Notes on Romans

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Preface and Introduction

With a new translation

Preface.

He who writes a book does in that very act profess, unless he be a thoughtless man, that he has somewhat of profit to offer the reader. To some this might seem unlikely, when ever so slight a survey is taken of the many works written on the Epistle to the Romans. Nevertheless, such is the wealth of the mine, on the one hand, such the faithfulness of God's Spirit, on the other, that I doubt if any servant of Christ has ever seriously sought into that great communication of God through the apostle Paul without results of value for others. By this brief exposition I too trust in the Lord to help souls in the understanding of that which shall never perish, so that they may walk more freely and firmly in His ways. Enough one knows, however little it may be, to be assured how much remains to be gathered by those who may yet labour in faith till the Lord comes.

October 1, 1873.

Introduction

The Epistle to the Romans, though not the highest in its character of truth, more comprehensively than any other sets forth God's glad tidings, and this with a method and depth which attest not merely the style of Paul but the wisdom of the Holy Spirit who inspired the great apostle of the Gentiles. His Son (for so the apostle preached Him from the first, Acts 9:20.) is the object of faith, come of David's seed according to flesh, marked out Son

of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection of the dead. Thus the connection with the Old Testament is maintained, while the way is open for a new order of things through resurrection wherein guilt was removed, sin judged, and life manifested victorious over the enemy in his last stronghold of death, yea, with a title superior to God's eternal judgment.

Then, after presenting himself suitably, as apostle by call to those called at Rome, he testifies his thanks for their faith, and his great desire to see them, whatever the hindrances till then, for their mutual refreshment. He desired fruit there as elsewhere, being debtor to all. He was not ashamed of the gospel (or glad tidings): it is God's power to salvation to every believer, because divine righteousness is revealed in it by faith to faith, as the prophet declared in a dark day for Israel. Thus, if the Son is the object of faith, the believer has part in God's righteousness.1 Man had no righteousness for God, who reveals His to man; and hence it is a question of believing. For His wrath is revealed from heaven against all impiety, and unrighteousness of men holding the truth in unrighteousness: the one embracing every shade of heathenism or ungodliness, the other especially Jews or, as we can now add, Christendom. How deep the need, how grave the danger, of sinful man.

To the end of Romans 1 the Gentiles are convicted of their impiety in a brief but appalling sketch, confirmed too truly by all that remains of antiquity, utterly depraved not only by their lusts and passions but yet more by their idolatry which sanctioned, yea, provoked and even consecrated their worst evils. It will be observed therefore that the apostle does not trace the ruin to the beginning of the world but only since the

flood when men inexcusably slighted the testimony of creation, and, knowing God, glorified Him not as God, but professing to be wise became fools, and setting up idols were given up by the one true God above them, whom they would not serve, to become slaves of every vileness below them.

The opening of Romans 2 looks at the moralists, at men, Gentiles or Jews, who speculated on good but were a prey like others to the wickedness they condemned, despising the riches of God's goodness as they forgot His judgment, with whom is no respect of persons, those who sin without law perishing also without it, and those who sin in it to be judged by it in the day when God judges the secrets of men, according to the apostle's gospel, by Jesus Christ. Here he names the "Jew first" and the "Greek" in judgment, as before in the administration of the gospel. For judgment takes account of all things, and hence of superior advantages, each giving account according to his light and receiving according to his deeds. For salvation is according to grace, reward or judgment according to works. Thus both tests are applied, what they fell from, and what God will bring in at Christ's coming and kingdom. And as wrath revealed from heaven stood in contrast on God's side with earthly judgments in providence, so here on man's side does the judgment of the secrets of the heart.

The Jews are then distinctively and expressly brought forward, who with better light were no better morally, for the name of God was blasphemed on their account. So far is circumcision from availing them against their base inconsistencies that it becomes contrariwise uncircumcision, even as uncircumcision keeping the

requirements of the law should be reckoned for circumcision, judging such as with letter and uncircumcision transgressed law. Sin is shown to be the great leveller, as righteousness does not fail to exalt. A transgressing Jew was as bad as, indeed worse than, a Gentile; a Gentile who wrought righteousness no less acceptable than a Jew. God will have moral reality; and this, wherever found, alone secures His praise.

This raised the question, in Romans 3, of the superiority of the Jew, or of the profit of circumcision. The apostle allows it in every way, and first in being entrusted with the oracles of God. But man's unfaithfulness in no way hinders the certainty or the justice of God's judging the world. Nor do outward privileges in any wise suppose or secure a better condition, though aggravating responsibility. And the fact that what the law or Old Testament says, it speaks to those under it (that is, to the Jews), totally convicts them; for it declares in the plainest terms that there is none righteous, none that understandeth, none that doeth good, all gone out of the way, and no fear of God before their eyes. Thus, as the beginning of the argument proved the Gentiles ruined, so does the end the Jews: the result is, every mouth stopped and all the world under judgment to God. What is His sentence? Is there no mercy? There is His righteousness by Christ Jesus, righteousness which justifies the believer. Doubtless by works of law no flesh shall be justified, for by law is knowledge of sin, the very reverse of sins forgiven, or of righteousness.

Law therefore cannot help Israel, still less a Gentile. What is the resource then? The apostle returns to the thesis which preceded his reasoning, and, with so much the more evidence of its urgent necessity, affirms that

now apart from law God's righteousness is manifested. A truly wonderful statement, in which we have the relation of the gospel to the Old Testament, its universal direction, and its application in fact as being contingent on faith, while it meets all on the ground of sheer ruin and so of pure grace. It proclaims the work of the Lord which answers to the mercy-seat with the atoning blood of Jehovah's lot sprinkled on and before it, thus a righteous ground laying both to justify the forbearance of God in dealing with the saints of old or their sins in past times, and to display now that God is just, while He justifies him that believes in Jesus. By faith boasting is thus excluded, and God is shown to be the God who justifies both Jew and Gentile while law itself is established instead of being made void.

There is nothing to hinder our understanding

δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ in its usual sense of an attribute or quality of God, because it is also δικαιοσύνη ἐκ πιστεως, for indeed it is revealed in the gospel for us to believe, and therefore we could profit by it on no other principle. It is of course χωρὶς νόμου "apart from law" (Rom. 3:21), which, if obeyed, would have been man's, not God's, righteousness. The δωρεά or free giving of righteousness (Rom. 5:17) is perfectly consistent with this: God's grace was the source of this gift; it was no question of one's work or fitness as under law. So Romans 10:3, Philippians 3:9, are both thoroughly in harmony with the fact that the apostle speaks of divine righteousness, or God's consistency with Himself in justifying the believer through the redemption that is in Christ. Undoubtedly it is a righteousness of which He is the author (as Phil. 3:9 teaches), and which He approves; but it is below the mark merely to say this.

For if man be imagined to have obeyed the law, it would have been a righteousness available before God; and man would have lived instead of dying. But this would have been neither eternal life in the Son, nor God's righteousness but man's. Hence the definition of Luther, Calvin, Beza, Reiche, De Wette, etc., is unsatisfactory, as Luther's version, which is a paraphrase expressive of it, is erroneous. A righteousness which God might give or approve need not be His own, which the apostle over and over declares it to be. Of course, it is not divine justice abstractly (which is perhaps the unconscious difficulty of most who approach the subject), but God just in virtue of the Saviour's work. How does He estimate it, how act on it, for the believer? The infusion of divine righteousness has no just sense or appears to confound justification with life; whilst the idea that it means mercy is a poor evasion which weakens the grand truth that not His love only but His justice justifies the believer in Jesus.

The remarkable fact may here be noticed that confessedly the majority of commentators, who shrink from the plain meaning of the phrase in Romans 1:17, and even in Romans 3:21, 22, confess that in verses 25, 26, it does signify, not God's mercy, nor His method of justification or act of justifying (which in Greek is expressed by δικαίωσις), nor that righteousness which is acceptable to God, but His justice. Here this is allowed to be the proper meaning of the terms, and what the context demands. Not merely did justice seem compromised by praetermission of past sins, and therefore require vindication, but the work of Christ had so glorified God in the judgment of sin that it was only just for God to remit sins, yea, to justify him that is of

faith in Christ Jesus. And so, it cannot be denied, the apostle but explains what he means by δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ, when he adds that God set forth Christ a propitiatory, or mercy-seat, that He might be just and justify the believer. If then it be so, that δ. Θ. can only mean God's righteousness where it is fully expounded (as in vers. 25, 26), how unreasonable to give the same phrase a different force in the same context! (Vers. 21, 22, just before.) If this be owned, with what consistency can one question its meaning in Romans 1:17? Even Romans 3:5 makes this apparent, for there beyond controversy the phrase means the consistently of God with His character (that is, His righteousness) in judging the world which rejects Christ, as the other passages show His righteousness in justifying those who believe in His name. Compare also Matthew 6:33, James 1:20. Elsewhere (save in 2 Cor. 5:21, which stands alone in using the abstract for concrete, but otherwise strengthens the same truth) the terms in the Epistles of St. Paul signify God's justice in justifying those who, resting by faith on Jesus and His blood, are accepted in all the value of His acceptance before God.

Romans 4 confirms the principle of faith for justification by the example of Abraham, backed up by David's testimony in Psalm 32; and this before the law or even circumcision. Thus, if the Jews contended for the inheritance by law or ordinances, they must shut him out who had it by promise, and therefore by faith: if they were his children really, they must receive all from God on a ground that ensures the promise to all the seed, Gentile no less than Jewish; and the rather, as in his case and Sarah's they were as good as dead, and their accomplishing of the promise out of the question, that

God alone might be looked to as able to quicken the dead; just as we, Christians, believe, not here simply on Jesus, but on Him that raised from among the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered for our offences, and raised for our justification.

The consequences of being thus justified by faith are stated in the first half of Romans 5: peace with God, His actual grace or favour, and the hope of His glory in which we boast; nor in this only, but in tribulations because of their effect experimentally; yea, finally, boasting in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom now we have received the reconciliation.

But the work of Christ goes much farther than remission of sins or the display of divine love to us in view of guilt, however important it is that we begin with this. Pardon refers to our sins which must otherwise be dealt with in the day of judgment; but there rises also the question of our nature or actual state, not merely of our bad works but of the sin that produced them. Here it is not personal guilt, nor Jews and Gentiles convicted as before, but the race with its head, and the sin which came in by that one man, though each also has his own sins. This clearly brings us up to Adam, though (thank God) also in presence of Christ, the law which came in meanwhile and by-the-by only shaping sins into offences and causing them to abound. Now, if a single man righteously involved all his family in sin and death, who can dispute the righteous title of God that the grace of another man, Christ, should abound to His family for eternal life? Such is the argument from Romans 5:12.

If grace be so rich in every way and for ever, should we continue in sin that grace may abound? It is a denial in

effect of Christianity: so we learn in Romans 6. We that died to sin, how shall we longer live in it? We were buried with Christ by baptism unto death that we should walk in newness of life. Our old man was crucified together that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin. For he that died is justified from sin. Thus we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Sin shall not have dominion, for we are not under law but under grace. Shall we sin then because we are thus? Certainly not. We were slaves of sin, but now, freed from it, we have become slaves of righteousness and of God, have our fruit unto holiness, and the end, worthy of His grace, eternal life.

Romans 7 handles the question of freedom from the law, as it was already shown that grace strengthens against sin, instead of making it a light or open matter. The married woman is bound by law to her husband as long is he is alive: death severs this bond. So are we made dead to the law by the body of Christ that we should belong to another who has been raised from among the dead in order that we might bear fruit to God. We were in the flesh, but now are cleared from the law, being dead to that wherein we were held, so that we should serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter. Observe however that it is not by abrogation of the law but by our death to it, that grace acts.

Not that the law is sin, but sin, getting an occasion or point of attack by the commandment, works every lust, deceives, slays, and also becomes exceeding sinful. But though renewed, the person finds himself without strength, discerns evil in his nature as distinct from himself, delights in the law of God yet sees another law

in his members bringing him into captivity, and so learns in conscious wretchedness the value of Christ for deliverance no less than pardon, though this in no way alters the two natures.

Romans 8 closes the discussion with the fullest statement of the results of Christ's work in death and resurrection for the Christian. Three divisions present themselves: first, the deliverance pursued even to the raising of the mortal body, the Spirit being regarded as characterizing that life and state; secondly, the relations of the Holy Ghost to the Christian as acting in, with, and on him in power and person; and, thirdly, God for us in the face of every trying experience and all hostility from the creature, fully and triumphantly securing us.

First, what a status for those in Christ! The necessary action of their new nature, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, bespeaks their deliverance from the law of sin and death; as again God has already condemned in the cross sin in the flesh, not merely in its outbreak, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For there are persons characterized by each in life and character, the mind of the one death, of the other life and peace; and this, because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God, and they that are in it cannot please Him, while Christians are not in it, but in Spirit, and so, Christ being in them, they hold the body as dead on account of sin, as the Spirit is life on account of righteousness. But even their mortal bodies will be raised on account of His Spirit that dwells in them. Secondly, the Spirit is a Spirit of sonship and an earnest of the glory that is coming, and we meanwhile groan by the Spirit, and God thus finds the mind of the Spirit, not

selfishness, in us, while He makes all work for good. Thirdly, along with God's purpose of conforming us to the image of His Son in glory, we have divine power assuring us so that, come what will, nothing shall separate from His love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 9-11 follow the doctrine, and have for their object to conciliate the special promises to Israel with the indiscriminate grace to sinners as such without exception in the gospel.

In Romans 9 the apostle shows that not he but the Jews could be more justly censured for making light of the peculiar privileges of Israel; as in truth he loved them quite as fervently as Moses. It was a question of God's call in Isaac. Nay, more, we see fleshly right still more manifestly excluded by the blessing of Jacob in disparagement of Esau, and this before the birth of the twins. It is a question thus of sovereign grace. Did they then complain of God's unrighteousness? It was all for Israel, that sovereignty of God: else what had become of them ruined before the golden calf at Sinai, had not God said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy?" On the other hand Pharaoh is the witness of His hardening and judgments. Does man yet find fault because, God acts as He will? This is met by asserting God's title to judge man, and rebuking man's pretension to judge God. He has power; but how does He use it? With the utmost long-suffering toward the vessels of wrath, and in the richest mercy to its vessels, the latter being in themselves no better than the former. Thus mercy calls Gentiles who had no privileges and Jews who had lost all. Hosea and Isaiah, more than once, confirm all, showing not only Gentiles called but Israel stumbling at

the stumbling-stone laid in Zion, while faith only would not be ashamed.

In Romans 10 the apostle expresses his heart's desire on their behalf for salvation. But their zeal was not according to knowledge. They were ignorant of, and did not submit to, God's righteousness, seeking to establish their own. For Christ ends law (and all such efforts are legal) for righteousness to everyone that believes. They speak incompatibly, that which is of law, and what is of faith; but God's righteousness is that of faith, Christ is the ground of it, and salvation the result, which therefore is as open to the Gentile as to the Jew who believed. Hence a testimony was sent out by God; and if few Jews received it, none the less did it go out unto all the earth; and here testimonies thicken from law and prophets to show God found by Gentiles, and Israel disobedient and gainsaying.

Romans 11 proves that the rejection of Israel is neither complete nor final, corroborated by the olive tree which lets us see the cutting off that awaits unfaithful Christendom no less surely than what befell the Jew, but that the Redeemer would yet come out of Zion turning away ungodlinesses from Jacob, and so all Israel be saved, coming in at length as an object of mercy no less than a Gentile. This drew out the transports of the apostle as he thought of the depth of the riches of God's wisdom and knowledge.

From Romans 12 we enter on practical exhortations formally. The apostle beseeches the saints by the compassions of God to present their bodies a living sacrifice, without conformity to this world, but transformed by the renewing of their mind, to cultivate a

sober, not a high, mind, as God dealt to each. For we being many are one body in Christ, and members one of another, with gifts differing which each should occupy himself in. More general calls follow, grace here too reigning through righteousness in the walk and spirit, widening toward men at large which draws out the caution against avenging ourselves: rather should we, as God does, overcome evil with good.

Romans 13 exhibits the relation of the saints to outward government in the world; subjection to what is thus set up of God, whatever it be, in the world, so that to oppose the authority is to resist His ordinance, on account not only of wrath but of conscience also; and on this account paying tribute and to all their dues, owing no man anything but love, the fulfilment of the law. And this too, urged the more by the nearness of the day, in the light of which we should walk, remembering that the night is far spent, and not gratifying flesh which loves the dark.

Then in Romans 14 follows the duty of brotherly forbearance, rendered at Rome in those days the more incumbent because of so many Jews and Gentiles meeting together there as Christians. The weak, as they are called, who were burdened with scruples, were not to judge the strong, who knew their liberty; neither were the strong to despise the weak. Conscience must be respected; Christ is Lord of dead and living: and to God every one of us must give account. Rather let one judge to put no stumbling-block in a brother’s way, nor thus for meat destroy him for whom Christ died. Peace and edification should be sought, but also a good conscience, for whatever is not of faith is sin. The beginning of Romans 15 concludes this question with Him who pleased not Himself but bore the reproaches men cast

on God, thus entitling the Christian to all the comfort of the scriptures which speak of Christ, and strengthening us to receive one another, as Christ did, to God's glory.

Next we have, from verse 8, a statement of God's ways in the gospel justified by the Old Testament, and of his own ministry among us Gentiles, as a reason for thus exhorting them, though giving them credit for goodness and knowledge and ability to admonish one another. From Jerusalem and in a circle round to Illyricum he had fully preached the gospel, and so aiming, not where Christ was named, but where they had not heard of Him; and now that his work was done in the East, his old and strong desire to visit the West, after a deacon's service for the poor of the saints in Jerusalem (for nothing comes amiss to love), revives the hope to see the Roman saints on his way to Spain. But God had plans of His own; and if Paul was not saved from unbelieving brethren after the flesh in Judea, it was but to give him more the fellowship of Christ's sufferings who was delivered to the Gentiles by the Jews.

Romans 16 finishes with commendation of a sister Phoebe, servant of the assembly at Cenchreae, salutations minute and varied in the appreciation of all that was lovely and of good report, and warnings against those who make divisions and stumbling-blocks contrary to the doctrine they had learnt. To turn away from such men eaten up with self-importance is the best answer to their kind speaking and fairness of speech. Here as elsewhere we should be wise to what is good and simple to evil. The God of peace will see to all that is above us, bruising Satan under our feet shortly. How much do we not need the grace of our Lord with us now!

The apostle’s amanuensis, Tertius, adds his salutation, as do a few others. The Epistle closes with a doxology wonderfully suited to all we have had before us, yet intimating truth (not here developed) in harmony with which was his preaching. In the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians is this hidden mystery fully set out, the Epistles to the Corinthians acting as a link of transition, but each in due place and season, and all important for the saint and for the church. To the only wise God through Jesus Christ be glory for ever. Amen.

1 Had a Jew unswervingly obeyed the law, it had been human righteousness and himself accepted accordingly. But in the cross of Christ we see not merely the Father glorified in obedience, but God glorified as to sin, so that He is righteous now in setting Christ at His own right hand and justifying us accordingly by and in Him. This is divine righteousness.

Romans 1

It was ordered in the wisdom of God that no apostle should plant the gospel in the imperial city. Rome cannot boast truthfully of a church apostolic in its origin, like Jerusalem, Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus, and many more less considerable. We know that on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost was first given, there were Roman Jews, sojourning in Jerusalem, who heard the gospel there. (Acts 2; compare also Rom. 16:7.) These may have carried the glad tidings westward, if not before, at least when the persecution that arose on the case of Stephen scattered all save the apostles. We are sure that some who were then dispersed went to Phenice and Cyprus as well as to Antioch, and that at this last place they preached to Greeks and not to Jews only.

But whatever the particular means used to make known Christ there, it is certain that till Paul wrote and afterwards came to Rome, no apostle had visited that city. Yet an evidently considerable number of saints were there; and, in my judgment, the epistle itself affords clear and full indication that they consisted of persons from among Jews as well as Gentiles.

