: in short, it makes known God justifying him that believes. It is therefore God's righteousness, not man's, and is founded on Christ's expiation, "by faith in His blood." Observe, it is the righteousness of God, who justifies "him that believeth." In virtue of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, God is enabled justly, not only to forgive the believer, but to account him righteous in His own sight.

On what terms, then, does God reveal His righteousness in the gospel? It is revealed by faith; that is, it is not by works of law, but by reason of faith. There is not a trace here of Christ doing the works for us, as they say who plead the law. How easy to have told us so, had this been the meritorious title ! It is said to be by faith; and inasmuch as God's righteousness is revealed by faith, the blessing of His righteousness only comes to him who believes; that is to say, it is revealed to faith. Hence, as it is here expressed, "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith." It is "by faith" on God's part, and therefore it is " to faith" on man's. Whoever has faith is the object for the righteousness of God. It addresses

itself to all, without exception, but it is actually for the believer.

Whoever believes in Jesus is justified by God; or, as it is said in the Acts of the Apostles, “All that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Why is there not a whisper about being justified by Christ keeping the law of Moses? Unless you can show it me from God’s word, bear with me if I treat it as a myth. What is the value of a doctrine on so weighty a theme which does not come out of the Bible? It may be put forth sincerely, piously: no doubt men mean to exalt the Saviour by it; but, be assured, they have made a very great mistake in putting their hand to prop up the ark. Upon it God has sprinkled the blood of Christ; thereby, in virtue of that precious blood, He can be just in justifying him that believes. With this the teaching of Rom. 1:17 agrees, in my judgment. Clearly the meaning is, God righteous on the ground of faith, and consequently to faith. It is put in the most abstract form, because it is the expression of His terms as a principle, without defining any class of persons. This is supported by the prophet Habakkuk, who says, not that Christ kept the law for the unjust, but that “the just shall live by faith.” Thus we see all thought of law-keeping for us by Christ is foreign to Rom. 1:17, as we have seen it to be unknown to Rom. 3:25, 26.

But is there not another sense of the expression in Romans 3:5? Unquestionably, “the righteousness of God” is employed with a different aim and subject there. But even so it always leaves the same substantial sense of a quality of righteousness in Him, variously exercised, of course. He may judge the world, as here; He may justify believers, as in verses 22-26; but it is in all cases

His righteousness. Does not this commend itself to your conscience as being a truer, simpler, less forced explanation than the traditional shiftings to and fro? It is assumed that God always justifies Himself. God is not responsible for man's evil; and the fact of man's unrighteousness being turned by Him to His own glory is no excuse for sins. It is the same fundamental truth, no matter how applied. If God displays His justice in judging the world, it is His righteousness, administered no doubt by Christ at His appearing; but it has nothing to do with Christ's keeping the law. For what link is there with God's taking righteous vengeance upon the guilty world? On the other hand, the sinner comes confessing his sin, flies for refuge to the blood of Christ, and God justifies him. He is righteous when He deals with impenitent unbelievers; He is equally righteous when He justifies the soul that repents and believes in Christ. It is the righteousness of God in both cases. Thus there is the strongest confirmation of the truth, although the application be different. In either direction it is God who is righteous, it is God displaying His righteousness. God's righteousness acts in view of those who, in pride or indifference, despise Him, and of those who, confessing their sins, betake themselves to the hiding-place of grace. Everywhere God is just, whether in judgment or in justification.

But does not such an expounding of divine righteousness in the gospel weaken the law? Assuredly it excludes boasting that a man is thus justified by faith without works of law. It overthrows the distinctions of men; it bespeaks one God who justifies Jews only by faith, and Gentiles through their faith. It is instructive to observe that the Apostle has to guard the true doctrine from this

self-same charge: “Do we then make void the law through faith?” And this he meets by an emphatic denial. The contrary is the fact, — “we establish the law” — law as a principle. But how? Bring the law in as done by Christ for us, and it is difficult to see how this objection could have arisen. St. Paul could hardly have said absolutely that a man is justified by faith, apart from law-works; for according to this scheme the law-works were done all the same for the man, only by another: a strange doctrine indeed, for which one ought to have Scripture before believing it! But the statement has quite another sense, and intimates that faith, apart from works of law (let them be done by whom they may), is the true and only principle of justification according to God’s word. And yet by faith we establish law, instead of annulling it; for faith sees and rests on Jesus suffering unto death for sin under Divine wrath, when sin was not only imputed to, but most really judged in, Him on the cross. When, or where, had law so deep and divine a sanction? Never, we may answer, can there be elsewhere such a maintenance of its authority. Were we under the law for our walk, we should make it void, if we fell into the vain conceit that we could break it, and yet escape its curse. Faith sees the law established in the death of Christ.

Next we come to a distinct step, which gives me occasion to ask, whether justification be only by the blood of Christ. Is this the sole measure and character and fruit of God’s righteousness?

Let me say, that my object is not at all to reduce the blessing to naked forgiveness of sins, essential and precious as this may be; it is in no way or degree to deny the value of the life of Christ to the believer. On the

contrary, the ordinary scheme of justification, I must contend, deprives you of realising the richest privilege God would have you know and enjoy. If this be so, how it illustrates that God's way is always the best! But what is it in this case? With singular inconsistency, these men allow that one cannot do without the blood of Christ. All admit this, as every Christian must. But then, say they, you need righteousness besides; and for this God needs Christ to obey the law for you. And what does Scripture say? It gives me the life of Christ, but life on the other side; not Christ keeping for me the law on the earth, but Christ risen: it is the resurrection-side. In point of fact, there is no such thing as identification with Christ as a living man here below; it is, without intending it, a virtual denial of Christianity. We are not Jews. Union is not with the blessed Lord as under the law, but with Him risen and exalted on high.