These were among the circumstances which drew out an epistle from the great apostle which yields to no other in importance. Hence have we here so comprehensive a treatise, and withal so fundamental; not on Church relationship, but man’s state as a sinner, and then his justification by the work and death and resurrection of Christ; that is, the privileges of individual saints through redemption, as well as the total ruin of man and his need of this mighty intervention of God in the gospel. Had the

apostle laid the foundation of the work at Rome, had he gone there, as he had ardently wished, to impart some spiritual gift, we could scarcely have had such a development as we now possess. For in either case he would naturally have taught them face to face what is now embodied for ever in the epistle. Before he could pay them a visit and establish them orally, their state called out this remarkable fulness of truth from the rudiments of truth upwards. Their mingled composition of Jews and Gentiles required the question of the law to be solved as to both justification and walk, as well as the reconciliation of the actual display of indiscriminate grace in the gospel with the special promises to Israel. It demanded a full explanation of human responsibility, whether in Jew or in Greek. For the same reason too it was needed, here especially, to set forth chiefly in exhortation the general walk of the Christians in relation to each other and to the powers that be (at that time heathen), with the peremptory claims of holiness on the one hand, and on the other the true nature and limits of brotherly forbearance in things indifferent.

The salutation or address of the apostle is unusually full. “Paul, a bondman of Jesus Christ, a called apostle, separated unto God’s gospel, which he promised before by his prophets in holy scripture, concerning his Son, that came of David’s seed as to flesh, that was marked out God’s Son in power as to spirit of holiness by resurrection of [the] dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom we received grace and apostleship, for obedience of faith among all the nations, in behalf of his name; among whom are ye also, called of Jesus Christ: to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called saints, grace to

you and peace from God our Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ." (Ver. 1-7.)

"Bondman of Jesus Christ" is the boast of one who knew the true holy liberty of grace as perhaps no other heart was taught and enjoyed so well. This was a general designation and should be true, is true, of each Christian. But. Paul next speaks of himself as a "called apostle." Apostleship was not successional like a Jewish priest, nor elect of the assembly like the seven who cared for tables at Jerusalem: still less was it a question of self-assumption He was an apostle by calling as the saints were called. (Ver. 7.) No doubt, from his mother's womb Saul of Tarsus had been separated, as he was afterwards called by God's grace. But here it appears to me that the separation was more distinctly "for God's gospel," and therefore may refer rather to Acts 13:2. God's glad tidings is a precious truth, the direct and explicit contradiction of man's natural thought of Him who gives to all liberally and upbraids not. Doubtless this can only be in and through Christ; still it is God who loves, gives, sends, it is His gospel. What a blessed starting-point for the apostle! What an exhaustless fountain-head!

But if the fulness of spontaneous and active love in God toward man be a truth ever new by reason of the constant prevalence of human thoughts even in the saints, it was no new thing to God. (Ver. 2.) It was late in the world's history when this gospel went forth; but He had promised it before through His prophets in holy writ — through the prophets who ever appear of old when all on man's part was hopeless. So one of the earliest that wrote prophecies said, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help. I will be thy king; where is

any other that may save thee?" So another, the last of them, wrote, "I am Jehovah, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Had the Jews, had the priests even, despised His name? "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles." Such is a sample of what He proclaimed beforehand through His prophets. Space would fail to cite even a small portion. What went before as far as this verse notices was God's promise (for the law is not yet touched on); His gospel is not promise but accomplishment. Before Christ and His work, it could not be more than promised. Now, whatever be the promises, in Him is the Yea and in Him the Amen.

How can these things be? What can account either for such precious promises, or for the still more precious accomplishment on which God's gospel is founded and goes forth to man? The answer is clear, worthy, and amply sufficient. All turns on the Son of God: His glad tidings are concerning Him. (Ver. 3.) His person comes before us here in two ways: first, as born of the seed of David according to the flesh which He had condescended to; secondly, as defined or declared Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection. These two views of our Lord are respectively in relation to what we have just seen, — the promises and the gospel. The true Beloved, the Son of David, came, object and fulfiller and fulfilment of every promise of God; but man, and especially the people who had the promises, received Him not, but cast Him out even to death, the death of the cross. God, infinitely glorified therein, raised Him up who had already raised dead persons, and will raise all. "For as the Father

raiseth up the dead and quickeneth, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." Thus in every way resurrection marks Him out as Son of God in power, pre-eminently so when He rose in His own person after being crucified in weakness, and this according to the Spirit of holiness which characterized Him all the days of His flesh. Thus, as the coming of Christ was the presentation of the promise, God's gospel supposes not only the divine glory of His person but the mighty power of His resurrection which demonstrates the value and efficacy of His death. (Ver. 4.) In life sin and Satan touched Him not, who ever walked in the Spirit and according to the word of God; on the cross, made sin for us, He annulled him who had the power of death, though resurrection alone adequately determines His power and glorious person.

Jesus consequently, risen from the dead in power, acts as Lord and Christ, "our Lord," "by whom we have received grace and apostleship." (Ver. 5.) It is He who sends from on high. As once on earth, Lord of the harvest, He sent forth first the twelve and afterwards other seventy also; so ascended He gave gifts to men. Nor was it only that the apostolic call was itself a mark of grace. In Paul's case the grace that arrested and quickened him to God was at one and the same time with the choice of him as a witness to all men of what he had seen and heard. Such a call could not, so to speak, but be of deeper character and larger sphere than that of others who had been appointed of the Lord while here below. Hence it was "for obedience of faith" (not exactly that which faith leads and strengthens to, but faith — obedience, the heart bowing to the divine message of His grace) "in all the nations" as the scene of testimony. Taken out from

among the people and the nations, to these last the Lord sent him, as we are told in Acts 26. Again, we are here told, it was “for” or “on behalf of the name of Christ.”

Such was his passport: what was theirs? “Among whom are ye also, called of Jesus Christ.” They were among the nations, and his commission was toward all the nations. Was he a called apostle? So were they saints, not by birth nor by ordinance, but by the call of Jesus Christ who had called him as apostle. (Ver. 6.)

This entitled Paul then to address “all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called saints;” this made it his heart’s joy, as it was the Holy Ghost’s inspiring him, to wish them “grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ver. 7.) These privileges they had tasted already through the faith of Christ; but the apostle owns himself their debtor and proceeds to put to their account that which would enrich them exceedingly. May we too enjoy increasingly Him who is their source through the One who alone can make Him known!

Take any part of the Old Testament and compare it with these opening words. How evident and immense the difference, aim, character, and scope! One may well wonder this never occurred to those who would assimilate the testimony of God and state of man before and after the coming of Christ. What is there, for instance, like it in the five books of Moses, or the historical books that follow? In vain do you search the Psalms and other poetical books for a parallel. Not even the prophets describe or predict such a state of things. Glorious things are spoken for Israel; mercy from God which will not fail to reach and bless the poor Gentiles; deliverance and joy for the long-travailing earth and

lower creation in general: — all this and more we have abundantly from the prophets and even in the Psalms. But there is nothing resembling the tone even of the Apostle's salutation and preface to the Roman saints, any more than what meets us in the rest of the epistles of the New Testament. A new thing was before God here below, answering to a new thing, the greatest of all, in heaven — His own Son, as man who was risen and gone on high after having expiated our sins on the cross. From this, as the central object, the Holy Ghost works, sent down to make God known in Christ come and gone, and to give believers a part in the infinite work Christ has effected for them. This revealed object conforms the hearts that know it, though not all equally, yet all in measure after its own nature. Such is Christianity.

Here, as everywhere in the epistles, illustrations, examples, and proofs abound; not that there was not faith before, not that the Spirit did not at all times work suitably to God's character and dealings. Hence there never was a day of difficulty or darkness of old which did not give occasion for some worthy display of God's wisdom and goodness, and this through, as well as to, those that knew Him in His grace. But these displays were of course according to the task He had then in hand, whether before the flood or after it, whether in the time of simple promise or after the law was given, whether amidst the sorrows of the captivity or when the Messiah was presented to the responsibility of the returned remnant in the land. Certainly for saints now as of old there are objective truths, there are traits of inward experience and of outward practice, which always abide in substance. But this identity in much that is of no small moment only makes the fact the more

striking that there are differences of incalculable importance, not merely for us but as connected with God's glory. Who could conceive before redemption such feelings, thoughts, language as we have here before us? Who that has the smallest spiritual perception could think of Enoch or Noah, Isaac or Jacob, Moses or Joshua, David or Solomon, Isaiah or Jeremiah, yea even Peter or John in the days of our Lord's ministry, uttering such words as these to saints at Rome, many of them Gentiles? "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all that your faith is proclaimed in the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you, always at the time of my prayers entreating, if by any means now at length I shall be prospered by the will of God to come to you: for I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift in order to your being established; that is, to be comforted mutually in you by the faith in each other, both yours and mine." (Ver. 8-12.)

Entirely independent of fleshly tie or national connection or a school of opinion or any other relationship of time, it was a bond which, resting on the unseen and eternal, knit the heart of him who wrote to souls for the most part never seen before. An affection ardent and sustained continually bore them on his heart before God and delighted in the good report of their faith announced in the whole world, as it then might easily be from that seat of central authority which made its will and mind felt to and beyond the extremities of its vast empire. Hence his longing to see them for no selfish interest but for their spiritual blessing through the faith which produces and reproduces joy now in the midst of rejection, and blessing that will never fade or be

forgotten. Such were among the effects of God's gospel now realized in and expressed by him who, without that blessed knowledge of Christ, had been the fiercest zealot of the straitest sect of the Pharisees, persecuting to prison and death all that dared even of his own nation to call on the name of Jesus of Nazareth; now the untiring herald of divine grace, in that same Jesus dead and risen, as unlimited as the sin and misery of man; the warm sympathizer with God-given faith in all who bore that despised name. He himself was emphatically a man of faith — faith working by love which sought not theirs but them, not this world's ease or honour but God's will and glory in the good of souls, everlastingly indeed but now also, not as if it were a doubtful essay but a willing blessing from the God whose grace he knew for himself and could count on for all His children.

Fervour of affection too was natural, so to speak, to one thus living with God, "my God," while in this world, joy (not in iniquity, as wretched flesh delights in what is of and like itself, but) in what was of God "through Jesus Christ," though only known by report everywhere. "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed in the whole world." He could appeal to God for the best of all evidences of his thankfulness to Him for it, and love to them. "For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son." His mention of them was incessant, always beseeching on occasion of his prayers, that, if God so pleased, he might somehow be permitted now at least to visit them. What evident and godly sincerity! What motives wrought of the Spirit in one who owned himself the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints!

Mark the change of expression here in passing. It is the gospel of God's Son now, not simply of God, however beautiful this was in its place. (Ver. 1.) But now the apostle is not thinking of the source which characterized the glad tidings, but of the manner and means in which His grace wrought to deliver the lost. It was therefore the gospel of His Son as well as His own. Here, too, the apostle names his own serving God "in my spirit;" i.e., not with mere outward works or a bare sense of imperious duty, but with inwardly active and intelligent devotedness in the glad tidings of God's Son.

One of this world's sages has dared to impute to the holy apostle pious craft and holy flattery; but this was, no doubt, a judgment founded on his own spirit and his incapacity of appreciating the delicate feelings which grace renders easy and habitual. Not so: though the apostle had his commission from the Lord to the Gentiles as such, he would exercise it according to Christ. It is the tact of tender love toward those who were saints of God in such a place, not the manoeuvring of a skilful party-leader, which we see here, when he tells them of his strong desire to see them — that he might impart some spiritual gift in order to their establishment: that is, as he explains, to be mutually comforted among them by each other's faith, both theirs and his. Yet the will of God governed his steps, whatever might be his affectionate longing after their good.

Nor was it a new thing, this desire to see them. "Now I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, that I often proposed to come to you (and was hindered hitherto), that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among the other Gentiles. Both to Greeks and Barbarians, both to wise and to unintelligent, I am

debtor; so, as far as concerns me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that [are] in Rome." (Ver. 13-15.) Whatever might be the special preoccupation which hindered the apostle's execution of what was in his heart, God manifestly did not mean the great western city, the capital of the world, to have an early visit of one in Paul's position. If he owned the debt of love to all nations and conditions, certainly Rome could not but have attractions, especially as some already called out from the world were there. On his part, then, there was no reluctance but all readiness to go to Rome.

Let none imagine that the grandeur of that great city kept him back through awe of it or shame of Christ. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, both to Jew first and to Greek." (Ver. 16.) All else was but man, or appealed to man. The gospel was God's power for saving, not a mere rule to condemn. Consequently it went out to every one that believes, Jew or Greek, though to Jew first who had the law and the promises too. Such was the order even for the great apostle of the uncircumcision, at least while the first tabernacle subsisted.

"For God's righteousness is revealed in it by faith unto faith, even as it is written, But the just shall live by faith." (Ver. 17.)

This verse is so important in itself, of so large a bearing on the epistle as well as the doctrine of the gospel elsewhere, and withal so perplexed by the conflicting thoughts even of true believers, not to speak of theologians of all schools, that it demands and will

surely repay our careful consideration in dependence on our God.

The first thing to be remarked is that

δικαιοσύνη does not mean justification, but here at least, as in most passages where this phrase occurs, righteousness, and this justifying. It is therefore kept distinct by the apostle from δικαίωσις (Rom. 4:25; Rom. 5:18.), which expresses the act of justifying, or the effect — justification; as δικαίωμα sets forth accomplished righteousness in justification or in judgment, righteous requirement whether morally or as an ordinance or decree. (Luke 1:6; Rom. 1:32; Rom. 2:26; Rom. 5:16, 18; Rom. 8:4; Heb. 9:1, 10; Rev. 15:4; Rev. 19:8.) Thus δικαιοσύνη retains its regular signification of habit or quality of righteousness.

Next, observe that it is

Θεοῦ, God's righteousness, not man's — divine righteousness revealed in the gospel, not human righteousness required in the law. There is no question here either of infusion or of imputation. As for infusion,2 it is wholly wrong; as to imputation, it is a precious truth insisted on in Romans 4, where the apostle draws from the case of Abraham that the believer's faith is reckoned for (or as) righteousness. For God in His grace can afford to justify the ungodly soul who believes on Him — can and does reckon righteousness to him apart from works, according to Psalm 32.

Here, however, the apostle does not enter on an exposition of the ground on which God could consistently with His character justify a sinful man. But as he had declared he was not ashamed of the gospel because it is God's power for salvation to every believer

Jew or Greek, so he now explains that it has this saving character because God's righteousness is revealed in it "by faith," and consequently "to faith."

In Titus 2 the apostle looks at the source of the gospel. It is the grace of God. Lost man needs that saving grace which is only in God and has now appeared free and full in Christ Jesus and His redemption. But here in Romans 1 the stress is on His righteousness, not on His mercy, though indeed it is the richest mercy, but it is much more. In the gospel is His righteousness revealed. The awakened sinner does repent, does detest his sins, judges himself as wholly and nothing but evil in God's sight, and so humbly, thankfully casts himself on Christ. But in the gospel is revealed not the victory of the soul striving against sin, but God's righteous consistency with Himself in revealing to the believer a salvation entirely outside himself and therefore ἐκ πίστεως, by or of faith, out of that principle and no other. Sovereign grace alone could have thought of it, or given it thus freely to him who deserved nothing less; but the conscience of the sinner touched of the Spirit could not have peace whilst a charge of guilt remained. The righteousness of God, without the gospel, would and must have made a short work of the guilty — most have judged them at once and for ever. But the gospel is God's power for salvation because in it is His righteousness revealed in the way of faith. Were it by works of law man must win and merit life, but it is wholly in contrast with such a scheme, and man, being guilty and so lost on any such ground, disappears, save as the object of God's salvation which now triumphs in the blessed fact that it is His righteousness also. Hence it is of faith that it might be according to grace, and so

open to any and every believer; for as we are told elsewhere (Gal. 3.) “the law is not of faith;” and it works wrath. (Rom. 4.) Clearly, then, there is great precision, as ever in the language of Scripture. Human righteousness is expressly excluded, as it would be indeed inconsistent with the entire context, which supposes man to be lost, if it were only because the gospel is God’s power for salvation: and which immediately after (ver. 18 et seqq.) proceeds to demonstrate the universality and completeness of man’s ruin. The gospel is the revelation of divine righteousness.3 It is God who justifies, and He is just in justifying, him who believes.

It is of immense moment to see this great truth. It is not merely a righteousness which God provides and gives, or which avails with Him,4 though both be quite true. The meaning is, what the words say — “God’s righteousness” — without for the present going farther. Who doubts the force of God’s power just before, or God’s wrath just after? Why should men stumble at the similar phrase between? Romans 3:21-26 is explicit enough to help to a definite judgment.

One reason of the difficulty is that some never seem to think of righteousness apart from imputation; and as we cannot speak of imputing God’s righteousness, so they, in their own mind, change the expression of Scripture and prefer to express their thought as the “imputed righteousness of Christ,” which again leaves room for other consequences. Now as a principle we must hold to the superiority of Scripture and the forms which the inspiring wisdom of God has given to His own truth. That Christ was absolutely and perfectly righteous every Christian believes; that imputation has a most weighty

place in the matter of our justification is to my mind both undeniably certain and essential to the gospel. Nevertheless, the truth remains that, where God's righteousness occurs in Scripture, imputation is not employed. Nor do I believe it could be; because as God's righteousness could not be inherent, so on the other hand imputing God's righteousness has no meaning.5 Here it is His righteousness revealed in the gospel. Chapter 3 shows how this can be righteously. Being not merely deficient but guilty sinners, we cannot be justified without the blood of Christ dying in atonement for our sins. Hence, therefore, entirely apart from law, divine righteousness is by faith of Him who thus wrought redemption, and God is just and justifies him who is of faith in Jesus. But God was so glorified in the cross of Christ, that He raised Him up and seated Him in glory at His own right hand — not only forgave us, but seated us in Christ in heavenly places. This is God's righteousness, which is revealed to faith. Nothing less is righteously due to Christ because of His redemption work. It is the contrast of law — work in all respects. God is righteous in treating not Christ only but the believer in Him according to the worth of redemption in His own eyes. By virtue of His work God accounts us righteous who believe; we are made the righteousness of God in Him.

At Sinai, in the law, man's righteousness was claimed but found wanting. In the gospel God's righteousness is revealed, complete and perfect. Promised before, it was only revealed when all was accomplished which is its ground. Being revealed, it is a question of faith, not of desert nor victory, nor power within, but contrariwise of looking out of self to God's righteousness in Christ.

As divine righteousness is revealed by faith (

ἐκ πίστεως), so is it unto or for faith (

εἰς πίστιν): the one excluding works of law as the way or principle on which it is revealed; the other including faith wherever it may be, and whatever the measure. It is singular that the Authorized Version should give “from faith” here and “by faith” for the same phrase in the same verse. The former appears to me objectionable in this connection; because it insinuates the idea of growth from one degree of faith to another, as some ancients and moderns have avowed. On the other hand, to take ἐκ π. (by faith) with δ. Θ. (God’s righteousness) is due perhaps to the difficulty some have found in assigning to each phrase its own definite value.

Again, the reader must beware of the notion which some found on the present tense of the verb ἀποκαλύπτεται, as if it warrants the idea of a gradually more complete realization of the state of justification.6 I do not doubt that faith grows and so apprehension and enjoyment of our blessing in Christ, but the thing revealed in the gospel to faith is complete: divine righteousness repudiates any other thought, whatever may be the measure in which the heart apprehends it.

Not even a Jew could deny that the prophet Habakkuk (2:4) affirms the same principle; and the slight difference from both the Hebrew and the Septuagint bears witness, it seems to me, that these words are cited for so much and no more: “even as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

The apostle next proceeds to show what it was that made the gospel so necessary to man and so suitable to God. The gospel is God’s power to salvation, and so a

revelation of His righteousness, ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν. When man evidently had, or was convicted of having, no righteousness for God, He revealed His own in the gospel, which was consequently open for faith wherever it existed, being by faith, and not by works of law, to which the Jew laid claim. To this truth also the prophet Habakkuk gave his emphatic testimony.

That God should thus deal with man was absolutely needful if man were to find salvation. “For God’s wrath is revealed from heaven upon all impiety and unrighteousness of men that hold the truth in unrighteousness.”

The fathers and the children of Israel were not without experience of divine wrath on earth. They had seen it consume the cities of the plain of Sodom. They had known His wondrous chastisements in the field of Zoan till the waters of the Red Sea, rebuked for their sakes, covered their proud enemies, so that not one was left. They had felt its edge when the Lord created a new thing, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up quickly Korah, Dathan, and Abiram with their company. Man, the race, had already proved it indeed in the flood which took them all away, save those secured in the ark. But these and other kindred acts of judgment of old were providential and earthly. There was as yet no revelation of God’s wrath from heaven. These divine actings were visible in their effects if not arresting men before the eyes of their fellows on earth.

Now, concurrently with the glad tidings, not exactly therein, divine wrath is revealed from heaven (ver. 18.). This is in no way executed yet, but it is being revealed; and man, being sinful, is seen to be utterly, manifestly,

unfit for God's presence. God Himself is no longer hidden. He has been manifested in flesh: the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him." His nature thus disclosed is absolutely intolerant of sin, as it must be also of sinners, but for His righteousness revealed in the gospel, which justifies the believer by the faith of Christ. Still the same Christ, whose atonement is the groundwork of the gospel, makes known God as He is, and nowhere more proved to be at war for ever with evil than in the cross, where Jesus who knew no sin, yet made sin for us, tasted not death only but the divine abandonment, that our sins might be dealt with according to the unsparing judgment of God. Hence, along with the gospel, there is revealed His wrath from heaven, which goes far beyond any conceivable temporal strokes of His hand on earth; for these (though of course a testimony to, and as far as they went in harmony with, this nature) were but a part of His governmental dealings, not the full expression of His nature as when we come to the expiation of Christ.

Hence this divine wrath revealed from heaven has for its object every kind of godlessness (πᾶσαν ἀσέβειαν) and especially men's unrighteousness that hold the truth in unrighteousness. It is no longer a particular nation under a law which judged acts of transgression, though it gave the knowledge of a sinful root underneath, while the rest of the nations were comparatively overlooked. 'Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." (Amos 3:1, 2.) The veil is rent; and God shining out, as it were, discerns and

judges all everywhere inconsistent with Himself. At the same time He sends in the gospel a free and full remission of sins to every believer. Thus, while every form of Gentile evil is morally judged as contrary to God's nature, the Jew, if unrighteous, is implied from the outset to be in a yet more awful condition. "Salvation is of the Jews." They had the promises, and the law, and in part at least the truth. But the language is so comprehensive as to be quite as applicable, if not more so, to the professing Christian now with his enlarged light, grace, and the truth more fully revealed in Christ. Increase of privileges, if abused, is but increase of condemnation. And what more just, the enemies of God themselves being judges and the cause their own? Thus it seems to me that πᾶσαν ("all") extends to the second part of the description as well as to the first, and embraces every sort of unrighteousness where men hold the truth in unrighteousness, no less than every kind of impiety. Such men might not be strictly impious; they possess the truth; but along with this, being unrighteous, they cause the truth and name of God to be thereby blasphemed.

Some find a difficulty in the last clause, and, assuming that κατεχόντων, if here taken in the sense of "holding," must have it only in the lowest degree, they contend for the meaning of "holding back" or restraint as in 2 Thessalonians 2:6, 7, which they persuade themselves is suitable to our context. My conviction is that κατέχω retains here its usual emphasis of possession or holding fast, where moral things are in question, and that this is necessary to the solemn lesson here conveyed. For the apostle is speaking of God's wrath as against not merely all impiety in general but specifically men's

unrighteousness who ever so stubbornly keep the truth in unrighteousness. God is not mocked. His Spirit is the Holy Spirit as well as the Spirit of truth. He must have the truth held in righteousness; for otherwise it is not Christ, the Second Man, but only the first man in another shape, and in a shape pre-eminently hateful to Himself. How many feel keenly, dispute hotly, and in other days have contended in deadly warfare for the truth they held, whose works denied God, being abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate! The Jews were a standing witness of this perilous religion then: Christendom, Popery, Protestantism, the truest dogmatic reaching you please, is not a whit safer now, where the professor does not pursue holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Nothing can be simpler and more certain than this truth, once it is stated and understood. But the value of it is apparent from the fact that the Fathers so-called, almost if not quite unanimously, overlooked and denied it. Their system, even that of pious and able men like Augustine, was that the wicked, though lost, would derive some considerable assuagement during their everlasting punishment because of their baptism. Most fatal and offensive error! The very reverse is true. “That servant which knew his lord’s will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew it not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”

Again, this verse is not, as some suppose, limited as a preface to the proof of Gentile depravity; it is rather the thesis in brief, which is opened out in the rest of Romans 1, 2, 3, down to verse 21, which resumes the treatment of God's righteousness, and begins the details of that which we had in Romans 1:17. I understand, therefore, that verse 18 gives first the general description of human ungodliness in every phase, and then the unrighteousness which was at that time most conspicuous in the Jews who combined with practical injustice a tenacious hold or possession of the truth: the former demonstrated to the end of Romans 1; the latter (after the transition of Rom. 2:1-16.) pursued from Romans 2:17 to Romans 3:20. Had this two-fold aspect been apprehended in the verse before us, the rendering of the Authorized Version would not have been deserted for "restraining the truth by unrighteousness," which is a sense framed to meet the condition of the heathen who were supposed here to be alone in the apostle's view. The same misconception wrought mischief in lowering the character both of the revelation of God's wrath from heaven, and of the truth in order to meet paganism. Admit the universal scope of the moral description with a specific reference to those who held the truth in unrighteousness, and the sense which results is as easy as it is all-important, the fitting introduction to the entire episode that follows till the apostle takes up his proper theme, God's righteousness revealed in the gospel.

The apostle next proceeds to set forth the proofs of the guilt of men, because of which the wrath of God awaits them. And first he takes up impiety, or the evil which characterized the vast majority of the world, as later on

he addresses himself to that subtler iniquity which consisted in holding the truth along with practical unrighteousness, then found among Jews as now in Christendom. This division of the subject, it will be seen, is not only closer to the language of the context but it preserves us from the mistake of such as attribute a knowledge of “the truth” to the heathen as such. In fact verse 19 begins with the earlier of the two classes of evil we have seen distinguished in verse 18, and the subject is pursued to the end of the chapter. It is distinctively the Gentile portion, and presents the moral ground which necessitated and justified the unsparing judgment of God.

Two reasons are assigned why His wrath is thus revealed upon all impiety. The first (ver. 19, 20.) is their inexcusable neglect of the testimony of creation to His eternal power and divinity; the second (ver. 21.), their abandonment of the traditional knowledge of God they had as late as the day of (not Adam, but even) Noah. Thus man was unfaithful to knowledge he possessed and to evidence around him.

“Because what is to be known of God is manifest among them, for God hath manifested it to them. For the invisible things of him from the world’s creation are perceived, being understood by his work, both his eternal power and divinity, so that they should be inexcusable.” The general force is plain. A few expressions may call for more detailed explanation. Τὸ γνωστόν means here, I think, not the knowledge (

ἡ γνῶσις) or what was known of God, but, as the English Version, “that which may be known” of Him. It is the knowable rather than the known. The evidence was

ample and distinct, but their eyes were dull. Next, I see no sufficient ground to take the phrase ἐν αὐτοῖς in an emphatic sense, but in one more general. Had self-knowledge been appealed to, as many conceive, it appears to me that the proper word for subjective knowledge must have been employed, and, further, the reflexive pronoun. It was expressly an objective character of knowledge which lay open in the midst; and this is confirmed by the added intimation — "for God manifested it to them," not the action of conscience, which finds its more appropriate place in Romans 2 where moral perception and conduct is discussed.

But how did God manifest to men what may be known to Him? This is answered in verse 20. For His invisible things, not all of course, but His eternal power and divinity, since the creation of the world, are perceived, being mentally apprehended by His works. The things He made were before all eyes, and, as we know, did not fail to produce convictions far above the ordinary strain of human thought prostrated by superstition and bewildered by philosophy: so much so that even the famous positivist of ancient times could not write his treatise on the world without affirming that "God, though He is invisible to every mortal being, is seen from the works themselves."

The phrase,

ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου, "from the world's creation," can signify the foundation or source of the suggestion as easily and surely as the earliest starting point of time; but the latter seems to me preferable here, because the things made by God are immediately afterwards named

as furnishing the groundwork for the mind to infer their Maker by.

Again, it is notorious that

θειότης (from

θεῖος, divine), here translated “Godhead” in the Authorized Version, has a wholly different force from θεότες (from Θεός, God) in Colossians 2:9. In the latter case it would quite fall short of the apostle’s object to predicate divinity of the person of Christ: all the fulness of the Deity, or Godhead in the strictest sense, he says, dwells in Him bodily. In the former case, there is no such distinct personality supposed, but the more general sense that man may gather of a nature not creaturely but creatorial as evidenced in His works, the fruit of His power. It is a real, though the lowest, kind of testimony.

The next ground is not the knowable but the positively known. “Because, having known God, they glorified him not as God, nor were thankful, but became vain in their reasonings, and their unintelligent heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into7 a likeness of an image8 of corruptible man and birds and quadrupeds and reptiles.” (Ver. 21-23.) A traditional knowledge of God is in question; and as the former regarded man with evidence from the beginning calculated and adequate to indicate a divine First Cause, so the objective knowledge of God here spoken of was the portion of man even after the flood: indeed not till after that mighty event do we hear of idolatry. But man was unequal to the task of preserving the holy deposit; and this, because of his moral state. When they did know God, they neither glorified Him as such, nor were they thankful. This left

room for vain reasonings, which again darkened the heart instead of leading it into light. It was the self-sufficiency, and so the folly, of the creature. For light is only seen in God's light, and man must sink into darkness when not morally elevated by looking up to One above him. The humbling proof appeared too soon; and philosophy but sealed the evil to which superstitious fear led the way. An unacknowledged Supreme was rapidly forgotten, and the glory of the incorruptible God exchanged for a likeness of an image of corruptible man, yea, into objects ever lowering till creation's lords, now the victims of this debasing delusion, worship the most loathsome reptile which eats the dust.

How admirably these few words refute the theory of progress in which the would-be wise have indulged in ancient and in modern times: a theory as contrary to their own vaunted reason as to fact. For what a Being could He be who would leave His intelligent and morally responsible creature, man, to grope his cheerless miserable way from the horrors of nature worship, and the darkness of polytheism, to juster notions of Himself and His attributes! Where is the wisdom, where the love, where the justice of such a scheme? The error consists in reasoning from progress in material things, or even from the intellectual domain, to moral condition: progress in those Scripture admits since the fall which means the very reverse in this. No: man departed more and more from God till the flood; after it he gave up the knowledge of God for the worship of the creature. The race fell into ever increasing error and evil, till a partial revelation by Moses and the complete manifestation of God in Christ judged morally the heathen world, proving its declension, not progress, its insensibility to right

reason, and its departure from true traditions into the degradation of idolatry.

The consequence of idolatry is invariably under the moral judgment of God utter uncleanness among its votaries; and this in all its varieties but perhaps most conspicuously, as a divine retribution, among those who set up the human form, — “corruptible man,” — though it was certainly not wanting where they worshipped that which was beneath man, birds, quadrupeds, and reptiles, alone or combined.

“Wherefore also God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness to dishonour their bodies among them [-selves], who changed the truth of God for falsehood and venerated and served the creature more than the Creator who is blessed for ever, Amen.” (Ver. 24, 25.) If the soul abandons the truth of God, all is wrong, whatever appearances may say for the present. This was the great falsehood. Not to be in dependence and obedience is to be false to the relationship of a creature. Yet is there a step still farther down in evil, — the giving to the creature the honour that belongs to God only. It is exactly, and in this order, what Satan did, who was a liar from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, for there was no truth in him. Fallen man does his own will and is simply thus the slave of Satan. It may be in lusts, or in a religion of his own imagination, the one evidently degrading him, the other promising to elevate. But in truth it is Satan’s, not God’s promise, and is the full absolute lie which seals him up in all moral degradation not only for mind but for the body also. Such was heathenism, from which Judaism was powerless to deliver man, though a witness against his state. For God as yet dwelt behind a veil, and if at times

He disclosed His way without a veil, it was but angelically, which is only a healing testimony to the sin-sick and not the quickening power needed by man, by all dead in trespasses and sin. (Comp. John 5.) God revealed in Christ, and this in eternal life as well as redemption, alone meets the case. Such is Christianity as now brought home and enjoyed in the power of the Holy Ghost, who accordingly puts more abundant honour on our uncomely parts and for the first time develops the vast importance of the body in God's service. See Romans 6, 12; 1 Corinthians 6, 15; 2 Corinthians 5, etc.

"On this account God gave them up unto passions of dishonour; for both their females changed the natural use into the contrary of nature, and likewise also the males, leaving the natural use of the female, burned in their desire toward one another; males with males working out unseemliness, and fully receiving in themselves the recompense of their error which was due." (Ver. 26, 27.) In this graphic but most grave sketch of the humiliating picture, which the classics fill up in so different a tone (for "the unjust knoweth no shame"), the weaker vessel comes first, as indeed the shamelessness was there most apparent and human depravity proved most complete and hopeless. The apostle does not deign to characterize them (though the greatest and highest, sages of earth, monarchs, conquerors, poets, philosophers, and what not) as men and women, but as "females" and "males," characterized by ways below the brute, given up of God, and even now enduring the meet reward of their deeds.

"And even as they approved not to have God in knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to

do things unbecoming; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, guile, ill-disposition; whisperers, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boasters, inventors of mischiefs, disobedient to parents, without understanding, perfidious, without natural affection, unmerciful; who, well knowing the righteous decree of God that those who do such things are worthy of death, not only do them but also take complacency in those who do them." (Ver. 28-32.) What pit of immorality can be lower than this last?

The word

ἀδόκιμος is here as elsewhere translated "reprobate," as this well suits the phrase and contrasts their not approving to retain God in their knowledge with His giving them over to a "disapproved" mind. But it may rightly bear an active sense, and would then mean an "undiscerning" mind, as the sentence on their presumption in rejecting God after pretending to test and try the matter. It will be observed that in verse 29 I have omitted on good external authority πορνείᾳ ("fornication"), as the internal appears to me to turn the scale against it. As for the resemblance to πονηρίᾳ, it might act either in giving room to its insertion by mistake, or to its omission. But I think that the first class consists of personal evil; the second of that which is relative; as the third brings out, not roots of moral pravity, abstractedly viewed, whether personal or relative, but developed wicked characters, and this in an order neither unsystematic nor difficult to discern. Ἀσπόνδους is deficient in authority, being omitted in the best and most ancient manuscripts. "Implacable" is therefore left out of verse 31. It was probably introduced

here because of its connection with ἄστοργοι in 2 Timothy 3:3.

2 This is the Romish or Tridentine doctrine, which, though it uses the phrase “righteousness of God,” means thereby inherent righteousness wrought by the Spirit of God in the heart of man, expressly “non qua ipse justus est, sed qua nos justos facit, qua videlicet ab eo donati renovamur spiritu mentis nostrae, et non modo reputamur sed vere justi nominantur et sumus,” etc. Thus justification, being confounded with practical holiness, is really set aside. (Can. et Decr. Conc. Trid. Sessio VI., capp. vii. xvi.) Bellarmine is very explicit to the same effect. (De Controv. Tom. IV, de justif. ii. passim.)

3 The peculiarly anarthrous form of the proposition must strike any careful reader. This is owing to the fact that the apostle is describing the character of the gospel, not explaining as yet how God can so act (as he does in Romans 3:24-26, and elsewhere).

4 Δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ = neither ἡ ἐκ Θ. δ. nor δ. παρὰ Θ.

5 It may be well to add that some, having the sense that there is and must be practical reality in those who stand in true relationship with God, have from time to time clouded this subject and slipped to either side of the truth; and I refer to this the rather because there exists much want of scriptural intelligence, as well as ignorance even of facts easy enough to ascertain. Thus in and even before 1550 there broke out a serious feud among the Lutherans, which, though not confined to the point of divine righteousness, nevertheless had this for one of the most serious questions in dispute. Andrew Osiander (Professor of theology at Konigsberg, a man of

mystical turn of mind and fond of bold and novel speculation) taught that it is only through the eternal and essential righteousness which resides in Christ as God or in His divine nature united to the human, that man obtains righteousness. Of this divine righteousness he partakes by faith. Thereby Christ dwells in man, and with Christ divine righteousness: in virtue of which righteousness, present in the regenerate, God regards them, though sinners, as righteous in the name of that righteousness. (See J. L. Moshemii Institt. H E. Saec. xvi. Sect. iii. pars ii. § 35.) This naturally and justly aroused the opposition of Melancthon; but Osiander's death did not end the mischief, — for Stancar (Professor of Hebrew in the same place, and of turbulence equal to his colleague) fell into an opposite extreme and almost as dangerous. For if Osiander excluded the manhood of Christ, his antagonist excluded the divine nature from redemption. Evidently, however, Osiander's doctrine is substantially that of the mystics, and confounds life, or the new nature, with the believer's justification. There is not the smallest resemblance between it, and that which has been expounded in the text. It is God's righteousness inherent or infused in the believer's heart, not revealed in the gospel. In fact, there was the activity of a mind which saw that the believer partakes of the divine nature but confounded this with the wholly distinct truth that he is accounted righteous according to the acceptance of Christ Himself before God. In short, Osiander abused regeneration to deny justification or imputation of righteousness, and confounded union with Christ, as many do now, with both. This may be seen in Calvin's Institutes, Book III., chapter xi., § 11. The following extract may be useful in showing how far those who have talked of Osiander have either

understood his doctrine or are free from the snare into which he fell. “Ridet eos Osiander qui justificari docent esse verbum forense: quia oporteat nos re ipsa esse justos: nihil etiam magis respuit quam nos justificari gratuita imputatione. Agedum si nos Deus non justificat absolvendo et ignoscendo, quid sibi vult illud Pauli? Erat Deus, etc., 2 Cor. 5:20, 21. Primum obtineo justos censeri qui Deo reconciliantur; modus inseritur quod Deus ignoscendo justificet: sicuti alio loco justificatio accusationi opponitur; quae antithesis clare demonstrat sumptam esse loquendi formam à forensi usu.” I purposely quote Calvin’s reproof of the Lutheran for his mockery of imputation under the plea that we must be in reality just, which is indeed to deride a capital truth of the gospel. No Christian doubts, on the other hand, the value or necessity of practical righteousness apart from justification. (See Phil. 1:9-11.)

6 Calvin may illustrate the danger of this; for he draws from it, that as our faith makes progress and advances in this knowledge, so the righteousness of God increases in us at the same time. What can be looser than such language?

7 Or, “for.”

8 Ὁμοίωμα and

εἰκών are not the same and are both needed to complete the apostle’s thought. The one means a thing made like, or likeness; the other, a representative or image, whether externally resembling or not. This explains why the forms of ὅμοιος are never used of the Son in relation to the Father; for He, who was God in the beginning before creation and yet with God, could not be said to be merely like God. But when incarnate He could be, and is

said to be, the image of the invisible God. On the other hand, it was no derogation but the highest distinction for God to say of the first Adam that He would make him "in our image, after our likeness;" i.e., representing Him here below, and withal sinless morally like as He was. The tracing of the application both in Genesis and in the New Testament is deeply interesting and will prove how little the Fathers or modern books based on their ideas have caught the truth conveyed. They exalt the first man as unduly as they lower the glory of the Second; and this through the influence of Platonism. Fallen as he is, man is still God's image. To curse him is to curse one that was made after His likeness. In the resurrection the saint will be like Christ and conformed to His image as the Firstborn among many brethren.

Romans 2

The proof of human depravity and need is not yet complete. There is another character of evil contrasted yet connected with the description in the last verse of chapter 1 and most offensive in the sight of God. Men judge others and yet do the same things, and thus condemn themselves. How can this in any way arrest or even mitigate the sentence of God? It was and is common among speculative men, moralists, and the like. In truth it is no small aggravation To say “we see” exposes us, who none the less practise iniquity, to hear from the just Judge of all, that “our sin remaineth.” For the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, and the judging in others what they themselves live in justifies their own righteous doom. Say what they please, God’s sentence is according to truth upon those that do such things. He will, He must, have reality, and conscience knows it. Instead of open sympathy with others who sin, they may judge it as wrong; but if they do the same, how can such moral trifling, or those guilty of it, stand before God?

“Wherefore thou art inexcusable, O man, every one that judgest; for wherein thou judgest the other, thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth upon those that do such things. And dost thou reckon this, O man, that judgest those that do such things, and doest them, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to

repentance?" (Ver. 1-4.) The truth is that philosophy knows not God, and so easily forgets His judgment, as it never can conceive His love. It is self-satisfied and has man for its object, not God. Hence His lavish goodness and His patience are despised, and His end in all is a lesson never learnt.