There is no doubt as to what is taught in Scripture. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," it is said. In what position is this union? Scripture leaves no question whatever. Thus the apostle Paul says: "Though we have known Christ after the flesh" [this is what the traditional righteousness amounts to], yet "now henceforth know we Him no more." Did the inspired writer put a slight upon the Lord here below ? Did he in anywise dishonour the perfect walk of Christ as a man under law upon the earth? God forbid! The truth is, that there and thus He was known as Messiah. There I ought to have regarded Him as a Being, however gracious, yet above and entirely aloof from me. I might believe in and love Him, follow Him, confess Him, obey Him, if I had life in my soul; I might be the object of His love and gracious care; but I could in no just sense have been a member of

Messiah. I could not have been said to be of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones; I could have possessed no such actual oneness with Him. Peter, and James, and John, would have been horrified at any one telling them they were one with their Master. United to Him! a member of His body! who ever heard of such a thing? The fact is, the basis on which union with Christ exists and goes on was not even laid then. How could any soul be one with the blessed Lord, when his sins were unatoned for and unremoved? More than this, Christ was not then standing in that power of resurrection-life in which He could take the place of bringing them into His own relationship to His God and His Father, free from sin and law. Directly He dies, and is risen, the first day (I might almost say the very first act), when He comes into the midst of His disciples, He breathed upon them, and said, “Peace be unto you.” He gives them the fullest assurance that all which pertained to the old man was gone, with peace not for themselves only, but others also. “Receive ye the Holy Spirit,” said the quickening Spirit, as He breathed upon them. “Whose soever sins ye remit,” etc. Not only were they quit of their own sins, but, in virtue of His large and blessed work, they stood and went forth witnesses, administratively, of the same to others.

Thus, there was the Lord Jesus Christ acting from the resurrection-side of the cross; for the believers had Him breathing life more abundantly upon them. (John 20) It was life in resurrection, life now entirely apart from and above the earth or Judaism, in short, above everything connected with the world or the law. What! Not connected with the law? Do you mean to slight the law, too? Certainly not; but we do mean to exalt Christ, yes,

to assert His supreme and incomparable worth. Do you mean to keep Christ under law after He rose from the dead? That is the question. If so, assuredly Scripture will not help you. It shows us most plainly that now a new sight appeared. Not only was there a Messiah who came to shed His blood that God might righteously justify; but the character of the justification was to be according to the new place which Christ entered by resurrection. That is, it was not merely a justification in view of the old nature and all its effects and workings met by redemption, but an entirely new standing in which the believer is set by virtue of Christ's resurrection. This is begun to be treated in Romans 4, being taken up in connection with the type of Abraham. It is not now the time to dwell upon it at large, especially as it has been before many minds in various forms. But it may be remarked that Rom. 5 brings both before us: in verse 9, "justified by His blood;" and in verse 18, "justification of life," - one answering to chap. 3, the other to chap. 4. In Romans 3 God justifies by virtue of the blood of Jesus; in Romans 4 God justifies by virtue of His resurrection, for He "was raised again for our justification."

Such is the doctrine of Scripture. Where is the fulfilment of the law in this? Here, if anywhere, one might expect it to be introduced, were the hypothesis only true and sound. For the point raised is not forgiveness barely, but justification. It is presented in both its parts, exactly and fully, in Romans 3, 4. How comes it that there is not a word about Christ keeping the law for us? It is an unfortunate case, in sober truth, and piteously destitute, seeing that it has to go begging about the Bible, without getting even a single sure contribution in its favour. If there is, where is it? It is not here; nay, it is inconsistent

with what is here. For “to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Why not, if true, tell us to believe on Jesus doing the works of the law for us? Why not tell us God imputes righteousness, not “without works,” but by Christ’s working, for us? The truth is, the promise would then be through the law, and not through the righteousness of faith, in contradiction to Rom. 4, whereas it really is of faith, that it might be according to grace, and not law.4 We go farther. Take up Romans 6, 7, 8, and what do we find? That the Spirit, having laid down the precious basis of resurrection in Christ, reasons upon it, applies it to the meeting of various difficulties, shows the fulness of the blessing to which the believer is brought by it: a blessing not only above all nature in its character, but also flowing out absolutely and without restriction to souls, wherever they might be in this world, absolutely ignoring the shades of earthly distinction. That is, it altogether leaves behind the limits of the law, and contemplates man as such apart from all else. The moment you have the race before you, mankind as they are, you are outside the necessary boundaries of the law, which dealt with none directly but Jews. Hence, we never hear the Gentiles spoken of in their guilt as “transgressors,” because they were not under the law as the Jews were. We read of “sinners of the Gentiles” (Gal. 2:15), because they were sinful men, of course, though not under the law. (Rom. 2:14) On the other hand, when we have in view either Adam, who had a law (Rom. 5:14), or the Jews, who had the law (Hosea 6:7; Gal. 2:18), the word “transgressors” has its force and appropriateness, as we see in Scripture. And why? Because Israel, like Adam, were under the positive enactment of a known law, and were

consequently more guilty if they were unfaithful. Hence, both are said to be “under sin” (Rom. 3:9), not exactly under transgression; as death is said to be the wages not merely of transgression but of sin.5 But what are we to think of Romans 5:19, so continually cited to prove Christ’s fulfilment of the law as the ground of our justification? “As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Here the apostle is meeting the objection that the Gospel of grace makes all turn on one man Christ Jesus, and on one accomplished righteousness. Hence, he goes up to Adam. Could the Jew deny that this one man by his single act brought in sin and death? Why should not the grace of God reverse the tale? Was not the first man the type of the Second man, the last Adam ? Thus, while the law is alluded to parenthetically, the whole scope of the argument necessarily mounts up before the law to Adam. It accordingly comprehends under the two heads their respective families, as involved in the ruin of the one and the redemption of the other. The express aim is to exclude the law, and to bring in, on the one hand, universal realities, on the other, special relations under Adam and Christ. “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”

Observe that we ought in verse 18 to have “by one offence,” as in the margin; such is the right version. It is “one offence” here, but “the offence of one” in verse 17. The two verses are entirely distinct. “Therefore as by one offence [the tendency is] toward all men unto condemnation, even so by one righteousness [the

tendency is] toward all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

Many rest very confidently on the passage; but allow me to ask, How is it you overlook that here the Holy Ghost is arguing upon the headships of Adam and Christ — not upon the narrower issue of the law, but in pointed contrast with it? He is comparing, not Moses, but Adam and Christ. Now, Adam had nothing to do with the law of God given by Moses. If we think of the moral sum only of the second table, he would not even have understood it. How could he have been told to love his neighbour, for instance, in Paradise? Why, he might have looked over the world and would not have found a neighbour to love. Again, to take a particular command, where would have been the sense of telling an innocent man that he must not lust? "Lust!" he might have said, "I don't know what lust is." He was a man without a single failing; there was a total absence of any evil, and therefore on this ground the propensities of the sinful heart which the law assumes did not even exist for Adam.