Repentance is the work of God in the soul on the moral side. It is inseparable from the new nature, and flows from the energy of the Spirit as faith in Jesus does; in no way the preparation for faith, but its accompaniment and fruit. Nevertheless, by this I do not mean faith exercised as to the infinite work of Christ. There may be as yet but a looking to Him longingly and hopefully; and, along with this expectation of good from Him according to God's word, that word turns the eye of conscience inwardly, and the man now converted judges himself as well as his ways before God. This deepens also, instead of diminishing, as the soul grows in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There was always repentance as truly as faith wrought in souls; and though this may have assumed a legal shape under law, repentance is not in anywise done with now, but is wrought all the more profoundly under the gospel. Different schools of doctrine have drawn a wrong inference, one from Romans 2:4, the other from 2 Corinthians 7:10. On the one side it is thought that the perception of God's goodness is repentance; on the other side that it is godly sorrow for sin. Scripture says nothing of the sort in either case, and intimates that, while repentance always supposes a change of mind, it goes much farther, and is a matter of conscience in the light of God, and not a purely intellectual process. As the goodness of God leads to repentance, so sorrow

according to Him works repentance. There is such a thing as sorrowing unto repentance, as there is repentance unto salvation. It is thus a far deeper dealing with the soul than many suppose. Self is judged without reserve, and the will goes wholly with the new man. Sorrow according to God may still have a struggle: when one repents truly, the evil is disliked inwardly, and one has got free from it. “Surely after I was turned, I repented; and after I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.” (Jer. 31:19.)

Moralizing without conscience has a peculiarly hardening effect, and the long-suffering goodness of God is then misused to slight His leading. God is not mocked; it is only thou, O man, who thus deceivest thyself. “But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest to thyself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of God’s righteous judgment.” (Ver. 5.) Such is the solemn sanction which accompanies the gospel: not national, earthly, and providential judgments, but divine wrath, wrath already revealed from heaven, to take its awful course in its day when the day of grace is over. The law inflicted its temporal chastisements; with the gospel goes the revelation of “how much sorer punishment,” even eternal; and this most of all when the gospel is refused or abused. For there is a righteous judgment of God, “who shall render to each according to his work: to those that in patience of good work seek for glory, honour, and incorruptibility, eternal life; but to those that are contentious and disobey the truth and obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath.” (Ver. 6-8.) The appraisal and the rendering are individual;

and, as we shall see farther on, the secrets of the heart appear.

It is important to note that eternal life is viewed not only as a present possession for the believer in Christ, but as the future issue of a devoted pathway for His name. The Gospel of John develops the former; the other three show us the latter; as our apostle elsewhere in this epistle (Rom. 6:22, 23) gives us both brought together in the same context. But now, says he of Christians, “being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” On the other hand, the wages of sin, though death, are not death only, but after it the judgment, as Hebrews 9 states in accordance with what we have here.

In the next verse the apostle for the first time points directly at the Jew, no less than the Gentile, as obnoxious to divine judgment. We have seen with what consideration he approaches this subject, which, once cleared, is to hold so prominent a place in the epistle. In Romans 1 he had begun with the bright side, and affirmed the gospel to be God’s power unto salvation to every one that believes, both to Jew first and to Greek. Now, in Romans 2, when handling, not the gospel that saves the lost, but the immutable principles of God’s righteous government, he brings out the alternative — ”tribulation and anguish on every soul of man that worketh evil, both of Jew first and of Greek; but glory, and honour, and peace to every one that worketh good, both to Jew first and to Greek; for there is no regard of person with God.” (Ver. 9-11.) Such are His ways. Time, place, people can make no radical difference with Him,

save that possession of privileges brings with it a prior responsibility, and this with evident justice. If the man who enjoys religious light works out evil notwithstanding, is he less guilty than his less favoured fellow-sinner? If he heeds the warning and testimony of God, working out that which is good, God will not withhold “glory, honour, and peace;” and neither last nor least stands the Jew thus found in His sight, though, as Peter truly declared on a great occasion, God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that fears Him and works righteousness is acceptable to Him. How this is made good in souls every believer knows. It is the fruit of His own grace; for it is not in man to direct his stops, nor in good in him or to be got from him, save when faith enables him to do His good pleasure: without faith it is impossible to please Him. Nor is it for a moment to be allowed that Romans 2 can clash either with Romans 1 or with Romans 3. Without such grace of God and faith of man there is no good about him: on the contrary, he needs God’s power to save him. But God is here laying down His own inflexibly just ways as dealing morally with man. The believer, no doubt, is the only one who works good, the only possessor therefore of glory, honour, and peace; and while the Jew (as long as he had a place of relationship with God, and even till judgment manifestly closed it) had the precedence, the Gentile is not overlooked, but comes up in gracious remembrance before God, as we see in Cornelius and his house.

But, next, the apostle goes farther, and formally lays down that, while in every instance God will judge righteously, superiority of privilege entails deeper obligations and corresponding strictness in judgment: “for as many as without law have sinned, shall also

perish without law; and as many as have sinned under law shall be judged by law (for not the hearers of law are just with God, but the doers of law shall be justified. For whenever Gentiles, which have no law, do by nature the things of the law, these having no law are a law to themselves; who evince the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also joining its testimony, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing) in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel by Jesus Christ." (Ver. 12-16.) Thus there can be no prescriptive title of exemption to the Jew in the day of judgment, as he fondly hoped. The very standing as God's witness in the earth, which that people had enjoyed in contrast with the Gentiles, bears with it their liability to a closer scrutiny when God deals, not in external inflictions on the nations, but with the heart and its ways in His sight, however hidden from man. Could even the Jew question the equity of this procedure? He must assuredly abandon his own fatal presumption — that the righteous God would close His eyes to the wickedness of His own ancient people: if he still maintained, as he ought, the special advantage of Israel, he could not deny their augmented responsibility compared with the Gentile.

In other ways also these passages are of great weight and value. Men are apt to reason on this as on other subjects after an abstract sort. From one true God who gave His law, as He had made and shall judge all men, many assume that all alike are under that law, and shall be judged by it, and that no other method is possible without sullying God's truth, righteousness, authority, and honour. But he who is subject to the word of God, and stands intelligently by faith in His favour, knows

that the dogmatism of a Pharisee is no better than the scepticism of a Sadducee, that neither knows the scripture, and that, as the latter denies the power, so the former sets aside His grace and also His righteousness. For the apostle elaborately shows as an incontestable truth here and elsewhere that there were men without law, as certainly as others under law. Who they were is equally clear and sure: Gentiles had not law, Jews had; and this was a main element of the different ground on which they should be tried. In vain would they weaken what the apostle says in verse 12 by that which he adds in verses 14, 15, that Gentiles, having no law, whenever they do the duties of the law, are a law to themselves, spite of having no law. It would be better to seek to understand the latter verses which need a little attention and reflection, rather than to overthrow what is so plain and positive in both; for in these passages, as everywhere, the doctrine is that Gentiles were without law, in contradistinction from Jews who were under law. (Compare Rom. 3:19, 1 Cor. 9:20, 21.) In Romans 1, where Gentile responsibility and guilt are treated, it is not a question of law, but of the testimony of creation and of the traditional knowledge of God they at first possessed. Here, in Romans 2, the Jewish boast of the law is turned to a serious purpose, as it is the basis of the apostle's proof that they cannot escape from being judged of God by the higher and fuller standard of His law.

It is argued by some who would neutralize these differences, that Gentiles are said to have the law written in their hearts. Why not look into what the apostle actually says and means, instead of twisting a few words into a contradiction of his express doctrine? It

would be strange indeed, and say but little for Christianity, if heathens possessed as such that which the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 10:15, 16.) affirms to be one of the grand and distinctive blessings of the New Covenant. This kind of theology teaches that the heathen have already the law written in their hearts. But the apostle does not stultify himself, as this would imply, — does not predicate of the heathen that immense mercy of God which the New Covenant holds out to faith based on redemption in Christ. What he really teaches is that whenever (for indeed it was scanty and rare) Gentiles do by nature the things of the law, they evince the law's work written in their hearts. He says not that the law, as these uninstructed men assume, but that its work, was written therein. For instance, let a heathen gather somehow the duty of honouring his parents: this, though he may have never heard of the law, is a law to him. So far the work of the law (not the law itself) is said to be written in his heart. His conscience thenceforth accuses or excuses him according to his conduct; and God in judgment will take all fully into account by and by. But this in no way interferes with the opening principle that some sin without being under law and so perish, as others more guiltily sin under law, and so shall be judged; for the question in judgment is not privilege but fidelity according to what we know or may know. Not the law-hearers are just with God but the law-doers shall be justified. This is invariably true; as scripture declares, faith accepts and judgment will display.

Accordingly we have the character of judgment declared in verse 16 conformably to what the apostle calls his gospel. Providential scourges, earthly chastening, or destruction, are true dealings of God and so revealed,

not only in the Jewish scriptures, but in the prophecies of the New Testament also. But the judgment of the secrets of men is a different and far deeper truth: and this finds its suited revelation in the gospel as Paul presented it, where man is judged fully, both outwardly and inwardly, in presence of the saving grace of God and the heavenly glory of Christ the risen man, who is the life and the righteousness of the believer. This is Paul's gospel, and God's judgment of man (yea, of his heart's secrets by Jesus Christ in the great day that hastens) is according to that gospel. (Comp. Rom. 1:17, 18.)

The apostle now advances another step in his appeal to conscience. He addresses himself next to the Jew, not classing him with the Gentile alone. Did the Jew value himself on his singular place among men, on his possession of a divine revelation, on the true God as his God, on the knowledge of His will, on his own consequent ability to try the things that differ and hence decide for the more excellent? did he assume a conscious superiority to his Gentile neighbours, through confidence in himself as thus standing on a vantage ground which gave him to look down on the wisest of other nations as but blind, and in the dark, and foolish, and babes, being destitute of that embodiment of knowledge and truth which the law afforded himself? Be it so, but if all this were so, how was it with the Jew in fact? The greater the privilege, the less excusable if he was faithless to the light he had and as bad as the heathen he despised.

"But if9 thou art named a Jew, and restest on law, and boastest in God, and knowest his will, and provest the things that differ, being instructed out of the law, and hast confidence that thou thyself art a guide of blind, a

light of those in darkness, an instructor of fools, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and of truth in the law: thou then that teachest another dost thou not teach thyself? thou that preachest not to steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest not to commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou who boastest in the law, through transgression of the law dost thou dishonour God? For the name of God on your account is blasphemed among the Gentiles even as it is written." (Ver. 17-24.)

Thus severely, but severely because it was with the irresistible force of truth, does the apostle turn to the utter shame of the Jew the very ground on which he had entrenched himself in pride and vain glory. If there was conscience, he must own himself more guilty than the Gentile; if there was none, his insensibility would not make his sin and folly less manifest to all who fear God and estimate man aright. On his own showing his boasted knowledge of the law brought no saving power along with it for himself, whatever fuel it might supply for his arrogant abuse of it in contempt of others. Who, then, more signally dishonoured God? Was it not written even more strongly still in their own prophets? What said Isaiah (Isa. 52:5.)? and what Ezekiel (Ezek. 36:20-23.)? No doubt their foreign lords made them to howl; but was it not true that Israel profaned Jehovah's holy name among the heathen whither they went?

The issue of the reasoning is given in the concluding verses. A religious form cannot cover the contradiction morally of its own spirit; and on the other hand, where the spirit is truly found, God will approve of this spite of the absence (it may be unavoidably) of the form. He will

and must have reality in that which concerns men in relation to Himself. “For circumcision indeed profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a transgressor of law, thy circumcision is become uncircumcision. If then the uncircumcision keeps the requirements of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be reckoned for circumcision; and the natural uncircumcision fulfilling the law, judge thee that in the way of letter and circumcision transgressest law? For he that is outwardly a Jew is not [one], nor is that which is outward in flesh circumcision, but he that is hiddenly a Jew, and circumcision of heart in spirit, not in letter, the praise of whom [is] not of men but of God.” As the principle is clear, so are the persons who alone are acceptable with God. External circumstances cannot over-ride His character and ways and judgment. The apostle does not here enunciate the fundamental truth of either Christianity or the Church in which dispensational differences vanish away in the light of a Christ dead and risen in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek. But it is of deep interest to observe how the profoundly just dealing of God which he is asserting, and which could not but commend itself to the conscience even of him whom it most condemns, fits in with that mighty development of truth, the revelation of the mystery, which it was Paul’s province above all others to make known to us. As on the one hand the mere outward Jew is nothing nor the rite abstracted from its meaning; so on the other hand that only has praise with God which is hidden and heart work, not in letter but in spirit. Such an one, he strikingly adds (in allusion it would seem to the name of Judah and of a Jew) even if his brethren curse, or men hate, shall have his praise of God.

9 But if (

εἰ δὲ) is unquestionably the right reading, not

ἴδε (“behold”) as in the Received Text and Authorized Version, which seems to have been a correction to ease the sense, if not a mere blunder in copying.

Romans 3

The apostle's statement at the end of Romans 2 had laid down with irresistible force for the conscience that God will have reality rather than form. Let the Jew then beware. This gives occasion to objections which are met in the earlier part of Romans 3:1-8.

"What therefore [is] the superiority of the Jew, or what the profit of circumcision?" To this or at least the former of these questions the apostle replies, "Much in every way; for, first, because they were entrusted with the oracles of God." In its proper place he enumerates the various high distinctions of Israel; but here he singles out, as foremost, that which had been their constant, and most precious privilege, the possession of God's written word; and the rather too as this was most suited to demonstrate their moral delinquency. For what use had they made of it? Where was the fruit of so great a favour?

Here again there is an anticipation of any argument founded, however unreasonably, on Jewish refractoriness which knew that the glory of God can never fail. "For what if some believed not? shall their unbelief make void the faith of God? Let it not be, but let God be true and every man false, even as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy words, and overcome when thou art judged." God holds fast infallibly to His truth, and men fail in faithfulness because of want of faith, which is insensible to sin, trusts self and has no confidence in God. That there is any, the smallest, failure on God's part he indignantly repudiates, and insists that He at least be vindicated to

man’s shame and confession of his own evil; even as David found his only resource in acknowledging his sin to God, clearing Him at all cost to himself. Indeed this is the secret of blessing for the sinner; and the willingness to own his ruined estate God operates in the heart by the revelation of His own grace. Our sins justify His words.

Of this the objector would again take advantage by contending that God could not then consistently punish us. Hence the apostle cuts off such misuse of the truth by what follows. “But if our unrighteousness commend God’s righteousness, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who inflicteth wrath? I speak according to man. Let it not be: since how shall God judge the world?” This last was an axiom with the Jew, who was willing enough to allow justice in dealing with the earth at large (as, e.g., Abraham had entrenched himself on it in favour of exempting Lot from the destruction then impending over the cities of the plain). Impossible that there can be unrighteousness in God. But this very consideration was fatal to the fond delusion of self-security to which an unrighteous Jew yielded. God brings Himself glory even in face of man’s iniquity; but iniquity is none the less, nor the less surely to be judged of God for all that. Hence he allows the objection to betray its own heinousness and leaves it when thus self-exposed without an answer, as necessarily condemned even by the most ordinary natural conscience. “For if the truth of God abounded in my lie to his glory, why any longer am I too judged as a sinner? and not, even as we are slanderously reported, and even as some give out that we say, ‘Let us do evil that good may come?’ — whose judgment is just.” Such reasoning resembled

what was falsely put into the mouth of the Christian, and proved too truly of the Jewish adversary that, in seeking to escape the conviction of his own hopeless exposure to God's judgment, he was obliged, as with the stiffest legalist is so often the case, to slip into principles of very gross antinomianism. It must always be thus, where men, cloaking their sins, hope for mercy from God; and the more inconsistently, as they ignore His grace and confess that He is the judge of all.

Next, from verse 9 the general argument is resumed, all the stronger for the interruption which rebuked the vain struggles and detailed cavils of the Jew. "What therefore? are we better? Not at all; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles to be all under sin, even as it is written, There is none righteous, not one; there is not the [man] that understandeth; there is not the [nation] that seeketh God. All went out of the way, thus then they became unprofitable; there is none that doeth kindness, there is not so much as one. Their throat [is] an open grave; with their tongues they used deceit; venom of asps [is] under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; swift [are] their feet to shed blood; ruin and misery [are] in their ways, and no way of peace they knew. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that whatever things the law saith, it speaketh to those that are in the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world come under judgment with God; because by works of law no flesh shall be justified before him, for by law is knowledge of sin." (Ver. 9-20.) The Jew then is no better. The Gentiles were utterly degraded and guilty, as we saw in Romans 1; the Jews had brought shame on the Lord in proportion to their exceeding privileges. To clench this last point

the apostle cites from the Psalms and prophets, especially Psalm 53 and Isaiah 59. Righteousness, intelligence, and even desire after God were not to be found, but all gone aside, and useless morally. Nay, every whit of them was corrupt or violent, — throats tongues, lips, feet, eyes. And this, as is remarked: was God's estimate, not of men merely but of the Jew, and addresses itself to those under itself as no Jew would deny.

The overwhelming conclusion, then, is that every mouth is closed and the whole world comes in guilty before God. The Jew never doubted the wickedness of the idolatrous Greeks, Romans, or other Gentiles. This to him was patent and unquestionable. But the flattering and most mistaken inference of immunity he drew from his own position, as having God's law and ordinances. No, reasons the apostle, this demonstrates your guilt to be even greater than the heathens, if you are no less immoral than they; and that such is the fact certainly flows from the revealed sentence of the law on the people who have that law.

Thus all stand inexcusable in their guilt before God; and this, because law-works cannot justify — still less of course the works that man's mind suggests, or that the will of others may extort. If any works could justify anybody, those of God's law must be the surest benefit to the Jew. But the truth is that no flesh shall be justified from any such source in His sight; for contrariwise law never produces holiness but is only the means of arriving at a full knowledge of sin.

There is another point I would notice as to the two chief portions which the apostle quotes from the Old

Testament. The psalm and the prophecy already referred to terminate respectively — the former, with an earnest wish that the turning-point for Israel were come out of Zion, their captivity giving place to the long-looked-for joy and deliverance — the latter, with the declaration that the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and the covenant of blessing be theirs for ever. That is, both texts in their original connection close their sad account of Israel's sin with the yearning after, and the distinct prediction of, the kingdom of God restored to Israel with all accompanying blessedness and glory. But in the New Testament they are followed by the indiscriminate grace of God to every sinner that believes in Christ. In the former it is redemption by power; in the latter it is redemption by blood, which is come in meanwhile, before the Redeemer appears in power and glory, as He will soon.

Hitherto it has been for the most part negative statement or argument. The proof is complete that the Jew has righteousness for God no more than the Gentile, whom no Jew could doubt to be hopelessly ruined in sin, as indeed the state of the heathen, before the gospel testimony went forth, was to the last degree deplorable. But it had been shown from their own Psalms and Prophets that Israel was wholly evil in the sight of God; and to demonstrate this the Apostle needs nothing but the admitted postulate that, whatever things the law says, it speaks to those that are under the law; i.e., the Jews. Thus, both being demonstrated to be mere sinners (the Jews who had most pretension by the most sweeping and express testimonies of their own boasted divine oracles), every mouth was stopped, and all the world obnoxious to God's judgment. Law made its

possessors no better, could not justify, but only give full knowledge of sin — sorrowful result for the sinner!

Then, what law could not do, God does by His good news. “But now without law God’s righteousness is manifested, being testified by the law and the prophets, even God’s righteousness through faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all that believe.” What fulness of truth, and what a compressed and precise expression of it! Man’s righteousness was nowhere among the Gentiles. It had been asked for by the law among the Jews; but the law received no answer save of guilt. Those among them whose conscience was upright acknowledged that all their righteousnesses were as filthy rags, and that their iniquities, like the wind, had taken them away — that for their sins and for the iniquities of their fathers, the Jews had become a reproach to all that were about them. In the very writings which confessed their ruin the prophets spoke of Jehovah bringing near His righteousness. “My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth.” “My salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.” “My righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.” “My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.” (Isaiah 46, 56; Daniel 9:16, 24.) So, in the types of the law, the entire sacrificial system sets forth a righteousness of God outside man, yet most truly for him, which meets its only adequate significance in the mighty work and death of Jesus. But the law and the prophets were only witnesses, testifying that this divine righteousness was not come, but coming; the shadows of a substance not yet present, the prediction of what was to be, and then near to come. Now it is come and

manifested. It is quite independent of law, on the wholly different principle of grace, though the law as well as the prophets bore an anticipative witness to it. Law (not in its types, but in its proper character) appeals to the individual's own obedience, knows nothing of a substitute. Grace always supposes the intervention of God Himself in His Son, who in the cross establishes the right of God to bless him that believes in Jesus. It is not simply His prerogative of mercy; it is His righteousness. For the blood of the only acceptable victim is shed, the sacrifice is offered, the judgment of the sins has fallen on Him, He has accepted it all. This then is the new sort of righteousness; not man's, which, if it existed, must be according to the law; not the sinner's, of course (for he, being a sinner, has none which can avail), but God's, according to the types of the law and the declarations of the prophets, now no longer hidden or even promised, but manifested. He who believes God's testimony in the gospel to Jesus Christ His Son, confesses his sins and trusts God, not himself; he sees and owns what God can righteously do for him through the cross, and thus shares in His righteousness.