How, then, can men talk and reason as they do about Adam having the law? It is a mistake as to the fact, a moral contradiction as to principles, unscriptural and irrational. If they merely said that Adam had a law, it is admitted; but we must not confound a law with the law. Further, in Adam's case it was no question of doing the law to live, for he was sinless. Hence, it was not such a trial as the law supposes. For the point in his case was not, "Do and live," but rather "Do not, lest you die." That is, it was in both its parts the exact opposite of the law, which supposes the state, and forbids the indulgence, of

sin. Again; the law supposes one not to have life, which it presents as the object to be gained. But this the sinner cannot do.

Hence the result, or at least the aim, of the law is to fix the consciousness in the heart of man, that, as he does not, cannot, meet God's terms, he is a dead man in God's judgment. Now, was this, in the least, the case with Adam unfallen? Unquestionably it was not. He was a living man; and it was not a question of doing to get life, but not doing what God forbade and Satan tempted him to do in order that he might not die. Fallen, he brought in death to all his family, as Christ risen brought in life for His family. Therefore, the apostle puts in contrast Christ and Adam, not Christ and Moses. Is not this the real point of contrast? Not Moses or the law (though both are incidentally glanced at), but Adam and Christ. However, the case is really far stronger than this. The next verse does introduce the law, but it is as a distinct thing added and contra-distinguished to the foregoing. One can have no hesitation, therefore, in concluding that the obedience of Christ here spoken of had nothing at all to do with the keeping of the law for us in any sense whatever. "Moreover" [or "now," "but"], says he, "the law entered [by the by] that the offence might abound." It is evident that the point insisted on is the value of tracing things to their sources. The law, which came in by Moses, and pressed man individually for what he was in himself, however important, was but incidental, and for special purposes.

Thus, in order to get an adequate view of the subject, we must go beyond Moses up to Adam and the beginning of this world's moral history. There man fell through disobedience. It was not a question of breaking the law,

for of it he knew nothing. He violated the command which he was bound to obey. So, here, Jesus stands at the end of the ages. (Heb. 9) As Adam at the beginning, so Christ appeared at the end, of the moral world; in the one case a disobedient man, and in the other the obedient One. The first exposes all to condemnation; the Second triumphs so as to open justifying to all. In effect, the disobedience of the one constitutes his company sinners, as the obedience of the other constitutes His, righteous. The one disobeyed, and brought ruin upon the mass of his dependents; the other obeyed, and the consequence is that the many dependent on Him are made righteous. Thus not an allusion is here made (ver. 19) to the keeping of the law, but, on the contrary, law entered by the way (not that the offence might be abolished, and that the ground of justification might be established), but quite simply and subordinately "that the offence might abound." Why are not men content with God's word and wisdom? "Where sin abounded, grace (not bare law-fulfilling) did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned in death [it is not a question of law broken or transgression merely], even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." How infinitely beyond law-keeping!

In Scripture, then, nothing can be more certain than that God's righteousness means His justice in justifying by virtue of Christ. We have seen in Christ, as the ground of justification, first, blood to put away the guilt of the old man before God; and next, resurrection, the spring of a new, more abundant, and holy life, where no condemnation can be. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." And what do men substitute for

this? A mere patching up of the old man as living under the law! Are you prepared to follow them? Can you accept this traditional earthly scheme as Christianity? It is really no better than lowering Christ, and His work for our justification, to a making up of the flesh's deficiencies as responsible under the law.6 Is this YOUR Christianity? You ought to know by experience the disastrous effects — uncertainty of soul, anxiety, doubt, fear, frequent, if not habitual, sense of bondage and condemnation before God, which is precisely and naturally the result for the conscientious mind. As long as the first covenant stood, it was the old man schooled and disciplined by the action of the law; and such was the external condition in which even the saints of God were held, whatever might be their faith and its fruits individually. (Gal. 4) "Through fear of death," as we are told, "they were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb. 2) Alas! how very many are in this day of ours practically in the same condition. How many really abide as if they knew not whether the Holy Ghost were or not! as if they were not quite sure that Christ had died for them, or that He, risen from the dead, had procured them present and eternal nearness to God! Do you think this a calumny? The truth is, men are themselves too much under the darkening influence of the error to be competent judges. But even they ought not to be ignorant of the fact, that there are now in the world thousands and millions bearing the name of Christ who are still going on their legal round, just as if the glorious Deliverer had not yet come. How comes this to pass? Because they do not submit to nor understand the righteousness of God; because they pertinaciously cling to their bald thought of law-righteousness made up by Christ, which they have made into a kind of party badge

and banner under which to fight. In a measure, God leaves even saints to taste the bitter fruit of their own folly. Hence it is that, though believers, they are kept from all enjoyment of peace and joy in Christ.

Such is the practical state of those who commit themselves to the error; for thoroughly is it allowed, that — as in other cases, so in this — where there is simplicity of heart in cleaving to Christ, where there is a fervent sense of the personal worth of Christ, it is wonderful how God cheers them, spite of their perverse bias. It is no otherwise with so many persons who see not Christ's coming as an immediate hope: God in His grace sustains them blessedly where there is an eye single to Christ; and if they have written hymns, others can sing their hymns as well as they can, and perhaps better; but then, this is no effect of their doctrine as to the coming of Christ. The insertion of a heap of intervening events practically puts Him aside as our hope; for one is thus waiting for the happening of this and that event rather than for Christ. I attribute it to the Spirit of God raising them above the withering influence of their system.

Just so is it with those who, in lieu of the righteousness of God, advocate the idea of Christ under law as a substitute for it, and as our standing before God. In such persons, where there is liveliness of faith and a hearty sense of the Saviour's grace and glory, they rise, more or less, above their false views. But the inevitable native effect of the doctrine, as far as it is carried out in the soul, is to bring persons back into the condition in which saints were before Christ came to accomplish redemption. And so it is that, beginning with Roman Catholicism, you will find that the language of such

persons is founded very much more upon the Psalms misapplied than on the truth and grace of God displayed in Christianity. And very naturally; for Popery (and, alas! not Popery alone) will tell you that Jerusalem and Zion are the Church of God. Popery acts as if, like Israel, commissioned to beat down all the Canaanites in the name of Jehovah. “O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us! Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones!” So now, Popery is happy where it acquires power to found the Inquisition — is happy where it can punish recusants and heretics soundly for their spiritual sins. Such is the effect of grafting the law on their system. Would that it were confined to one religious body only!

My reason for referring to it is, because it shows the issue, practically, of slipping outside the blessed region of liberty, and light, and life in resurrection, into which Christ has brought the saint now by virtue of His own redemption. Thus one loses sight of the new standing of grace, and returns to what could not but be before the cross, instead of following on through the cross into the presence of Christ on high, made the righteousness of God in Him.

Let me call your attention to an expression in the beginning of Romans 8, which illustrates the immense importance of the resurrection-side of justification: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them....” — for whom Christ died, is it? No. For whom Christ shed His blood? No; but “to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Redemption by His blood we have seen, — not pardon only, as these misleaders say, but justification by the blood of Christ. It is the value Godward of Christ dying

for us; but in that aspect there is no such thing as being "in Christ." But here is another character of privilege, because our justification is not only by the blood, but in the life of Christ risen from the dead. Accordingly, the believer not only has Christ for him on the cross, but he is "in Christ." What is the effect of this? "No condemnation." To justify, therefore, is not, as some teach, "to declare judicially the innocence of the party justified." For innocence, the condition of man unfallen, once lost, is gone for ever. But God, as always, brings in something better. The gospel, accordingly, is no return by law to the first Adam condition, even if it were conceivable, but the gift of relationship by grace to the Second man, founded on the judgment of sin, root and branch, in the cross, and displayed in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Now let us just look back at the scene where this victory was achieved for us in the grace of God. There are those who will tell you that there is nothing beyond the precious blood of Christ. This I do admit, that for depth of vindicating God, for thorough clearing of sin, and for intense manifestation of love, such as never else was conceived of, there is nothing that equals the cross and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. But if you mean to affirm that there is no privilege founded upon His blood beyond pardon and cleansing — if you mean to deny that there is any new region of life and liberty for us to be ushered into, as God's sons, beyond the blood of Christ in itself, I cannot but infer that you labour under a profound mistake. It is to exalt, not to depreciate, His precious blood, if I say that I follow Him into resurrection, that I am one with Him glorified in heaven, and that Christ dead, risen, and ascended, alone gives me, through the

Holy Ghost sent down, the true place of a Christian, and of the Church. No doubt His blood is the foundation, but His life in resurrection is the new character in which the believer stands before God. And here is one effect of it — “No condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Why so? “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” It is not the blood of Christ, but the Spirit of life in Him after redemption was accomplished. The blood of Christ was the sacrificial basis on which the freedom is conferred; but He, risen from the dead, is the spring, pattern, and power of the freedom He confers. His blood cleanses from all sin. “This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ, not by water only, but by water and blood.” But all this, indispensable as it may be, is not the same thing as the life of Christ risen. Upon the cross I see our Divine Saviour suffering for our sins; there too I see the heavens in darkness, and earth a scene of utter confusion and rebellion against Him; yea, not even God espousing His cause, but, on the contrary, forsaking Him — the true God, His own God, abandoning Him, the Holy One, whom He made sin for us. Does that give me my conscious peace, and joy, and liberty? Peace I never could have without it; but were there only the cross thus seen, how could we have it? Absolutely needed by us, absolutely needed to vindicate and glorify God, as the cross is, it seems to me that we ought to be in the darkness, the grief, and the shame of the cross, yea, that we ought to abide there still, if God were only thus dealing with His beloved Son. Why should we expect anything more? What right should we have to look beyond, were this all?

Once more look at the resurrection. What a new and pregnant fact! The same God who smote Jesus, raised Him: the same God who then forsook Him, now ranges Himself on His side, and, not satisfied with raising Him up from the grave, takes and sets Him, “far above all principalities and powers,” in the very highest place, “at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” And what is all that, you ask, for you, me, and all who believe? Beloved friends, it is Christianity. It is not merely the cross, though the cross be the sole sufficient foundation; but you cannot separate Christianity from the person of Christ exalted on high, consequent on redemption. That risen Second Man in the presence of God it is who determines the acceptance of the believer now. Is Jesus not the object of the perfect favour of God? His work has brought every Christian into the same place of favour and relationship. “You that were sometime alienated.... yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblamable, and unreproveable in His sight.” Such is the cloudless grace in which all now stand who believe. There is no difference whatever as to the standing of the Christian. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” If there is no difference as to sin, there is none as to acceptance: for Christ is all and in all.