The manuscripts differ as to the text here. Some of the most ancient (the Sinai, Vatican, Alexandrian, and Rescript of Paris, beside some juniors, versions, and fathers) omit καὶ ἐπὶ πάντας ("and upon all"). But I agree with the judgment of those who retain the received text in this, and I have little doubt that the words were omitted through the eye or ear resting on one πάντας so as to overlook the other. Possibly indeed one scribe or more may have designedly left out the clause, fancying it to be a mistake from not apprehending the scope, and conceiving, like some

commentators (e. g., Dean Alford), that there is no real difference of meaning in the prepositions. But this is incorrect. There is no difference of words in scripture without a different sense, though sometimes the shade is so fine as to be more easily felt than expressed. Here the distinct force of the clause is plain and important. The former (εἰς πάντας) marks the direction of God's righteousness. It is not, like the law, restricted to a single nation; it addresses itself "unto all" men without exception; but the benefit depends on faith in Jesus Christ, and hence it only reaches and takes effect "upon all that believe." This distinction is of great practical value; but it turns mainly on the difference of the prepositions. Divine righteousness was in principle applicable to all, but in fact applied only to all believers.

It was no question of right in man, but in God, and this through Christ's redemption. "For there is no difference; for all sinned, and do come short of the glory of God." When man was innocent, he simply enjoyed the creature gifts around in thankfulness to Him who had set him in the midst of all and over all which God had pronounced "very good." But when he sinned, God appeared and could have no test to try him by short of His glory, which drives out sinful man from before His face. Hence the necessity for divine grace if he is to be justified. This accordingly is the immediate topic of discourse: "being justified [i.e. all who are being justified] gratuitously by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiatory through faith in his blood, for a declaration of his righteousness on account of the praeter-mission of the sins that had been before in the forbearance of God, with a view to the declaration of

his righteousness in the present time, in order to his being just and justifying him that is of faith in Jesus."

Thus the utter sin of man makes it an absolute necessity that, if he is to be justified at all, he must be justified gratuitously by God's grace. The question of desert or previous fitness is excluded. This suits the grace and majesty of God quite as much as the abject need of man. His grace moreover does no dishonour to His holy and righteous character, but the very reverse; and all through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. What is the ransom He purposed and has found? Christ a propitiatory through faith in His blood whom He set forth for a declaration of His righteousness. For God passed over the sins of believers in Old Testament times, looking forward to Christ's blood to vindicate Him, and forbearing all the while. But now it is not a matter of forbearance. The debt is cancelled, the blood is shed, His righteousness is no longer in prospect, but brought in and manifested, and God is proved to be just in justifying him that believes in Jesus. (Ver. 26.)

This therefore exalts God and His Son, but leaves no room for the boasting of those who trust in themselves that they are righteous. "Where then [is] boasting? It was excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by [the] law of faith. For we reckon that a man is justified by faith without works of law. Is he the God of Jews only? [Is he] not also of Gentiles? Yea of Gentiles also; since God is one who shall justify [the] circumcision by faith and uncircumcision through their faith? Do we then make void law through faith? Far be it: but we establish law." (Ver. 27-31.) The principle of faith shuts the door against glorying in one's own works, because it means justification by faith apart from works of law. But the

moment it is allowed that this is God's sanctioned way, He is certainly not God of Jews more than of Gentiles, but is one and the same to both, who will justify circumcised persons not by law as they expect, but by faith, and if uncircumcised have faith, through it He will justify them also.

Is this destruction of law as a principle? The very opposite. Law never had such a sanction as in the gospel proposed to faith, whether one looks at the sinner totally condemned under it or at Christ made a curse on the cross. On the other hand, those who would treat Christians as under the law for their rule do enfeeble its authority, because these are taught to hope for salvation at the same time that they fail to meet its requirements. This is not to establish law, but to make it void.

Romans 4

The previous reasoning, and especially the statement of the apostle towards the close of Romans 3, had made justification to depend evidently and exclusively on the expiatory work of Jesus. God was thereby just and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. And this, as he had further shown, at once opens the door of grace to Gentiles as well as Jews, while it establishes law instead of annulling its authority (as the salvation of sinners on any other principle must).

This naturally raised the question of the saints in Old Testament times, before Jesus and the gospel which, since His advent, is preached to every creature. How does the doctrine agree with God's ways in their case? Accordingly the apostle takes two instances which would naturally occur to a Jewish objector: one the depositary of promise from God, as regards the chosen people; the other the true type of royalty over them according to God — Abraham and David, but especially Abraham. Both, we shall see, confirm the great argument instead of presenting the smallest difficulty to be removed.

"What therefore shall we say that Abraham, our [fore-]father according to the flesh, hath found?10 For if Abraham was justified by works, he hath matter of boast, but not before God. For what saith the scripture? And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh the reward is not reckoned according to grace, but according to debt; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness." (Ver. 1-5.)

What, then, is the true inference from the history of Abraham? If justified by works, certainly the credit would be his; but this is never found before God. And with this the scripture accords; for it speaks not of his goodness before his call or acceptance, but expressly of his faith in God's word as that which he exercised, and which was accounted as righteousness. (Gen. 15:6.) No Jew who bowed to the divine authority of the Pentateuch could dispute this. Was it, then, consistent or at issue with the gospel? If a man work, the reward is not viewed as a gratuity, but as the wages due to him; but if, instead of working, he believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, what a magnificent proof and conclusion that his faith is reckoned for righteousness! This is free grace, and the very reverse of a debt according to law; and such was the principle of God's dealings with their great forefather according to the inspired account of Moses.

Take again the testimony of David. Does he fall in with the gospel or contradict the legislator? The sweet psalmist of Israel confirms them, for he pronounces those blessed whom the law could only curse. "Just as David also speaketh of the blessedness of the man to whom God reckoneth righteousness without works. Blessed [they] whose iniquities were forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed a man whose sin the Lord will in no way reckon." (Ver. 6-8.) Unquestionably this is justification not by good, but in spite of evil works. It is God's grace blessing, not His law cursing, where there was no righteousness, but only lawlessness and sin; yet the Lord reckons no sin whatever, but righteousness without works. No doubt, man is supposed to be altogether evil and without excuse; but this is the revelation of the God of all grace as He loves

to be known by sinful man. He justifies those who need it most — the ungodly. “This blessedness, therefore, [is it] upon the circumcision or also upon the uncircumcision? for we say that to Abraham faith was reckoned for righteousness. How then was it reckoned? When he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received [the] sign of circumcision, a seal of the faith that [he had] in uncircumcision, in order to his being the father of all that believe while uncircumcised, in order that righteousness might be reckoned to them also; and father of circumcision, net only to those circumcised, but also to those that walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham while uncircumcised.” (Ver. 9-12.)

We have seen, then, faith counted as righteousness to Abraham, corroborated by the testimony of David to the blessedness of those whose bad works were remitted and to whom the Lord reckoned no sin. But a new question arises for the Jewish mind — Were not those blessed in the enjoyment of circumcision? Is it not limited to persons within that pale? Again the apostle brings in Abraham. Could any Jew slight him or hesitate as to the conditions of his blessing? How, therefore, in his case was faith reckoned to him? after or before he was circumcised? Beyond doubt, when he was uncircumcised, as their own inspired record made plain and sure. Circumcision was but a sign he received considerably later, as sealing the faith he had while in an uncircumcised state. Thus is Abraham more than any other fitted to be father of all that believe while uncircumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned to them; and father of circumcision (not of the circumcised, or Jews, as some perversely understand, but), of true

separation to God, whether for the circumcised or for those also that walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham whilst uncircumcised.

The Jew, therefore, could not cite Abraham without being compelled by the scriptural history to allow that this precedent illustrates the grace of God in justifying the heathen more forcibly, if possible, than in its application to his own circumcised and lineal seed. God, if He pleased, could have justified Abraham after bringing him under the rite of circumcision; but He saw fit to do the very reverse. Not only was faith reckoned as righteousness to Abraham, but it was also beyond cavil whilst he was still uncircumcised; and circumcision was in no way a means of the grace that justifies, but a seal of the righteousness that was reckoned to him long before that sign was instituted by God.

Justification, then, is not of works: else man might boast of himself, instead of God being glorified. It is really according to grace, and not debt; and God reserves His prerogative of justifying the ungodly. Thus God and man have their due place; and as Abraham illustrated the principle, so David speaks of the pronouncing a blessing after this sort in Psalm 32. Nothing but imputing righteousness without works could avail for the justifying of a sinner. Nor this only; for the very man, with whom circumcision began as the command of God, was expressly justified by faith before he was circumcised. So manifestly did God order all in His wisdom and goodness that circumcision should be but a seal of the righteousness of faith which Abraham had while yet uncircumcised. Thus the Gentiles or the uncircumcised were especially provided for in the unquestionable facts recorded in the first book of the

Pentateuch, as no Jew could deny. Abraham was father of all believers in a state like his own, and father of circumcision (i.e., separation to God, couched under that act which set forth mortification of the flesh) not only to the circumcised, but also to those that walk in the footsteps of the faith the ancestor of Israel had before circumcision. Believers from among the Gentiles were thus as truly circumcised in the highest sense as Jewish ones.

“For not by law was the promise to Abraham or to his seed, that he should be heir of [the] world, but by righteousness of faith. For if those of law [be] heirs, faith is made vain and the promise is annulled.” (Ver. 13, l4.)

The apostle now reasons from the necessary principle of God’s promise. This excludes law and supposes faith — righteousness. For evidently law supposes the obedience of man as the condition of receiving the boon which is in question. It was not so in God’s dealings with Abraham or his seed. There was not a word about His law when God gave promise to Abraham in Genesis 12, and to his seed in Genesis 22. The promise implies God’s fulfilment of it; the law claimed man’s obedience of its demands. They are thus, while each is admirable for its own end, absolutely different and mutually exclusive. The promised inheritance is not by law, but by another sort of righteousness. It was annexed to faith; and this is so true, that if those who stand on law are heirs, no room is left for faith and the promise comes thus to nought. “For the law worketh out wrath; but where no law is, there is no transgression.” (Ver. 15.) The application is as clear as it is momentous, and this positively as well as negatively. The thing law generally, and in particular the law of God given by Moses, provokes by its very

excellence the hostile self-will of man, and so detects his enmity and works out wrath in result. On the other hand, where there is no law, there is no transgression. It is no question of sin here, but of violating positive prescription, which latter of course could not be till the lawgiver uttered the enactments definitely. Then as law existed, it could be transgressed. But it was not yet promulgated in the time of Abraham, who had that wholly different thing — the promise.

The conclusion is, that as law would have defeated the promise of God and brought wrath on man, instead of the inheritance, “on this account [it is] of faith, that [it might be] according to grace in order to the promise being sure to all the seed, not only to that which is of law, but also to that which is of Abraham’s faith, who is father of us all (even as it is written, A father of many nations I have made thee), before God whom he believed, that quickeneth the dead and calleth the things that are not as if they are; who against hope believed in hope, in order to his becoming father of many nations according to that which was spoken, So shall be thy seed.” (Ver. 16-18.) As faith is opposed to works, so is grace to law; while the grace of God who gave the promise makes the sole and withal the large door of faith to open for Gentiles no less than Jews. Had law been the principle, Israel who boasted of possessing the law, though blind to their breaches of it and to their own enhanced exposure to wrath, could alone have made an effort, however vainly. But grace goes out to the Gentile no less than to the Jew who could hardly limit Abraham’s paternity of “many nations” to his own people.

Here too another point of great value is noticed. The God whom Abraham believed quickens the dead and calls things that have no being as though they had. This was rendered evident not only by the fact that Sarah bore no child to Abraham, but by their great age when the promise was given. They were as good as dead, and a child of theirs had no existence. But what of all this to God? Long before the time God spoke, Abraham against hope believed in hope. What a pattern of faith! On the human side all was hopeless; on God's part there was simply His word. But Abraham believed, hoped, and was not ashamed. God could not fail to make good what He said: "So shall be thy seed."

We are thus gradually advancing to the great principle of resurrection, which, while it bears mainly on life, as we shall see in Romans 5-8, plays also a most momentous part in justification. For this too the case of Abraham is employed: "And, not being weak in faith, he considered [not] his own body now dead, being about a hundred years old, and the deadening of Sarah's womb, yet as to the promise of God wavered not through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and fully assured that what he hath promised he is able also to perform." (Ver. 19-21.) The promise of God was beyond hope, and contrary to it, if he reasoned from himself and Sarah; but yet he believed in hope, because God had declared he should have posterity numerous as the stars and the sand. Faith reasons from God and His word, not from self or circumstances.

In verse 19 there occurs a remarkable difference of reading; and yet, strange to say, though that which results is as opposite as can be, in either way the sense is good. For both appear to suit and carry on the

argument, though of course one alone is the true and intended comment of the Spirit on the state of Abraham. There is excellent and perhaps adequate authority of every kind11 (manuscripts, versions, and ancient citations) for dropping the negative particle, which is therefore marked as doubtful in the version just before the reader's eye. If οὐ be an interpolation, the meaning would be that Abraham, instead of slighting the obstacles, took full account of them all (Gen. 17:17), yet as regards the promise of God had no hesitation through unbelief, but on the contrary was inwardly strengthened in faith. If the ordinary reading be right, the meaning is that, far from being weak in faith, he paid no heed to the facts before his eyes whether in himself or in his wife, nor staggered at the promise of God through unbelief, but found strength in faith, giving glory to Him and satisfied that He was able also to perform the promise.

"Wherefore also it was reckoned to him for righteousness. Now it was not written on his account alone that it was reckoned to him, but on our account also, to whom it shall be reckoned — [us] that believe on him that raised Jesus our Lord out of [the] dead, who was delivered12 for our offences and was raised for our justification." (Ver. 22-25.)

Thus as faith was reckoned for righteousness to the father of the faithful, so is it to the believer now. But the apostle takes care to point out the difference as well as the analogy. The faith not of Abraham only but of all the Old Testament saints was exercised on promise. They all in a large sense waited for the accomplishment of what God held out, sure that He could not lie, and was able also to perform. But in the great ulterior object of their

hope they were expecting One who was only promised and not yet come.

It is not so with the Christian; for though he, like the elders, obtains a good report by faith, and has his faith reckoned for righteousness, yet the personal object of hope is come, and has wrought the infinite work of redemption. This is an incalculable change, and fraught with mighty consequences. It is not of course that much does not remain to be effected when Christ comes again (changing the saints then alive, raising the dead believers, judging the quick and finally the dead who had no part in the first resurrection, and closing all in the eternal state); but as to the foundation of all this and more, as to that work which alone could glorify God and justify sinful man, it is already done so perfectly that it admits of not a hairbreadth from God or man to render it more complete or efficacious. Such is the gospel of the grace of God; it is not promise, but accomplishment; and so absolutely, we may boldly say, that, if not now done in the cross, in the death and resurrection of Him who hung there, it never can be done — not even by Him. Christ being risen from the dead, dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over Him. Without His death in atonement, nothing was done which could adequately vindicate God about sin. In His death, God is glorified perfectly and for ever. He has put away sin by His sacrifice. By His one offering for our sins, they are gone for the believer. This is no question of hope, but of faith in the efficacy of His redemption, which we already possess through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Hence we are viewed in scripture as receiving the end of our faith, namely, the salvation of our souls, though we have to wait for the change of our bodies into His

glorious likeness at His coming for us. Besides, there are gracious promises of care in both natural and spiritual necessities along the path here below. But the great fact remains for faith, that the atoning work is done.

Let it be remarked, further, that here it is not a question of the Saviour's blood as in Romans 3, but of God that raised Jesus our Lord from among the dead. The truth insisted on is not His grace who suffered all for our sins. It is the mighty intervention of God on our behalf in triumphant power, raising out of the dead Him who gave Himself to bear our judgment; or rather as it is here written, who was delivered on account of our offences and was raised to secure our justification. Thus, in Romans 3:26 the point is faith in Jesus; here, it is on Him that raised up Jesus. Such is the God whom we know. The fathers knew Him as He was pleased to reveal at that time and link Himself with them. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob was the giver of promises assuredly to be accomplished in His time. But our God, while the same blessed and blessing Almighty, is (as we can say) far more than this. The Only-begotten who is in the bosom of the Father — He had declared Him — He who was full of grace and truth. Nor this only; for Jesus, conqueror of Satan in life, went down for us into death, was delivered for our offences, and therein so glorified God that His righteousness could not but bring Him up from the dead. The sins that were laid on Him, where are they? Gone for ever: blotted out by His precious blood. Could God leave Him in death who had thus afresh retrieved His glory and bound up with it the means of our eternal blessing? Impossible. He raised Jesus therefore from the dead and gave Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.

As God, then, is thus made known to the believer now, so it will be noticed that all is here closed in justifying us. In the same verse of Romans 3, which has been already compared, we read that He might be ‘‘just and the justifier” of him that believeth in Jesus. For as we look on the blood of Jesus shed in expiation God has necessarily a judicial character. Sins must be judged according to all the holiness of a nature to which they are infinitely abhorrent. Here therefore God is declared to be just and the justifier of the believer. But in the end of Romans 4 we see that it is no longer a question of righteous satisfaction, as this had been completely settled in the blood of Jesus. Not so with justification. This derives an immensely increased value from the resurrection of Jesus which gloriously displayed in the Deliverer’s person the victory that was won for us. He was delivered for our offences and was raised for our justifying. It is our Red Sea, and not merely our Passover 10 The manuscripts differ widely in this place. The Vatican is not alone in omitting εὑρηκέναι (“hath found”), which would yield a very easy sense. Most of the copies place εὑρηκέναι before κατὰ σάρκα, but the best have it after ἐροῦμεν. Προπάτορα is the reading of but few, but perhaps enough; as πατέρα is the usual form and might easily have slipped in.

11 The Sinai, Vatican, Alexandrian, and Rescript of Paris (C.), with a few cursives, some of the oldest and best copies of the Vulgate, the Syriac (not the later or Philox.), the Coptic, the Erpenian Arabic, and some Greek and Latin fathers did not read οὐ. Lachmann accordingly leaves it out, and Griesbach counted it a probable omission. Tischendorf too omitted it in his first

edition, but replaced it in the second and those subsequent. Meyer adheres to the common text.

12 Διά with the accus. means “for,” “on account of,” either retrospectively or prospectively, according to the requirement of the context (as here we have instances of each). The active force of δικαίωσις forbids “because of,” as does Romans 5:1, which makes faith necessary to justification. I have therefore preferred “for” as admitting of a similar latitude in English.

Romans 5

The weighty theme of justification has been now fully treated, on the side both of Christ's blood shed in expiation and of His resurrection as carried through death in the power of God; that is to say, both negatively and positively, bearing all the consequences of our sins and manifesting the new estate in which He stands before God.

In the former half of our chapter the apostle draws out the consequences of justification. From verse 12 he enters on a new part of his subject which runs down to the end of Romans 8 and is practically an appendix to what goes before.

"Having therefore been justified by faith, we have13 peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have also had access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God."

Peace with God we have as the first notable result of justification. Our previous state was enmity and war with God. But now that He has justified us by faith of Christ, we can look back at all the past, so humiliating to our souls, and yet we have peace with God.

It is a mistake to confound this with the ordinary apostolic salutation, which desires grace to the saints and "peace from God." These we need continually, and feel so much the more to be needed because we have peace with God. Again, "the peace of God," of which the apostle speaks in Philippians 4, is quite distinct; for it too is the want of the Christian in his daily

circumstances. While he is enjoying peace with God as to his state, spite of the deep sense he may have of past guilt, he may not have the peace of God guarding his heart and his thoughts by Christ Jesus. He may be tried greatly and distracted, because anxious about this or that; if in one thing and another he fail by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to make known his requests to God, he will assuredly fail to enjoy the guardian power of His peace. This therefore differs indisputably from that primary blessedness, the fruit of justification, which the apostle treats as the common portion of believers in his Epistle to the Romans.

The next effect it is as important as sweet to take into account. Through our Lord Jesus Christ we have also, as a permanent blessing given already to us, the title of access into this favour wherein we stand. If the former was in view of all we had done in past hostility to God, this contemplates our actual place and the feeling which reigns where we stand. Blessed be God! it is grace that reigns there. Not a breath is there, save of favour toward us who deserved alas! to be cast out and contemned for our unworthy ways, even since we have been brought to God. We do not stand under law: this were to fall from grace, the sure precursor of falling into sin, as well as the denial of the Saviour and of His precious redemption, and of our own blessing. The access we have had through our Lord Jesus Christ is into the grace, the true grace of God, and there alone we stand; anywhere else we must fall from everything good and into all evil.

But there is a third result which must not be passed by. The greater the boon, whether you look at the past with its dark sin or at the present with the settled sunshine of

God's favour, so much the less can one bear to think of such blessedness coming to nought; and to nought it must all come, did the rich effects of justification depend on ourselves. But they do not. They come to us faith-wise, and they rest on Christ through whom alone they are our portion. They are not temporal like Adam's tenure of Eden, or Israel's possession of Canaan. They are secured through Him who died for our sins and is raised out of the dead. Can He lose the blessings He has thus won? No more can we for whom He won them. Hence we can exultingly look on the future. Not more certainly do we stand in present grace than "boast in hope of the glory of God." Less than this does not suit our God to hold out before us. He will have us to be with and as Christ in His own glory. With, us who believe He deals as to past, present, and future, according to what our Lord Jesus deserves and His eternal redemption. If the righteousness be God's righteousness, not man's, if divine righteousness be the starting-point, no wonder that the grace of God is the ground in which we stand, and that the glory of God is the sole adequate hope, whether we consider the person or the work of the Saviour. May we boast of it and Him!

The soul that believes has been thus shown us enjoying the results of justification absolute and complete. Admirable as a groundwork, nevertheless it is not everything. God would bless the believer according to what is in His heart, yet with full consideration of passing circumstances. And this last is what the apostle can speak of, now that the course is clear from the starting-point to the goal of God's glory, the hope of which makes the heart exult.

Nevertheless we are in the place of trial still, we are in the wilderness, though sheltered by the blood of the Lamb and redeemed from Egypt and its prince. Indeed properly here above all are we put to the proof; here, where no resources appear, God calls us to depend on and confide in Himself; here especially the enemy seeks to make us murmur in unbelief both as to the journey and as to the hope at the end of it. Egypt is the house of bondage; the wilderness is the scene of temptation; the land calls for conflict with the powers of darkness. The first two verses suppose us outside Egypt, and looking onward with joyful anticipation to the mountain of Jehovah's inheritance, the place He has made for Himself to dwell in.

Meanwhile there is nothing but desert around. Do we boast in hope notwithstanding? Assuredly, "and not only [so], but we boast in tribulations also." This flesh can never do; it may affect stoical insensibility: but faith, while it increases our feeling, alone gives us to triumph.

Here, however, there is a process to which we need to take heed. In hoping for the glory of God, our boast is direct. It is not so with our tribulations. We should and do boast in them, but it is not immediate. It is the fruit of intelligent apprehension of God's gracious aim in these afflictions. Hence the apostle proceeds to set out how we are brought thus to traverse the judgment of nature. We boast in tribulations, says he; "knowing that tribulation worketh endurance; and endurance, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that was given to us."

Such is the shining pathway of the Christian even here, because Christ is before the heart: otherwise, tribulation works out the impatience of the first man, not endurance through the Second. Then endurance sustained in faith works out experience (i.e., the proof of what is tested and stands); as this again, from what God is shown to be in gracious present care, strengthens hope; and this does not put to shame by failure and disappointment; because the Holy Ghost sheds abroad in our hearts the love of God, who loved us when there was nothing lovable in us, as we are shown after self is thus detected and judged, the world seen in its true colours, and God more than ever proved, and prized, and trusted.

This verse is remarkable as the first which speaks either of the Spirit given to us, or of the love of God which is thereby shed forth in us. We have His righteousness fully displayed and applied before there is any allusion to either. That God is wise in this, it is almost needless to remark. It is well that the soul should be shut up to that which is absolutely perfect outside ourselves on God's part and in virtue, not of the Spirit's work in us, but of Christ's for us. And so it is. Then in the path of subsequent christian experience, he can touch on and in due time unfold the love of God shed abroad in us, and the Holy Ghost given to us. We can then bear it safely. Had it been brought in before this, the heart would have readily turned to its own workings and affections from Christ and God's righteousness revealed in the gospel.

It may have been noticed that, though the apostle had carefully proved the ruin of man and the righteousness of God in which the believer has part, it is not so with His love. Of this he first speaks here as a thing not demonstrated but known and enjoyed. He assumes it

from the common consciousness of Christians. It is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us.

Next we have God's love not thus subjectively viewed, but its display pointed out and grounded on the great objective fact of the death of Christ for us and outside us. "For while we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for [the] ungodly." (Ver. 6.) How admirable the wisdom of God, and how wholesome! For even the believer convinced of his ungodliness is slow to appreciate his powerlessness. It was good to know that as man all was lost, and he had to do either with God's wrath in unbelief, or with His righteousness by faith. There is then the love of God in us, yea, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost; but the foundation of it is in Christ's death, when we had as little strength as we were far from godliness. This was just the opportunity for grace; and for such Christ died.

It is not after this sort that the creature — that man — loves. "For scarcely for a just [man] will one die." Righteousness, as such, one esteems and values; but it does not draw out love so that one would die for a merely righteous person. Not that man's heart is not capable of strong affections; "for one might for the good14 [man] even dare to die." (Ver. 7.) None among the sons of Adam could surpass such love as this.

"But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Ver. 8.) This is characteristically divine and sovereign. We were powerless, unjust, evil, nothing but sinners, on the one hand; and God, on the other, had no motive for His love other than itself. It is emphatically His own love. As another apostle puts it, God so loved the world that He

gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Only God can love thus. Man, the saint even, must have a motive without; God has none. He, and He only, is love. The spring is within, and He needs no object without to call it forth. Those whom His grace makes objects of His love are wholly and absolutely unlovable as to themselves, yet He loves them spite of all they are. While they were yet sinners, Christ died for them — the fullest proof of their sin and of God's love. Nothing less could avail; nothing more blessed could be done even by Him; nothing different would suit Himself. Thus He commends His own love. What a resting-place for both heart and conscience! He forgets nothing, judges all, yet loves us with a love that is perfect and altogether peculiar.

How admirable are the ways of God in Christianity! There is nothing which opens so vast a field for activity, either in love or in mind; for the truth revealed is the revelation in Christ of Him who is infinite. Yet withal is it the most simple adaptation to the wants of every heart awakened to its real state in relation to God and indeed also to man. Thus the display of His love in the death of Christ comes down to the child, while it wholly transcends the highest soarings of poor but proud philosophy. There is the most profound truth, but it is embodied in facts which speak to every heart and conscience when the will has been dealt with by the Holy Spirit. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us; and in this God commends His own love toward us.

We have now to note the reasoning of the apostle, not indeed to prove the love of God; but, beginning with it as known through the Holy Ghost given to us, he draws

conclusions after a truly divine sort. Thus the consciousness of the Christian has its just and full place, and so has the proof of divine love. However shed abroad in the heart, its demonstration rests on the gift of Christ and His death for us, wholly without us. This presents the love of God toward us absolutely free from mixture with anything in us or of us. Hence, as there was nothing to draw it out and fix it on us, the result is no less sure. The reasoning is not at all from divine counsels about us or promises made to us, but from what God is; and He is love — love proved in Christ's dying for us, while we were yet sinners. "Much more therefore, having been now justified by15 his blood, we shall be saved through him from wrath." Most sound and conclusive!

But he proceeds in the next place to develop and apply it yet more definitely. "For if, being enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Neither the weakness nor the positive enmity of man hindered that love but furnished the deepest occasion for its display. Certainly there is nothing that can frustrate its results now. We were but sinners then; we have been justified in virtue of Christ's blood now. We were foes of God, but have now been reconciled to Him through the death of His Son — infinitely precious in His sight, infinitely efficacious in its effects for us. Impossible that such love could fail for those whom it placed in a relationship so excellent. Assuredly the blood, the death, of Christ has done great things for us: now that he is risen again for our justifying, is all to prove abortive? It could not be. The wrath of God awaits the unbelieving soul, yea, abides on him that submits not

to the Son. But we have received Him, believing on His name; we have been justified in the power of His blood; and we shall be saved through Him from that wrath.

How could it be otherwise? For us even now there is reconciliation. On the ground of the blood of Christ God has reconciled us to Himself. Not only are we no longer alienated, but He has brought us back and put us before Him according to His own grace, not reinstated merely (as if it were a replacing us in Adamic blessing), but according to His own nature and purpose by redemption. It is the due and normal place before God who would bless us in view of Christ and the results of His work for us on the cross. God reconciles: man, the believer, is reconciled, and this through the death of His Son. There was His own love without limit in Christ; nevertheless, even that love alone could not have sufficed to meet the case. No love in se could have saved us who were enemies from His just wrath. The death of Christ puts everything in its due place, and conciliates all. Neither wrath on God's part nor enmity on ours is ignored. Christ shed His blood, and died; the believer is justified and reconciled, and God's love, which so wrought in Christ and for us, will yet have the results of His gracious purpose in perfection. If He justified us when evil and rebellious by the death of Christ, much more (now that we stand in a new and holy relationship where all is made good for us by and with God) shall we be saved by His life.

Yet there is another boast we have as believers, in virtue of Christ's death and resurrection; and it is infinite, though entered on already. It is not now simply in hope of the glory of God; nor is it in our tribulations, looking on to the end of the Lord in them and the consequent

profit meanwhile. This had drawn out a most blessed unfolding of what God is. His love is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost given to us. He commends His own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. There are consequences drawn; but they are not drawn from counsels about us, but from what He is, and has done for us when we were in our sins. There was no motive but in Himself; the objects of His love were the merest sinners. Hence we exult in much more than His ways with us, or the glorious hoped for result; “and not only [so], but also [we are] boasting in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we now received the reconciliation.”

Truly this is the climax: we exult in God! Higher we cannot go. In this we do boast through our Lord Jesus Christ. He has given us the most excellent gifts, but, better than all, Himself. For this, as for all the rest, we are indebted to Jesus; and we may even say, boldly yet most truly, that only through Jesus could God be what He is as the highest spring, ground, and object, of our boasting. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him,” said the Saviour, “God will glorify him in himself and will straightway glorify him.” “And not only so, but we glory in God through our Lord Jesus.” Blessed fruit above, yea and even below!

Through Him also now we received the reconciliation; for so the apostle wrote, not the propitiation, but the “reconciliation.” Without that mighty work of Christ on the cross we could not indeed, being sinners, be reconciled to God; but this is the theme here — the complete making good of our case with God with whom we had been at war, and from whom we were wholly

estranged by our sins. In Romans 3:25, we were shown how God justified us freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom He set forth a propitiatory (or mercy-seat) through faith in His blood. Thus He could be propitious spite of our sins which were fully met by the blood of Jesus. But the first half of Romans 5 brings in His love and consequently the reconciliation, which we have now received through Christ, impossible without His atoning death, but going much farther in itself.

The chapters that follow can scarcely be thought to carry the soul into a deeper blessedness. Privileges are there very fully developed, security is more elaborately affirmed of the Christian in the face of adverse circumstances and enemies, in Romans 8 above all; but I know not that any joy even there rises up to the boasting in God we find here. It is at once the occasion for the heart both of the most profound repose and of the utmost spiritual activity. Worship is its expression. The outflow of the joy of the redeemed in the rest of God is thus anticipated. We begin the new song that will never end; and as it is here and now through our Lord Jesus, is it not so much the sweeter to our God? Thus the deepest inward poison that Satan insinuated into man at the fall is not merely counteracted but triumphed over to the praise of God. He thus acquires His due place; but it is such a place of trustful delight as never could have been for the creature save as the result of Himself known as He is now by redemption — the God who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.

From this verse to the end of Romans 8, we have not so much a distinct portion of the Epistle as a needed and most weighty appendix to that which precedes. Hitherto

the great truth of the remission of the believer's sins has been fully set forth, closing with the blessed privileges which belong to the justified man, but still in that connection — the expiatory efficacy of the blood of Jesus, and this displayed in His resurrection. Precious as it all is, it is not every thing the believer wants. He may be miserable in the discovery of what he finds within himself, and if he know not the truth that applies to his difficulties on this score, he is in danger of yielding to hardness on one side, or of bearing a burdened spirit of bondage on the other. How many saints have never learnt the extent of their deliverance, and go mourning from day to day under efforts which they would be the first to confess unavailing against their inward corruption! How many settle down callously balancing their faith in the forgiveness of their sins by the blood of Christ as a set-off against a plague which they suppose must needs be, and of course with no more power over it than those who are honestly but in vain struggling to get better. Neither the one nor the other understands the value to them of the sentence already executed on the old man in the cross, nor their own new place before God in Christ risen from the dead. This it is the Spirit's object to unfold in what follows.

"On this account, as by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death, and so death passed unto all men for that all sinned." (Ver. 12.)

There is no need to reduce the apostle's language to a formal regularity. The utterance of the Spirit's mind, through a heart and understanding which felt its value as none ever did, clothed itself in a form more akin to that which was enunciated than man's rhetoric ever conceived. A broken sentence, with a long interruption

following before the answer was given, suits the subject here, no less than the most parenthetic chapter in the scripture falls in with the task the apostle had in hand in Ephesians 3. This coincidence of the remarkable form with the great facts and doctrines under discussion cannot be questioned even by those who see nothing beyond the fortuitous even in the Bible. Verses 13-17 form a digression that ends in meeting objections and helping on the argument; and then verse 18 resumes the matter of verse 12 under a more compact shape and furnishes the consequent of what was there introduced but left unfinished.

Nor does there seem to be any great difficulty in apprehending the propriety and bearing of particular phrases in this verse. The opening words have given rise to much needless and unintelligent questioning. The connection is as evident as it is important. God's love being the source, and Christ — the death and resurrection of Christ especially — the channel of redemption with such wondrous results to the believer, "on this account" (διὰ τοῦτο) we are free to approach another side of this mighty and fruitful theme — the two heads with their respective families and the two natures of the believer, derived from Adam and Christ, with the relation of the Holy Ghost to us. In the same verse the last words have also been much debated. Undoubtedly the new subject is sin, the fallen estate of man, marked and closed by death; but there is no right reason to exclude from this and other expressions of the section the actual sinning of mankind. Ἐφ᾽ ᾧ does not mean "in whom;" nor is there warrant, while translating these words correctly, to add to the sentence that all died in the person of Adam. The point beyond all prominent is

the way in which one man may affect the world. However preoccupied the Jew might be by the individual dealing of the law with each soul under it, it was impossible even for him to deny that such is the plain fact standing in the written word at the beginning of the world's sad moral history. Undoubtedly by one man, sin, the thing sin, entered; and this at once broke up the ground on which all was then ordered. As it was rebellion against God, so was it fatal to man. Thereby death, the enemy so dreaded of man, entered.

Thus the change most solemnly affecting the world came in long before the Jew existed or consequently before their boasted law was given. The Jew must look somewhere more largely, and accurately too, into the scriptures. He must not flatter his national vanity or religious pride with the delusion that all hinges either on Israel or on their law. Adam was before them both and affects all mankind (the Jews not excepted). True, the momentous history that shows us how sin and death entered is humbling indeed; but anything will the heart turn into a vaunt. At any rate, that incalculably grave event was outside the Jew in itself, and in consequences went far beyond them. It was not outside man, but contrariwise "by one man;" yet its effect, death, permeated the world.

But the apostle takes care to add to this one man's sin those of all others — "and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned." Thus the last clause is expressly to guard against the exclusion of the sins of men generally. We must therefore beware of enfeebling either side of the case. In the very scripture which opens the discussion of the universal bearing of Adam's sin on the human race (for it is no question here of Israel in

particular) the connection of men's own sins with their death is carefully added. No one doubts that infants and idiots die, and this through Adam's sin; but the Spirit does not exclude the consequence where personal guilt can apply. The position of ruin to which the fall consigned the race is not severed from the evil workings of the nature now fallen in all men. Adam's sin is the cause but not the sole account and whole case of the bitter lot of man.

Now if one man, according to God's word and consistently with His character and ways, could plunge the world in death by sin, was it inconsistent with the true God by one man to bring in justification of life which addresses itself to all men? This the apostle proceeds to show elaborately and with divine precision in the verses that follow, which I will not further anticipate.

The parenthesis now begins. The apostle meets a possible objection, and certainly proves that the existence of sin is independent of law. "For until [the] law sin was in [the] world; but sin is not put to account when there is no law." Thus the Jew could not even make the miserable boast (for what will not man boast of?) that the law preceded sin. The very object of law is to prove the sin of men. Alas! it is not confined to Israel; it is universal. "Sin was in the world," where the law was not. When it was given by Moses, it put sin to account; but sin was already there, and far more widely than the sphere which law contemplated when it came. Law could work no remedy for sinners; it could only register — not get rid of — sin. Law gave sin the character of offence; sin, where law spoke, became the transgression of a positive and known commandment. "Where no law

is, there is no transgression." It is a pernicious mistake to understand that the apostle denies sin to be where no law exists. Sin is not the transgression of the law, though transgression assuredly is sin. But sin is a wider and deeper thing. The Authorized Version notwithstanding, 1 John 3:4 teaches really otherwise — that sin is lawlessness, and not necessarily the violation of law. Thus both apostles are restored to harmony, instead of either clashing mischievously or tempting an expositor to a still more mischievous paring down of the truth to save appearances. Never is this needed with scripture. As being the word of God, we must eschew and resent all such manipulations of its language. It is only our ignorance which finds difficulties; it is ill-will which sets one passage in antagonism to another. If John could have meant us to gather that sin and transgression of law are the same thing, nothing could save the statement from opposition to our text.

This is yet more apparent from the support the Apostle Paul adds in verse 14 to what was laid down in verse 13: "But death reigned from Adam to Moses even over those that sinned not in the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was coming." The two points are named when a positive commandment was imposed by God. Adam had a law; by Moses the law was made known. Between them there was no dealing with men by either the one or the other; yet men sinned as scripture abundantly shows. Hence death reigned, for it is the wages (not of transgression only but) of sin. It reigned in the case of Adam and Eve; it reigned from Moses' day; but not at either epoch only, but between them, when there was no law. Death reigned over all those that sinned; for sin they did, even though it was not in the

likeness of our first parents' transgression. Their antediluvian posterity, as well as those who followed the flood down to the gift of law from Sinai, could not sin as their father in Eden or the children of Israel after they heard the ten words. But they sinned, they did their own will, they were corrupt and violent, as they afterwards added idolatry to their evil ways. Accordingly death reigned even over them; for they were sinners, though not transgressors, like Adam at first and Israel afterwards.

It is interesting to note that the apostle refers here to Hosea 6:7: "But they, like men, transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me." The margin gives the true sense, which is lost in the vagueness of "men" in the text. "They, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant." Israel had the law, as Adam a law; and both transgressed the bond by which they were held. But all between Adam and Moses were on a different footing. They were not a whit less truly sinners, but they had no law or laws proposed to them by God which they broke. So the nations in contrast with Israel are ever styled "sinners of the Gentiles." Having sinned without law, they perished without law; while the Jews who had the law sinned in the law and were thus transgressors, which the Gentiles who had not the law could not be. But the Jews were not sinners only but transgressors. Hence it is written, "Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." The law put sin to their account. Not so

with the Gentiles: God winked at these times of ignorance.

Nothing, however, is said of Gentiles in our verses, for we are here led up to times before the Jews were called, or the Gentiles consequently could be left aside. We see the sons of Adam down to the promulgation of God's law at Sinai. If on the one hand there was no law to charge sin to the account of the guilty, there was on the other hand the reign of death, and this over sinners, if not transgressors, even over those that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Men at large were guilty and died accordingly. We are here then in presence, not of the law and its special aims and its peculiar sphere, but of sin flowing down from its first source, Adam, through all the streams which descended thence. If law was not there to set sin to account, as it does precisely and in detail, their death was the witness that they were all sinners, whose dread wages were duly paid. Thus Adam, as we shall see more fully soon, is a figure of the coming One, of Christ (i.e., of a federal head who was to follow the first).16 Having spoken of Adam as typical of Christ, the apostle at once proceeds to guard and clear the statement. The point of comparison is the bearing of a head on his family. He that believed the scripture (and every Jew was tenacious of the Pentateuch) must own that Adam's fall brought a condition of sin and a sentence of death on his descendants. Such was the sorrowful beginning of the Old Testament, such the key to the history of the race ever since. It was in vain then to make all a question of law. Not so: granted that what the law says it speaks to those under the law. The fact was plain that the fundamental book of the law shows a far deeper, wider,

earlier principle, yea, so early that it embraces all the children of Adam from the first. Could any Jew deny the scripture, the facts, or the moral ground? It was certain then, and must be conceded by hint who believes the first book of Moses that Adam's fall involved in universal ruin those who sprang from him; for he, while innocent, had no son! His family headship was only after he sinned.