‘‘What shall we, then, say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the

right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation," etc. Here we have the apostle, in Rom. 8, triumphantly closing his comprehensive exposition of justification. But there is no weakening, modifying, or supplementing of the doctrine. Death and resurrection, or their results, remain, as ever, his theme, — the security for the believer, no less than the ground and character of divine righteousness. In our baptism we owned ourselves dead with Christ, buried with Him into death, that, like as He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life, reckoning ourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we were held. In the Lord's Supper it is His death we show forth till He come, not His living for us under law, which is nowhere so said, but eating of His body broken for us, and drinking of His blood shed for us. So again under the pain and pressure of our daily path, we have His intercession for us at God's right hand, His ever living on high to plead for us; nowhere a repairing of our faults in the flesh, as on earth and under law. There is no going back for comfort there; "for such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." It is all in pointed contrast with an earthly, legal state. For us it is the Son perfected for evermore. "Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Most sweet it is, that if any sin, "Jesus Christ the righteous" is the advocate we have with the Father; and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

The deep general want is, that Christians should know Christ, and their blessing in Him, far, far better; not merely read and hear occasionally, and even seem to enjoy at times, but that they should never allow or join in any lower or different language; for they know the Shepherd's voice, not that of strangers; "and a stranger will they not follow," says the Lord, "but will flee from him." To slight the Lord's warning word is not the way to live in the new place into which the resurrection of Christ has carried us; but, on the contrary, for one exposed to the tones and ways of a worldly sanctuary, as temptations increase and thicken, the taste for and enjoyment of the truth impoverishes. Is it a matter for wonder if those who retrograde at last become the enemies, ay, the bitterest enemies, of that very testimony that once seemed so grateful to their hearts? For, allow me to ask, who at this moment are so keen, persistent, and implacable as those who, having once confessed, now turn away from the confession of an exalted Christ and of His speedy coming for us? This deadly opposition is going on, and you need be on your guard "lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." Not that God does not, will not work, who will surely call out those who have ears to hear as long as Jesus tarries. May He grant them such faith and faithfulness to Christ, that they may walk far better than we have done! Not, of course, that we could desire to be put to shame; but that, even so, Christ might be magnified, and His heavenly testimony have a better answer in the hearts and ways of His own on earth. But be not deceived nor self-secure. There is such a thing as having had the truth and selling it. There are those who, having once appeared to value the truth, have allowed painful

circumstances and mortified feelings to carry them away against those that were the instruments of God's gracious power for their good. And, depend upon it, when men become the antagonists of such, under various and plausible pretexts, they will ere long fall into the deeper guilt of becoming the enemies of God's testimony itself.

To return, however. The evident scope of the righteousness of God is, that He himself is righteous in justifying the believer by virtue of Christ's work in all its extent and blessedness — a work first viewed in the efficacy of His blood-shedding upon earth, but alone fully displayed in His resurrection, that we might stand in Him, cleared from all charge, the very old nature being thus judged dead and gone, and a new life given according to the power and character and acceptance of Him risen from the grave. Legal obedience is essentially individual. The law is the measure of duty as in the flesh to God. Its righteousness, therefore, wholly differs from God's righteousness, not in degree or sphere only, but in source and kind. To the sinner the law was necessarily a ministry of death and condemnation; to our blessed Lord an occasion for manifesting His perfectness, and having its own character retrieved. But never did the law hold out such a prospective reward as quickening or justifying others. The idea is purely imaginative, and entirely false. Nor did Christ earn life by doing the law: such a thought denies the glory of His person. In Him was life; yea, He was "that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Not as made of a woman, made under law, did He give life, but as the Son of God, quickening whom He would in His own sovereign title, and in communion with the Father. For

the law knows nothing of the sort; it says, the man that does these things lives, and the man that does not, dies. So Christ, speaking for it, says, not to sin-convicted souls, but to the self-righteous young ruler, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” No dead ever passed into life by this road, but only by faith, only by hearing the voice of the Son of God. For eternal life is the free gift of God, and is never otherwise the portion of sinful man. It is false, then, and ignorance of the gospel, to say that we enter into life by virtue of Christ’s keeping the commandments; for life and incorruption are expressly declared to be brought to light by the gospel, not by the law. “If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.” But it could give neither. “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.”

Hence, in Scripture, legal righteousness is never treated as vicarious: if it be so, where? Not only is the language of the law intensely, exclusively personal, but the New Testament pointedly contrasts it with the language of faith in Rom. 10: “For they [the Jews] being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law [why not tell us of fulfilling it?] for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in shine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

It is impossible to conceive words more directly fitted to shut out the thought of the same righteousness, only fulfilled by Christ for us. The point insisted on is, that there are two righteousnesses which speak two-wise: not a single righteousness of law, obligatory on us, and done by Christ; but one righteousness of law, and another of faith; one of doing to live, and the other of believing (not that the Lord Jesus kept the law for us, to justify us, and fill up the deficiencies of the old man, but) that God raised Him from the dead. It is a question of salvation, which finds its answer only in the righteousness that is of faith.

Again, this difference is entirely confirmed by Phil. 3:9, where one's own righteousness is explained to be of law, in contradistinction to that which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God on the ground of faith. And the reason is obvious. Legal righteousness is that which every one under law is bound to render to God; the righteousness which is God's, and of God on the ground of faith, is of pure grace, and as much higher and better as God is above man — yes, above what man ought to be; for that was human, this is divine righteousness. The law never called a righteous man, still less a divine person, to die for sinners; never claimed His resurrection, and still less to raise Him again for their justification; never proposed to glorify in

God Himself a suffering, crucified, but therein God-glorifying man, still less to give us the glory which the Father gave the Son. The law, in fine, sought righteousness from man, made God but the receiver and so far passive — man being contemplated as the active party; in the gospel, on the contrary, God has His due and better place as active in grace through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord — it reveals His righteousness. It is δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ, and not only ἐκ Θεοῦ divine in nature and in source.

John 16:8-10 I will just notice. It does not expressly mention “the righteousness of God,” but it is evidently connected with it, and full of instruction and interest. “I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin,” etc. It is a totally different process from that of the law. In the prophets’ times the law was made to reprove the Jews of sin. And so at any time it may be the instrument to deal with the guilty, and convict them of sin. “ By the law is the knowledge of sin.” But now appears another power, mightier, yet deeper withal, and not precept or principle only, but a living, divine person. Assuredly He is here, while Jesus is away, for glorifying Him, for teaching and comforting those who believe in Him; but the same Holy Ghost sent down from heaven is the power for convincing the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Whether men like it or not, such is the statement of the word of God: let them beware of fighting against that word.