Now if it were a righteous dealing, as no Jew would dispute, so to involve a whole race in the consequences of what one man, their father, did amiss, Israel of all men should be the last to question the principle and the wondrous grace of God in the headship of the Lord Jesus. What Adam was to his descendants in evil and its consequences, Christ is in good to all who are His by faith. Thus the first man is a figure of the Second.

"But not as [is] the offence, so also the free gift; for if by the offence of the one the many died, much more the grace of God and the gift in the grace of the one man Jesus Christ abounded unto the many." (Ver. 15.) Thus the apostle qualifies the analogy. The difference is an immense advantage on the side of good. How could it be otherwise with such a source of goodness as God, and with such a channel and ground and object as the man Christ Jesus? To punish, smite, destroy, was a grief, so to speak, to God; to bless is His delight, and now to the full, since Christ has made it righteous by the removal of all hindrances. The superior dignity of Christ and the exhaustless fountain of God's grace of which He was the expression secure the vast preponderance for the free gift, as against the offence.

Nor is it a difference of measure only but of kind. “And not as by one having sinned [is] the gift; for the judgment [was] from one unto condemnation, but the free gift from many offences unto justification.” (Ver. 16.) The people or parties affected were before us in verse 15; the things which indicate it are prominent here. In the former contrast “the many” were respectively made to depend on “the one,” though “much more” for those in relation to Christ. In the contrast before us one act on the part of the head that sinned sentenced into condemnation; whereas the free gift, spite of many offences, was for a state of accomplished righteousness.

And this he confirms by the overflowing results in the next verse 17: “For if by the offence of the one death reigned by the one, much more they that receive the abundance of the grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by the one, Jesus Christ.” Thus the result is triumphant, and this not only for men dead by sin, but also for those that had the aggravation of offences under law. Believers being Christ’s, let them have been what they may, Gentile no less than Jewish, receive abundance of grace and of the free gift of righteousness, and shall reign in life by the one Jesus Christ. It is not merely that life is to reign, in contrast with death, but they shall reign in life through Christ. Calvin thinks these two equivalent; what is said is really far more blessed. For faith the contrast of grace with the first man always exceeds. If the balance is not so exact in rhetoric, the believer may enjoy so much the more the precious affluence of the word and the Spirit now, as he will the crowning blessedness in glory by and by.

It is evidently an argument drawn from the righteous governmental ways of God to His grace. If, looking at Adam, the head of nature, it was worthy of Him not to limit the consequences of sin to him who fell, surely it was much more worthy to extend the effects of grace according to His own nature and the glory of Christ from Him who rose to all who derived their life from such a source! and this whether we consider the objects (ver. 15), the circumstances (ver. 16), or the results. (Ver. 17.)

The argument is now resumed from verse 12, but strengthened by the parenthetical instruction of verses 13-17. This both enforced the analogy between Adam and Christ for evil and good over those who pertain to them respectively, and also pointed out the enormous preponderance of good over evil in Christ, as is but due to the glory of His person and the grace of His work. If the one by a single offence involved all that were his in death, the other brings blessing to His family spite of countless offences.

“So then as by one offence [the bearing was] unto all men unto condemnation, so also by one accomplished righteousness unto all men unto justifying of life. For as by the disobedience of the one man the many were constituted sinners, so also by the obedience of the one the many shall be constituted righteous.” (Ver. 18, 19.)

There is no reasonable doubt that the marginal correction of our English Bible (“by one offence”) should be adopted, in preference to the text — “by one man’s offence,” however weighty and from various sides the names which have espoused the latter. The Sinai Manuscript actually inserts ἀνθρώπου here, as we find in some minuscules also. But this is an unquestionable

error. The point of the verse, as it appears to me, was to present the direction respectively, apart from the actual issues, whether on Adam's part or on Christ's. Hence the strikingly elliptic, as well as the broadly characteristic, form of verse 18. There is no need (as in the Authorized Version) to bring in κρίμα or χάρισμα from the parenthesis. If we understand ἐγένετο17 [it was], this suffices, though we may conform the phrase more to English ears by saying "the bearing was." But it is more to maintain the idea of direction here by giving εἰς the force of "unto," "for," or "towards" rather than "upon," which is more suited to convey the notion of the definitive effect or result. This, we shall see, it is the object of the following verse 19 to supply, and in contradistinction from verse 18. And, as has been observed by another, this is confirmed by Romans 3:22 where we have two classes distinguished — εἰς πάντας, καὶ ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας (easily merged into one δὶ ὁμοιοτέλευτον or the double occurrence of πάντας, whereas it is hardly possible to conceive one clause enlarged into two). Here the distinctive force of εἰς and ἐπί is plain: the former gives the bearing of God's righteousness by faith of Jesus Christ "unto all" (and so the gospel is preached to every creature); the latter gives the result (and, as we know the gospel has its blessed effect "upon all those that believe," and upon them only).

The meaning, then, I conceive to be that "as through one offence" all men were threatened with condemnation; so through one accomplished righteousness all had the door opened unto a justifying (not by blood alone, but) of life in Christ risen from the dead. But therein we see only the native tendency, on one side of Adam's act, and

on the other of Christ's, without taking into account the modification of God's effectual grace or of man's persistent unbelief.

Accordingly, verse 19 is requisite to complete this part of the subject. "For as by one man's disobedience the many were constituted sinners, so by the obedience of the one shall the many be constituted righteous." It is the final result which is here contemplated; and as this is certainly and necessarily limited to the household of faith, it would have been false to have said πάντας "all" in the last clause. For it is not a question in any of these verses of merely raising the dead just and unjust, as many divines in old and modern times have unintelligently imagined. For the vast majority of mankind, dying in unbelief, must rise for a resurrection of judgment, which is as far removed as it is possible for facts and words to make it from justification or justifying of life.

First the scope and then the result of Adam's position and of Christ's are here set before us and explained by the Holy Spirit. As it is certain from scripture that not all men but only such as are Christ's have life, eternal life, and are justified by faith, so in this verse, devoted to the presentation of the result, it was not possible to adopt a larger term common to the two heads (the disobedient and the obedient) than "the many" or "the mass" (οἱ πόλλοι) identified with each. In point of fact the Adam party, according to nature and for some time, embraces the whole human race; and therefore in this way "the many" in the first clause of verse 19 may be said to answer to "all men" in verse 18. But this I must be forgiven for considering a superficial method of solving the question, and altogether unwarrantable as applied

to both classes. The second οἱ πόλλοι is unequivocally and exclusively “the children” given to Christ and in no possible sense humanity as actually saved and recovered. They are not identical with the “all men” of the verse before; for there it was but the gracious aspect of the work of Christ, and therefore not (as some say) all men who receive and embrace its truth, but universal. Here it is the positive effect, and so restricted to those who believe (i.e., those who live through Christ, as the preceding οἱ πόλλοι derive their being from fallen Adam). There is no “total” in this verse, but “the [known] many” in relation to “the one” definite person who represented each his own company. It is not the same total in the two verses, nor is there any total expressed in the latter of them. As the ruin of Adam went to destroy all the race, so the work of Christ goes out for the blessing of all. As in fact the Adam mass were constituted sinners through his disobedience, so by Christ’s obedience His own are constituted righteous. Here all is explicit result, and not character; and hence the article is used in Greek as pointedly as the preceding verse exhibited the anarthrous construction: in both cases with the utmost accuracy, and with a perfection altogether admirable, with which no writings of man can compare. Where the apostle speaks of “all men,” the aim is to show the tendency whether from the first man or from the Second; where he speaks of “the many,” the definitive effect is set before us.

Thus Calvinism and Arminianism are both at fault; and the truth conveyed is larger than the one and more definite than the other, refusing the fetters of human system, and yet exhibiting a precise as well as an infinite character, being the revealed truth of God.

Thus the doctrine of headship, and of a race or family depending on the head for evil or good, has been distinctly laid down; and Adam and Christ stand confronted as those respectively under whom all ultimately must be classed. This necessarily brought in a wholly different principle from the law which is necessarily individual in its character, and claims from each under itself what he must do if he pretends to stand for himself before God. But the apostle does not close this part of the subject without a notice of the relative place of the law. Since he introduced the theme of sin, as distinguished from sins, in connection with the two heads, he had only alluded to the law negatively to show that sin is a deeper question than law, and, so far from depending on it, existed before it: only it is not put to account when no law exists.

Now we are told what was the true object of law. The Jew, and all Judaizers, at once assume that it could be for nothing else than righteousness. Alas! the blindness of man at his best estate where human thoughts prevail, and not the understanding of the revealed mind of God. But he is fallen; and fallen man thinks as highly of himself as meanly of Christ. Nothing but this can account for the perverse ingenuity with which, even in spite of the blessed light of the gospel, the truth as to this is eluded and opposed. What can be plainer than the inspired statement? “But law came in that the offence might abound.” One can see how it is that men dislike a sentence which annihilates their moral ground; but it is an astonishing proof of the deleterious effects of theology that christian men can uphold their false systems of thought against such words of inspiration.

Every word is uttered with the greatest accuracy. Thus the apostle speaks of the legal state of things, and hence employs the word νόμος, “law,” here as in verse 13 without the article. It is clearly the Mosaic law that is in question; yet if it be, Middleton allows that the rejection of the article is not here authorized by any of the canons (i.e., of his own treatise). And this is true. The case is one which demonstrates the defectiveness of his theory. Even in verse 13 the preposition has nothing to do with the true solution; and his notion though still followed by very many scholars, that the use or non-use of the article is a license after prepositions, is a total fallacy. It may call for more nicety of observation to account for cases with certain prepositions, but nothing more. The regular usage, with or without prepositions, is to present a phrase in the anarthrous form wherever a characteristic state is meant rather than a fact or an abstraction. So here it was the state of things when God gave His law through Moses to Israel which enters the discussion; and, hence, νόμος (not ὁ ν.) was the correct form. Again, the reasoning of Macknight is of no force; for it is not the point whether the Mosaic law was ushered into the world with pomp and notoriety, or privily. Not the historical fact, but the resulting state is here meant. Further, there is no need to take παρεισῆλθεν as necessarily implying in entrance by stealth or privily. The true idea appears to be that the legal state came in by the by. Neither was it the original mould, in which man was made, nor is it the final condition to which he is destined. It came in not directly, but ancillarily, for a special though subordinate purpose, between the entrance of sin and the coming of the Saviour. Hence law in the abstract is uncalled for, even if the phrase would admit of it. But this is carefully

excluded, quite as much as giving prominence to the objective historical fact, which also would be out of place.

But law, the legal state, came in by the way in order that the offence might abound. The sense is not that sin might abound: God is in no way or degree its author. Sin, as had been already shown, was in the world, quite independently of law and before it was given by Moses. But law came in, that the offence might abound; that, sin being already there, its evil might be made manifest and horrible by taking the shape of open contempt of God's known authority. This was worthy of God and wholesome for man. And such was the object and issue of the legal state. Sin, I repeat, was not created by it; but it was provoked by the restraint put on its gratification: the very presence of God's revealed claim on man's conscience made the offence to abound. The evil of man was there and at work; and the expression and authoritative demand of his duty only drew out unmistakably what was at work. Self-will only the more chafes, the more it is subjected to an authority which opposes its every desire. But this is the truth of man's moral state; and it is good, as far as it goes, that he should know the truth about himself.

There is no reason therefore to escape from the plain and certain meaning of these inspired words. Chrysostom was wrong in this, and has misled thousands. He denied that the apostle spoke of intention or aim, but only of result, and fell into the error of saying that the law was given, not that the offence might abound, but to diminish and take it away. This was to contradict the apostle, not to expound him.

So, again, Macknight asks if one can imagine that no offence abounded in the world which could be punished with death till the law of Moses was promulgated? and that grace did not superabound till the offence against the law abounded? He therefore argues for “the law of Nature,” which silently entered the moment Adam and Eve were reprieved. What can be more distressing than this confusion?

It must be evident to him who believes the word of God, and understands His dealings ever so little, that between the fall and the promulgation of the law at Sinai was precisely the time when men were left to prove what flesh is without the restraint of law; that afterward Israel became the proof that a legal state did not in itself mend matters, but caused the offence to abound. So the apostle instructs us in this chapter, the truth of which is otherwise apparent in the facts of the Old Testament and the condition of Israel.

“But where sin abounded, grace far exceeded; that, as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Here too it is impossible to conceive language more apposite or precise. The apostle does not say, it will be noticed, where “the offence” abounded; for this would limit the sphere to the area of the legal state. All that wherein a Jew boasted was the causing the offence to abound. What a withering of pride without an exaggeration or an effort! But grace went out in its triumph far beyond the narrow bounds of law; it went out into the world where sinful man lay, not to Israel only. “Where sin abounded, grace far exceeded.” And

grace too had its characteristic purpose, or God rather by it. What was this? “That as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” Here if anywhere is an aim and result which do honour even to God and His Son. In presence of such a gospel we are not ashamed, but boast. To vaunt of law is to vaunt of what condemns and kills, for it makes the offence to abound. In grace we may and ought to exult. God delights in it. It came, as did truth, by Christ Jesus who is full of both. And specially may we boast, that grace reigned. Had law reigned, what must have been our just doom! But grace reigns (not without but) through righteousness; for the work of redemption is done, and God justifies in consequence according to His sense of its worth. Thus it is not more surely a fountain of grace than a righteous ground and channel. And hence the issue is according to God; it is eternal life, and this through Jesus Christ our Lord. He is risen from the dead, and gives life more abundantly. All is thus as secure as it is perfect. God is glorified as He should be; and this, as it ought to be, through the only One, even Jesus, who has retrieved all and turned by His death and resurrection even sin itself into an occasion of such a glorifying of God, and such a blessing of the believer, as could never else have been. These are the ways, and this the victory, grace through our Lord Jesus.

13 This is an instance of a reading which differs from that given in the great majority of first-class authorities (the Sinai, Alexandrian, Vatican, Rescript of Paris, Clermont uncials, many excellent cursives, ancient versions, and fathers), yet, as it appears to me, most in keeping with the requirements of the context. For

ἔχωμεν (“let us have”) brings in an exhortation which agrees neither with what goes before nor with what follows, as the christian reader can judge for himself. The fact is that nothing is easier than to account for the various reading, for the interchange of the short with the long vowel or a diphthong that corresponds to it is most familiar to all acquainted with the critical history of the text. Thus inadvertence may have introduced the long ω instead of the short o. Besides, the subjunctive suits man’s mind, when conscious of wants Godward (and such is the state of most), rather than the indicative which expresses the blessing possessed already. Just so we see in 1 Corinthians 15, as another has remarked, where the Vatican stands alone of the Uncials in supporting some modern copies against the mass of ancient MSS., which favour an unquestionable error., A, C, D, E, F, G, J, K, with the great majority of cursives, the Italic, Vulgate, Coptic, Gothic, Sclavonic, and many ancient ecclesiastical writers read φορέσωμεν, the subjunctive (instead of the indicative as in the common and correct text).

14 The article is here inserted, not before

δικαίου but before

ἀγαθοῦ. One would hardly die for any just person simply as such; but it might be for some known good man, whose excellence had powerfully acted on the heart of another.

15 The preposition

ἐν here and in the next verse I have translated “by.” It is a far more intimate relation (= “in virtue of,” “in the power of”) than is expressed by διά, which, with the genitive as in each of these verses, signifies a means or

instrument (“through”), as sometimes also in a certain condition (“with”)- a sense which it occasionally bears in the accusative also. Compare Galatians 4:13 with Romans 2:27.

16 I am surprised Mr. Green should understand

τοῦ μέλλοντος “of the future;” for the context points unequivocally to a person, and to one person only, Christ, not to time coming merely.

17 It appears to me, because of contextual reasons, that ἀπέβη (as Meyer, Winer, etc.) is rather strong.

Romans 6

That grace should so triumphantly rise above sin, even where sin abounded most, leads to the various objections of unbelief and the answers of the Holy Spirit for our furtherance and joy of faith. Grace in no way slights sin. From first to last Christianity and evil are proved to be incompatible.

“What then shall we say? Let us continue in sin that grace may abound? Let it not be. We who died to sin, how shall we still live in it? Are ye ignorant that as many of us as were baptized unto Christ Jesus were baptized unto his death? Therefore we were buried with him by baptism unto death, that, as Christ was raised from among [the] dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Ver. 1-4.)

Is this then the deduction from the gospel of God? May we continue in sin, in order that His grace may be the more richly displayed? Away with such a thought. But here the apostle deals with the wicked inference or imputation, not from its intrinsic heinousness, nor from its reflection on the character of God, as in Romans 3:8, but from its flat contradiction of Christianity in its first principles. It is not again a motive drawn from the sense we have of our Saviour’s love; it is not here a question how can we so wound His heart or grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

The apostle replies from the starting-point of each confessor of Christ. Not merely did He die for our sins, laying us under an infinite obligation, but we died to sin: 18 how then shall we longer live in it? This is the meaning of our baptism. Are you ignorant of so plain a

truth? It is not some special quality of blessing that is the privilege of a few Christians only; it is the common property of all the baptized. As many of us as were baptized unto Christ Jesus were baptized unto His death.

Thus is laid down clearly and beyond question the fundamental truth that not more surely did Christ die for us, than we died to sin in His death. Our baptism sets forth this as well as that. The conclusion is inevitable: “We were buried then with him by baptism unto death, that, as Christ was raised from among the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Let us weigh the immense importance of this truth stated with the simplicity and the force characteristic of a divine revelation.

Evangelicalism (whether in national or dissenting bodies) takes its stand (at least it used to do so) on the truth of Christ dying for our sins. This is most true, and a capital truth; without which there is no bringing of the soul to God, no divine judgment of our iniquities, no possible sense of pardon. But it is very far from being the truth even of the Saviour’s death, to speak of no more now. Hence evangelicalism, as such, having no real apprehension of our death in Christ, never understands the force and place of baptism, is habitually infirm as to christian walk, and is apt to take the comfort of forgiveness by the blood of Christ so as to mix with the world and enjoy the life that now is, often helping on the delusion of ameliorating man and improving Christendom.

Mysticism on the other hand, whether Catholic or Protestant, dissatisfied with the worldly case and self-complacency of the evangelicals, is ever pining after a deeper reality, but seeks it within. Hence the continual effort of the pietist school is to die to self and so to enjoy God, unless perhaps with the few who flatter themselves that they have arrived at such a state of perfection as they can rest in. But for the mass, and I suppose indeed all whose conscience retains its activity, they never go beyond godly desires and inward strainings after holiness. They cannot dwell consciously in God's love to them as a settled fact known in Christ, producing self-forgetfulness in presence of His own perfect grace which made Christ to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. The system tends even in its fairest samples to turn the eye inwardly in a search after a love which may aspire to resemble as closely as possible the love of God, and so satisfy itself with the hope of a life ever higher and higher. Hence pious sentimentalism, which is little more than imagination at work in religion, reigns in the heart, not grace through righteousness.

Thus the ground the apostle here insists on is ignored by evangelicals and mystics; and indeed in Christendom at large it is excluded by its legalism and ordinances as decidedly as by rationalism. They are all, in every part, judged by the simple elementary truth couched under and expressed in baptism, that the Christian is dead to sin. To teach that we ought to die to sin is well meant, but it is not the truth, and therefore can but deeply injure the soul in its real wants. The true view is, no doubt, the reverse of death in sin; it is death to sin. Grace gives us this blessed portion — gives it now in this

world from the commencement of our career — gives it once for all as the one baptism recognizes. Hence the Christian is false to the primary truth he confesses who should live still in sin. In his baptism he owns he died in Christ. He is bound to walk accordingly — as one already and always dead to sin.