The Spirit then reproves or convicts the world of three things — “Of sin, because they believe not on me; of

righteousness” — Is it because Christ came from Jehovah to fulfil the law for man? The very contrary! — “Because I go to my Father.” How can men continue, then, to speculate? Why should believers persist in contending for what none can find in God’s word, to the giving up that which is there? It is a mere delusion which the enemy encourages them in, because he knows that, in their zeal for this notion of their own, they are losing the full and fresh power of the truth of God, as set forth in the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. The object of Satan is, if he can, to make some fancy about Christ Himself a means to take people back to the state of things before redemption. Do you suppose Satan is become less keen-sighted? Do you imagine that he has lost his ancient subtlety? This is his aim — if he cannot keep people altogether away from Christ — as little of Christ as possible. Even Scripture may be so misused as to help it on.

When Christ was on the earth, redemption was not effected; God was still dealing with the world; man was not thoroughly condemned. The “strange doctrine” I am combating at once dishonours Christ’s sufferings and consequent heavenly glory, puts God again behind a veil, deprives believers of the full liberty of redemption, resuscitates the flesh, and represents the world as a present possible scene of enjoyment. It is not the wrong of any one association in particular. Christ’s law-keeping for us is quite as strongly held among rationalists as dissenters, and more among Calvinists than Arminians. This tenacity, in holding on to what they cannot prove from Scripture, demonstrates how powerful is the spell of tradition, new or old, and how small is the place they practically give to the authority of God’s word over their

souls. Hence, too, unbridled license of tongue and pen to make up for Scriptural evidence, and this in proportion to their own want of a spiritual mind and of enlarged acquaintance with the ways of God. The consequence is, that the zeal which should be put forth in defence of God's blessed truth evaporates in ignorant and powerless efforts to pass off on others, as the light, those earth-born clouds by which their own souls have been kept in comparative darkness.

Let us look at another and serious application. How do I know that man is lost? By the word of God, no doubt; but it is the doctrine of the resurrection that shows the state in which every one lies who has not resurrection- life in Christ. Therefore it is that we find many a soul pretty much in the plight of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda. They are waiting for the troubling of the waters, instead of enjoying the blessed fact and proof in their own souls, that He is come who is life everlasting, and that He, dead and risen, gives life in deliverance from sin, law, world, and judgment. Without slighting any good man, and with a certain knowledge of the best men's writings in most ages, I may say confidently that this legal theory is the millstone about the necks of most moderns. If I must mention names, take John Owen and Richard Baxter among crowds of others.

Are you aware that Richard Baxter never had peace in his soul until he came to his death-bed? He was an ardent Christian, of fervent piety, of no small energy in service, possessed of considerable powers of mind as well as of large stores of reading, and one who wrote very extensively indeed on the things of God. How came it that the author of the "Saint's Rest" never had rest himself till the close? The reason was that Baxter lay

under the dark bondage of law as a matter of his soul's experience day by day. It was not that he did not believe in Christ, but that he so feebly realised the deliverance of redemption till he was ending his career.

Look, again, at John Owen. He was Baxter's antagonist. The one was a moderate Presbyterian, the other a Congregationalist. They were both good and able men, but they differed materially — the one being decidedly Calvinistic, the other Arminianly disposed. Still, in both there was, perhaps, equal lack of light as to the righteousness of God. Is this to disparage either? Be it far from us; but must we therefore accept their mutual attacks and their clashing thoughts on this very head of justifying righteousness? The fact is, their stamp remains and is plain enough: not a heavenly, but an earthly tone; little sense of the liberty of grace; no joy of resurrection, but contrariwise, a strong assimilation to the position and experience of godly Jews. This is not to be wondered at in Cromwell's Vice-Chancellor of Oxford. His system of theology rather fitted him for (certainly in no way hindered him from) the revolutionary movement of that day. None of them had the faintest conception of the heavenly calling of the saint, still less of the Church's privileges as the body and bride of Christ in heaven. Nay, they had no right understanding of the full and proper deliverance of the individual Christian. Association with Christ raised and ascended was to them an unknown region. Not one of the Puritan class could say intelligently with the apostle, "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." (2 Cor. 5)

For us Christ is dead, and risen, and gone on high, and we are made the righteousness of God in Him. This is

the righteousness, therefore, that the Holy Ghost is convincing the world of; not man's under law, but God's in grace. "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." Christ, rejected of men, is gone to the Father, and has done with the world, as such, for the present. The world will never see Christ again, till He comes in judgment of it. The Christian even now belongs to Christ in heaven, and will go shortly to meet Christ in the air and be with Him in the Father's house. He will also appear with Christ, and the world will behold Christ and the Christian in the same glory. The world will then see with shame and remorse what it was to despise Christ and those who are Christ's, and the testimony of His name. What a changing of sides! Assuredly, the joy and the grief in that day will be great indeed. All will turn on Christ and His word. Are you honouring Him, His word, and His work now? If so, blessed are you now, and blessed then.

But observe here again how law-righteousness differs from that of God. Law promises earth and living long upon it to those who kept it. Grace gives Christ to suffer for our sins, the just for the unjust, raises Him for our justifying, glorifies Him in heaven, and makes us God's righteousness in Him there, with the sure hope that He will soon come to have us with Himself where He is. No doubt, the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives. But then in Christ we are dead to it, instead of being alive — not, as the English Bible makes it out, by the law being dead to us (Rom. 7:6), which would be to abrogate the law indeed, but by our being dead to it by the body of Christ. Thus, being in Christ, there is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Without stopping long, I would add a word on this last verse of 2 Cor. 5, “He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Some find a little difficulty here, and this, because the “righteousness of God” is applied with a somewhat different shade of meaning. But can you bring in the fulfilling of the law? If there be a Scripture that more positively excludes it than another, it is this verse. It is not that God made Christ to keep the law for us that we might thus have His performance of it imputed to us; but “He made Him to be sin for us.” What and when was this? Was it anything but the cross? It is evidently and exclusively the atonement. Thus it is another form in which the righteousness of God is presented. For here it is not put before us, so to speak, objectively; it is predicated of the saints. The righteousness of God is upon us in Rom. 3; it is what we are made here. No matter, however, whether it comes before us in Scripture objectively or subjectively: it carries always the same thought of what God is because of the cross of Christ. It is God justifying us righteously by virtue of Christ, without the remotest allusion to Christ’s keeping the law for us. God made to be sin for us Christ “that knew no sin.” Christ had no sin within, neither had He done anything sinful. He did not even know sin. Yet “God made Him to be sin for us” upon the cross: it was atonement for us, “that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

The apostle connects all present relationship with Christ at the right hand of God; even as, from his conversion, we know he had to do with Christ in glory. It is the capital truth of all that part of the epistle. Compare 2 Cor. 3, 4 (and it is always of importance to get the

context, for this does not deceive), where you will find that the point is Christ glorified as the object of the Christian's regard, in contrast with Moses veiled, which was the distinctive sign for Israel. They could not even look upon Moses without a veil, which is the exact type to represent Judaism. With a veiled man they had to do then; whereas "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," (not Christ fulfilling the law for us upon earth) "are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit."

In other words, Christ glorified in heaven is the proper object of the Christian's daily contemplation. He knows and delights in the life of Christ, as he follows Him in spirit here below; he rests exclusively upon the blood of Christ, as that which purges his guilt; but the object of his soul, which transforms and acts upon him from day to day, is Christ beheld in glory. So, in 2 Cor. 4, it is the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ (as Paul saw him literally in glory, we by faith), ''the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Again, chap 5 confirms the same doctrine: "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." He is viewed, of course, there — not on earth, but in heaven. And so, at the close, we are told that "Him who knew no sin God made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." On the other hand, in John 16 we saw the Spirit, sent down, convicting the world of righteousness, because Christ, rejected from earth, is accepted on high. There was no righteousness in the world: had there been a particle, they would have bowed down and worshipped the Son of God. But they cast Him out in unrighteousness; He goes to the Father,

and the world sees Him no more. This is, in both its parts, righteousness. But it is not all; for God not only shows His righteousness by exalting the world-despised Jesus to His right hand, but He makes us His righteousness in Christ. What a blessing! We become "the righteousness of God in Him!"

With another I would illustrate this truth by directing you to the analogous case of Jerusalem and Jehovah. (Compare Jer. 23:6, and 33:16.) In the former passage the Lord is called "our righteousness." "This is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness." In the latter passage, "This is the name wherewith she [Jerusalem] shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness." Thus, Jerusalem acquires by grace a standing in association with Him who is the source of her justification. But even this is never said to be by law nor law-fulfilling, be it by whom it may. Substitution is of the essence of the gospel; vicarious sacrifice was an unquestionable truth before the law, and during the law, as it is for ever consecrated in Christ's one offering, which set aside the Levitical system. The obedience of One is that by which alone any can be justified; but it is His obedience all through: not the active, as men say, contrasted with the passive, but His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. But where is He said to have obeyed the law for us? Where that His life was vicarious? He suffered, was made a curse, was made sin, died for us — all most true, His substitution and satisfaction on the cross; which is enfeebled, not strengthened, by the unscriptural addition of His walk on earth, as if this also were substitutional.

So it is, then, with us as with the earthly city. "Jehovah our Righteousness" is the name of the Lord in

connection with Israel. Our association is with Christ in heaven. The Lord Jesus has been received up in glory. Divine righteousness is shown in exalting His person on the throne. But if God has shown His righteousness in setting Him there, He further exercises His righteousness in setting us in Him there. Such is the efficacy of His work as made sin for us. “Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who from God was made to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” (1 Cor. 1:30.)

But I close. To dwell upon this subject further here might be but wearisome, and only weaken what I desire to leave resting upon the minds of those who have been listening. May the Lord bless what has been of Himself, for His name’s sake!

W.K.

1 2 Peter 1:1 does not touch on the ground of justification, but asserts that the saints he addressed obtained like precious faith with the apostles, in virtue of the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Even if we adopt the marginal suggestion, it would mean that our God and Saviour Jesus Christ took care, according to His faithful regard to the promises, that there should ever be a remnant according to the election of grace. Hence He, in His righteousness, secured that they should get faith. Christ’s law-keeping is not in question: introduce it, and you spoil the sense. For how could His legal obedience bring any one to faith. But verse 2 confirms the English Bible against the margin. If the former be correct, there would be no possible place for the desired result; for nobody believes that God and Jesus kept the law either to make up a

legal righteousness for others, or to give them faith. The later Puritans were the chief promoters, though not the authors, of the scheme which conceives our justification to consist of Christ's observance of the law imputed to us; but even their chief, Dr. John Owen, renounced the sense which modern Evangelicals try to fasten on 2 Peter 1:1.

2 The hypothesis of Justification by the law-keeping of Christ involves the extraordinary consequence that our righteousness is made out in the days of His flesh, before His blood was shed to procure our pardon! But when was a theological idol not mis-shapen and incongruous?

3 The following words contain the discussion referred to: — "Is it the righteousness (justice) of God regarded as a divine attribute, or the righteousness which is bestowed by God upon sinners believing in Christ? I think either gives a consistent interpretation of the passage. On the one hand, the righteousness which God bestows upon believers, derived as it is from the propitiatory offering of Christ, when rightly understood, shows how God is just when He justifies the sinner to whom it is given. And, on the other hand, when the righteousness of God which is manifested is understood to be His justice, the sense of the passage is still easier. Christ was the Lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was not to be sent into the world until the fulness of time was come. His sacrifice was from the first the ground of the forgiveness of sinners; but it was not distinctly made known as the ground upon which they were forgiven until the offering was actually made. And so, though God was really as just in the forgiveness

of sin before as after the coming of Christ, yet His justice was not manifested until Christ was set forth to be a propitiatory offering through His blood — not set forth only to those who witnessed His death, but evidently set forth before the eyes of all to whom the Gospel was preached, crucified among them. So that though I have no doubt that the interpretation which makes the righteousness of God here spoken of the righteousness which He bestows on believers, is defensible, I think it is easier, and therefore better, to interpret it as His justice." — (An Attempt to Explain and Establish the Doctrine of Justification by Faith only, etc. By J. T. O'Brien, D.D., formerly Fellow, etc., now Bishop of Ossory, etc. Second edition, pp. 584, 585.)

4 It is just the same principle in Gal. 3 "They that be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." No man is justified by the law; not merely he is not justified by his own keeping the law, but not in virtue of law at all. To be justified, to live, is by faith. "And the law is not of faith:" they are opposite principles. If not so, what an admirable opening to have told us that Christ kept the law for us, and that His doing it is our life and title to eternal blessedness in heaven! For His legal observance is, according to some, the way, the truth, and the life, the ground necessary to imputing righteousness. But not so. Scripture excludes the idea, insisting that no one is justified by law, and that the law is not of faith; whereas these men say that, though it be nothing for pardon, it is all for righteousness. Had we been Jews, Christ has bought us out of the curse of the law [not a word about fulfilling it for us] that we might receive the promise by faith. Hence the apostle proves that the promise was

independent of the law, and hundreds of years before. The blessing of Abraham, the inheritance, is not by law, but by promise. It is a question, therefore, of the immutability of the promise, not of the law, whatever cavillers may say. The law was a wholly distinct institution, added because of transgressions (in express contrast with our righteousness), till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. Is there inconsistency, then, between the law and the promises of God? There would be, if either life or righteousness were by law. But not so. The Scripture has shut up all (τὰ πάντα) under sin [not transgression merely], that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. Dead silence as to His keeping the law for us! What we are told is, that, before faith came, we [the Jewish believers, not the "ye"] were guarded under law, shut up unto the faith about to be revealed. So that the law was our schoolmaster unto Christ [not a hint of being kept by Him for us], that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and heirs according to the promise, not the law. In chapter 4:4 we do hear that God sent forth His Son, made of woman, made under law. Surely here, if anywhere, one might expect to learn, if it were true, that, so come, He was here keeping the law for us representatively. Not the most distant hint of it! On the contrary, He was sent to redeem, or buy off, those under law [the Jews], that we might receive sonship. Nor this only. "But because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So thou art no longer a bondman, but a son." It is an elaborate argument to exclude law on every side, — law as a principle, — from life, promises,

righteousness, and special relationship. When Christ is introduced in this connection, it is solely as redeeming those under the law from its curse, and never as obeying it for their justification.

5 Few mistranslations have wrought wider or more profound mischief than that which represents 1 John 3:4 The real sense is, “Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.” Violation of a positive command is not merely ἀνομία but παράβασις νόμου, a wholly different and sometimes contrasted idea, as in Rom. 2:12. Ἀνομία of course includes all infraction of law, but it goes incomparably farther, and takes in every exercise of self-will, where and when there may be no promulgated requirement. This explains the universality of sin since the fall according to Scripture; as the Apostle proves of those who died between Adam and Moses, though they had no known code or command from God. Thus, where there is no law, necessarily no transgression can be; yet it would be erroneous and evil thence to infer that, where there is no law, there is no sin. (Compare Rom. 4:15, and chap. 5:13, 14.) As to all this, the moderns are as dark as the fathers or the schoolmen. The common error as to the law naturally led to an erroneous system, both as to justification and the standard of Christian walk.

6 Hence, as all men before conversion, in every age and country, are imagined to be equally under the law, the Gentile no less than the Jew, so the Christian is put under the same law, not (they say) for justification, but for a rule of life. Every whit of the system is false; the whole is a denial in principle both of Judaism and Christianity, of law and gospel, and even of sin and holiness, as taught in God’s word. It is certain, from

Rom. 2, 3, that the Jew is under law in contrast with the Gentile. It is certain, from Rom. 4, 5, that between the fall and Moses not one could be said to be under law. It is certain, from Rom. 6, 7, that the Christian is not under law but under grace, and this not only for justification, but for his walk; so that, even if he had been a Jew, he is become dead to the law and belongs to another, Christ risen: to be connected now with both is spiritual adultery, and leads to bad fruit. Rom. 8 is distinct that God has wrought in Christ the mighty work of condemning sin and delivering ourselves who believe, in order that the δικαίωμα or righteous sum, of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. And, in truth (as we are shown in Gal. 5), walking in the Spirit is the true guard against the lusts of the flesh; and if we are led by the Spirit, we are not under law, and yet we love, in which one word the whole law is fulfilled. For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, etc., against which there is assuredly no law. He that is under law does not love, but breaks the law; while he that loves fulfils the law (Romans 13) without being under it (indeed, by being under grace and not law). For the law is the strength of sin, never of holiness (1 Cor. 15), and applies not to a righteous man, but to the lawless and disobedient. (1 Tim. 1) Those who desire to be law-teachers in our day are evidently, therefore, equally unsound as to justification and the walk of the Christian, and, what is more serious they virtually frustrate God’s grace, and annul for righteousness the death of the Saviour. “For” (says the Apostle) “I through law am dead to the law that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the

faith of the Son of God [not who kept the law for me, but] who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Do you say Christ was only keeping the law in dying on the cross? Then you ignorantly blot out grace and debase the Saviour's infinitely precious death to the mere doing of a man's duty; for the law is just the expression of man's duty to God, not of God's grace to the sinner, nor of the saint's devotedness to God, still less of all Christ did to glorify God in either life or death. But the notion is utterly false. "By the grace of God" [in contrast with His law] Christ tasted death for every man.