Is there then no mortification? no practical carrying out of death with Christ? Unquestionably. It is the constant duty of the Christian; but then, mark well the difference: — christian practice consists, not in our dying to sin, but in our putting to death our members which are on the earth, even the various lusts of the old man. In his baptism the believer openly renounces all hope of himself or the first man; nor does he, like a Jew, merely hope for a Messiah to be born and reign on the throne of David. In baptism he confesses His death, and his own death therein — not only his sin but its end in the death of Christ. If we had not another life, who could thus give up his own life as dead? Yet what is attested in baptism is not life but death — our death to sin in Christ's death — which we could not do save as living through Him.

Thus it is as different from Jewish ground as from that of the Gentiles who know not God, some of whose sages in West as well as East have tried to die to sin. The distinctive christian ground is that, as baptized unto Christ's death, we died to Pin from the commencement of our career. "We were buried then with him in baptism unto death, that, even as Christ was raised from among the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life." It is a poor interpretation to take the Father's glory as equivalent to His almightiness or power. Every motive which animates Him morally, every way and end whereby He is set forth in His

perfections, all that goes forth in excellence and delight, not toward the creature only but His Son, was exercised in raising up the Lord Jesus. After such a standard are we too called to walk in newness of life. It is no longer a question of original creation, still less of fallen Adam, but of Christ, who is the life of which by grace we live; and He is risen. May we walk accordingly!

The apostle carries out the comparison of our blessing after the pattern of Christ to actual resurrection. “For if we have become united in nature with the likeness of his death, we shall be also [with that] of his resurrection, knowing this that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin. For he that died has been justified from sin.”

Resurrection, as far as we are concerned, is a matter of hope. We have part with Christ in His death; we shall have in resurrection also for our bodies. Meanwhile, we, as alive through Him risen, have all the benefit of His death as a power delivering from sin. Our old man we know to be crucified with Him. Without this the root of evil had not been dealt with, nor consequently had we against self that weapon of divine temper which a God of resurrection puts in our hands. Nor is it a feeling — a consciousness — of death which might only minister to self-satisfaction. It is a fact objectively known, though only within the ken of faith: knowing (γινώσκοντες) this, etc. Thus only as a practical means can the body of sin come to nought, that we should no more be slaves to it. Here the point of need is liberty from sin to do the holy will of God for those who were only slaves of sin. There is no other way, though when we take this the path of faith, there is much to help us along the road. If I

have died, it is evident that there is no longer a question of sinning. A dead man cannot sin more; and the Christian is given to know himself dead in Christ's death that he may henceforth enjoy this quittance from the power of sin. How can one dead be charged with going on in sin? For he that died (ἀποθάνων, the completed act) has been justified (

δεδικαίωται, the subsisting effect of the past action) from sin. It is a deliverance worthy of God both in His wisdom and in His holiness; and as it is of grace, so it is by faith.

Hence verse 8 repeats the conclusion as to the future which follows from the death and resurrection of Christ. "Now if we died with Christ, we believe we shall also live with him." Our condition when actually risen is once more anticipated and rehearsed. "Knowing that Christ being raised from among [the] dead dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him." It is interesting to note the difference here. We only know because we are taught it, as a truth outside us, that our old man has been crucified with Christ. It is not really, what so many would like to make it, a matter of subjective experience; for this would flatter the flesh in its pious frames and aspirations, instead of honouring the grace of God in the death of Christ. On the other hand we have the inward conscious knowledge (εἰδότες) that Christ, being risen, dies no more: death has no more dominion over Him. It is not a mere outward fact of knowledge: we feel from our soul that so it is and must be. Sin never had dominion over Him, but death had, that God might be glorified, sin judged, Satan's power abolished, and we delivered.

“For in that he died, he died to sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth to God.” Life has now the victory, so much the more strikingly and conspicuously because that death seemed to gain it at first. Thus as sin never had the least advantage, so death has lost its claim through His bowing to it and thus securing our freedom who have part in His death. If sin’s wages are death, what a gain to us His death has been who, personally without sin, was made sin by God for us, as truly as we became the righteousness of God in Him.

Not of course that on the cross He was not as holy as in all that preceded it; but He gave Himself to be judicially treated according to all that was imputed to Him, and for which in grace He became responsible. In nothing did He spare Himself; in nothing did God, who forsook Him thus identified with our sin and all its consequences under divine judgment, that we might come out free. By dying all was ended; and we, having our part with Him, have done with sin. “So also do ye reckon yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” We are entitled so to reckon ourselves; we ought to do so; we wrong the death and resurrection of Christ if we do not account ourselves thus dead to sin and alive to God in Him — a great and wondrous boon to those who delight to have an end of sin, a real if but a small part of Christianity, yet even this, I may say, ignored in Christendom, its force misunderstood, its joy untasted.

It is to be observed that verse 11 carries the subject beyond the reasoning of verse 8, where our living with Christ is shown to be a just and sure consequence for the believer: if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. It is future. But now we have a weighty present result founded on what intervenes,

especially verse 10. Christ died to sin once and lives to God; and He is the life as well as the resurrection. As thus alive to God, all closed as to sin in His death, we live of His life, and are thus also to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God, not here with Him, but through or in virtue of (ἐν) Him. This epistle never, in its doctrinal province, goes so far as union with Him, though it does employ the truth of the body to enforce the right use of spiritual gifts on Christians. In the Epistle to the Ephesians we are shown to be quickened together with Christ and raised up together with Him. Here however we are alive to God in Him.

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that ye should obey its lusts.”19 (Ver. 12.) The truth is then, not that sin is dead, but that we are entitled by Christ’s death and resurrection to regard ourselves in the account of faith as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign. It is personified here as elsewhere sometimes, seeking the upper hand in our mortal body so as to subject us to its lusts. But through Christ it has no claim over us. As He lives to God who died to sin once for all, so also we are to reckon ourselves done with the dominion of sin and not to obey its lusts. As dead to sin we owe it no allegiance whatever.

Nor is this all. The apostle pushes the matter farther. “Neither yield your members instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but yield yourselves to God as alive from out of dead [men], and your members instruments of righteousness to God.” (Ver. 13.) The first occurrence of “yield” means, in the form of the word, the habit of yielding; the second, by its form, implies the surrender already made. It is not a gradual improvement

of the nature or the will as men speak, but the giving up of ourselves in a single and complete act to God as alive from among the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness to God.

This is the new place of positive blessing given to us, counting ourselves thus by faith. Such is the present practical consequence, as we have seen also what is future for us. “For sin shall not have dominion over you” — not sin as a personified ruler now, but no sin in any shape or measure; “for ye are not under law20 but under grace.” (Ver. 14.) This closes the foregoing discussion and prepares for a new step taken in the argument following.

What a blessed comfort thus far and how uncompromisingly laid down in the very portion that refutes the flesh’s misuse of God’s mercy and of the Christian’s liberty! “Ye are not under law but under grace.”

It is painful to see how those who profess to believe the gospel, valuing both Christ and His work, elude the force of His word, and essay to foist on the Christian subjection to law, which the Spirit is here flatly negativing. The law is the strength of sin; for by its restraint and interdict it can but provoke the flesh. It never gives power of holiness any more than life: grace, not law, quickens, saves, and strengthens. If believers could be under law, sin must have dominion over them.

It is in vain to say that the apostle is here treating of our being accounted righteous in Christ. Not so: he is discussing the walk of the Christian in answer to the cavil that grace tends to sanction lax ways. It is a question therefore of a rule of life, of its principle and

spring. The objectors then as now had fallen into the error of supposing that the law, though unable to give the remission of sins, is the rule of righteousness for the Christian. Justification from sin, not from sins, is the point in hand, and as the blood of Christ washes away the sins of the believer in the sight of God, so he is cleansed from sin; not simply by Christ's dying for him, but by his dying with Christ. For he that died is justified from sin. The nature is in question, and consequently the walk of the believer; and the remedy here, as everywhere, is in Christ; but it is in death with Him of which baptism is the sign.

Nor can there be a less holy doctrine than the notion so prevalent among the Puritans as well as others still less intelligent and with less godly desire, that the death of Christ has taken away the condemnatory power of the law for faith, but left the Christian under it as a directory of his ways. A law which can no longer condemn departure from itself or those guilty of it is nugatory. It is of the essence of law not only to prescribe duty but to condemn any and every infraction of its requirements. Hence our apostle teaches elsewhere, "as many as are of the works of the law" (i.e., as many people as are on the ground or principle of works of law, not merely as many as have broken the law) "are under the curse."

It is false doctrine, then, and really Antinomian in its basis, that the law has lost its sting or condemnatory power for those under it. Such is not the boon of redemption. The law is not dead. It retains all its force against the wicked, as the apostle shows. It is not an evil thing but excellent, when used lawfully; but it is unlawfully imposed on the righteous and holy. The

Christian, even if he had been a Jew, is not under law but under grace; and this not by the death of law, which cannot be and ought not to be, but by his own death with Christ. As a dead man can sin no more, so the law does not apply to one viewed as dead. Such is God's way of considering the Christian, not only atoned for but dead with Christ; and faith considers him who possesses it as God does. Thus the law remains inviolable; and the deliverance of the Christian consists, not in the weakening or even mitigation of the law, but in the change of place which grace gives. The believer died with Christ, and is thus justified from sin and freed from law. Nebuchadnezzar's furnace did not burn the less, though the three Hebrews were preserved unscathed. The curse fell on Christ crucified; the believer is in Christ risen. "There is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Verse 15 puts a new question. It is no longer, as in verse 1, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may exceed?" This is the primary objection to grace for Christians just delivered from the ruin of the first man. Moral relaxation is dreaded, if where sin abounded, grace still more exceeded. It was met by counter questions which prove that grace does not merely help by motive against sin, but delivers the believer from it by that most decisive and ultimate weapon, even death. How shall we that died to sin live any longer in it? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized unto Christ Jesus were baptized unto his death? Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism unto death.... He that died is justified from sin. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Christ Jesus

our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign. Such is the apostle's argument in answer to the first question.

"What then? are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? Let it not be." (Ver. 15.) Thus his second question is not answered by our death with Christ. That we cannot live longer in sin is conclusively set aside by the fact that we died to sin with Christ and therefore are not to abide in it. All this sinful first Adam life is closed to us, both for the future in resurrection and for the present in the part we have with Christ for our souls. Christ dead and risen is the pattern for faith; His death is the principle of present deliverance from the reign of sin. But do we not need a mighty spring to move, and cheer, and strengthen us along the way of the Lord? Unquestionably we do; and this is none other than grace. Nothing else could keep the believer from yielding his members as implements of unrighteousness to sin, nothing else could enable him to act consistently with that surrender of himself, once for all, to God and of his members as implements of righteousness to God, which is characteristic of the Christian. And we are under grace, the power for holiness, as the Jew was under law, the strength of the sin he was so slow to feel and confess. And therefore sin, which for the present has absolutely governed the chosen nation, shall not lord it over the Christian. May we then sin because we are not under law that condemns, but under God's free unmerited favour that imputes no sin, but justifies and saves? Far be it from us. Is it thus we would or could use our liberty? What could be more base? If I am by Christ thus freed, for what, for whom, shall I use my freedom? "Know ye not that to what ye yield yourselves bondmen to obey, ye are bondmen to what ye obey, whether of sin

unto death or of obedience unto righteousness?”21 (Ver. 16.)

This again is another characteristic of Christianity. Christ makes the soul, once the slave of sin, to be free, and calls it to stand fast in His liberty, never again to be held in a yoke of bondage. For there is no middle ground or other alternative. But grace uses this liberty to be so much the more His bondman, free from sin to serve the Lord Christ. It was precisely what He did here below, evermore the true and perfect servant. Into this love always leads. With Him we have communion in this, and in order to express its absoluteness we, however free from our old slavery, are said to be bondmen of Jesus, His will and work, or, as suits the argument here, “of obedience unto righteousness.” The Christian’s righteousness is never doing things because they are right, which is pride, independence, or deification of self, but because they are God’s will for us. We must obey in order to practical righteousness. How complete the change from all we were! “But thanks to God that ye were bondmen of sin, but ye obeyed from [the] heart [the] form of teaching into which ye were delivered.” (Ver. 17.)

Man does not suffice for himself; for he is but a creature and therefore necessarily dependent on God. If he seeks to be his own master, if he affects independence, he only falls the more thoroughly under Satan; and, instead of obeying God, he becomes the slave of sin. From this servitude redemption delivers the believer, but only to bind him heartily (and so much the more because under grace, not law) to do as the christian form of teaching instructs us; for obedience is always according to, and measured by, the relationship in which we stand. Legal

obedience, if practicable, is not that which grace produces, which is in unison with the truth in Christ — that mould, as it were, into which the believer is cast.

Such then is the character and effect of christian deliverance and the vital connection which we shall see more fully afterwards between redemption by Christ and life in Him. “Being made free from sin ye became enslaved to righteousness.” (Ver. 18.) Two masters no man can serve. Freed from sin, we are now indissolubly bound to righteousness. Grace is the only power for righteousness. The law defined and demanded that measure and form of righteousness which God could not but exact from man in the flesh. But grace, under which the Christian is, makes good in his practice what we have been taught since Christ is revealed. Thus the very fact that God does not impute iniquity to the believer encourages and fortifies him in willing self-surrender to the Lord, instead of simply provoking sin and condemning the sinner as law did and could do nothing else. Under grace we are free, but withal servants. Freed from sin, we become bondmen to righteousness. Such is the effect of our hearty obedience of the gospel.

As the first question of our chapter, then, is met by the great fact of God’s judgment of the old man and deliverance of the Christian by the death and resurrection of Christ, as he confesses his own death with Christ (witnessed in baptism from the starting-point of Christianity), so the second is an appeal to his motives as set free according to the liberty of grace. Is he going to use it for sinning? Not as the power of sin is the law (1 Cor. 15), grace is the power of holiness and makes him who is under it a more devoted bondman of righteousness to the God who imputes no sin, than the

law even asked, but never obtained, with all its rewards and penalties: why this is will appear fully and definitely in Romans 7, where the special question of man under law, even though converted and indeed only as converted, is brought to issue.

For having spoken of the Christian as enslaved to righteousness, the apostle hastens to excuse his language. He had shown the impossibility of a middle place, maintaining the absoluteness of the surrender to God, which is made good in the heart and ways of the believer; he had characterized the new relation as one of bondage to righteousness. This required explanation; for in truth it is real, and the only real, liberty of heart; yet is the bond none the less firm and thorough. “I speak after a human sort on account of the weakness of your flesh; for as ye yielded your members in bondage to uncleanness and to lawlessness unto lawlessness, so now yield your members to righteousness unto holiness.” (Ver. 19.) Their former estate manifested its corruption and wilfulness increasingly. Evil ripens and waxes worse and worse. Willing service issues not only in a just appreciation of our relative place to God and man, but in an ever deepening sense of separation to God. To this the saints are exhorted. The life is exercised and progress is looked for. Righteousness is here the practical maintenance of our responsibility according to the relation in which we now stand to God (our mere creature-place as of the first Adam being closed by death). Holiness is the intrinsic delight of the new life in good and its abhorrence of evil, according to God as revealed in Christ.

“For when ye were bondmen of sin, ye were free to righteousness. What fruit had ye then at that time?

[Things] of which ye are now ashamed. For the end of those things [is] death." (Ver. 20, 21.) There seems to be a grave but cutting irony in this allusion to their old condition, when the only freedom they knew was in respect to righteousness. They were slaves of sin and had nothing to do with righteousness. And what was the result? Nothing to boast of certainly: how much to fill these representatives with shame! And what is the.end of those things? Death.

Here then we stand on the ground of motives which test the heart. It is no longer, as at the beginning of the chapter, a great fact which is true of the Christian because he has a part with Christ in His death, and so is dead to sin and lives to God. It is an appeal to his appreciation of the grace of God which has freed him from his slavery to sin. To what account and use then is he going to turn his freedom? What was the fruit of his old life when he was free enough in relation to righteousness? Nothing, as far as he was concerned, but a source of present shame, save death the end.

How admirable is the wisdom of the inspired word! The sense of grace thus corrects the otherwise inevitable effect of the light of God, cast on the past and the present and the future: for if it were possible that a soul should be awakened to a just sense of its sinfulness and then left with earnest desires to serve God, to a new life, battling with its old evil, how occupied with self must be the whole of its experience! Alas! so it is too deeply as well as extensively among real children of God, who imperfectly know the blessed consequences for them of the work of Christ. They are not redeemed to be put under law, but contrariwise under grace. Saved by grace, they stand in grace. And this is the strongest

motive to the renewed mind, the most fatal snare to the hypocritical professor, the ready objection of the natural mind, which sees the latter without being able to estimate the former.

“But now freed from sin, and made bondmen to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end life eternal.” Observe the relation of grace. It is not slaves to the law, but bondservice to God. Man in flesh was tried by the ten words; but they were too weighty for his weakness, and only riveted a chain of judgment on his guilt. But now, emancipated by the death and resurrection of Christ, received by faith, having the life of Him risen from the dead as well as redemption — the forgiveness of sins, we are freed from sin and enslaved to God. Hence follows not a mere test by certain commands, but subjection to Himself who speaks to us by all His word. Every part of scripture has His authority to our souls: only we must learn by the Spirit its just application; and this, holding fast our association with Christ no longer as in the first Adam. It is clear that this both gives a more intimate relation to God, and opens a boundless sphere in which our obedience is to be exercised.

Nor is it only subjection to God, which takes the place of the Jewish position under law; but, thus walking, we have our “fruit unto holiness, and the end life eternal.” Such is the pathway here, and such its crown in glory by and by. There is growth in the value of good and its issue in the attracted separation of the heart from evil to God; and the end is suited to the way, though surely according to the personal dignity of Christ, and that which alone meets the character and counsels of God.

“For the wages of sin [is] death; but the free gift of God life eternal in Christ Jesus our Lord.” This is a summary of the general truth; it is the result on man’s side and on God’s. He does not limit it to transgression, though of course its wages are no less; he takes man, the Gentile sinner, as well as the Jewish transgressor. Both were sinners; and the wages of sin is death. But the blessing is quite as rich and free: eternal life is the need of the Jew no less than of the Gentile: it is God’s free gift, and thus equally open to either or both. Let it be carefully noted that the Holy Spirit, by the structure of the phrase, carefully avoids intimating that the wages of sin are limited to death; for in truth judgment remains, and is appointed to man no less than death. Together they are the full wages of sin. Nor would it be safe to affirm that even eternal life exhausts the free gift of God; for, as we shall find in Romans 8, no less than in many scriptures more, He gives the Holy Ghost to be the portion of the believer, not to speak of the relation of son and the accompanying inheritance. Boundless indeed is His grace to us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

18 The notion of Macknight and Rosenmüller, that death by sin is intended, misses all the force of the passage, and is clean contrary to the argument in the context, which is founded on our being baptized unto the death of Christ.

19 Beza notices the critical reading as that of the old interpreter (the Vulgate) and of Augustine, and as also so found in one Greek. This may serve to show how much more fully and accurately the authorities are now known; for it is so read in the Sinai, Vatican, Alexandrian, and Rescript of Paris (C); in six cursives; in the Coptic, Sahidic, Syriac, Æthiopic, Armenian, etc.,

besides the Latin, not to speak of many fathers Greek and Latin.

20 The commentators torture themselves to reconcile these words with their own views, which they condemn; but even Calvin and Beza own that it is a question of law, moral law (not the law of our members, nor of ceremonies, still less national or political law). “Quare non est dubium, quin hic aliquam ab ipsa Domini Lege manumissionem indicare voluerit,” says the former (in loco). That is, the context decides for him beyond doubt that the apostle meant here to indicate some freedom from the very law of the Lord. But his explanation is altogether imperfect and unsound, falling in with and helping on mere natural thoughts, and thus contributing to bring about the low state of practice which prevails even among the godly portion of the Reformed. “Therefore, lest broken in mind by a consciousness of their infirmity they should despond, he seasonably comes to their help, by interposing a consolation derived from the consideration that their works are not now tested by the severe criterion of the law, but God, remitting their impurity, accepts them kindly and benignantly.... Therefore not to be under law means that we are no longer exposed to the law as requiring perfect righteousness, with death pronounced on all who have in any part deviated from it.” The notion is that, being under grace, we are freed from the rigorous exactions of law. Thus grace becomes a sort of mitigated law, which is just what flesh would desire — a law that prescribes but has no power to condemn. That this must of itself lead to laxity, and is therefore really Antinomian in principle, seems evident and certain. It is an unwarrantable mixture of law and grace, which destroys

the true character and scope of both. The truth is that Christ redeemed such believers as were under law from the curse; but He has in no way taken away its curse from law. Our blessing is of faith that it might be by grace; but the law, as scripture says, is not of faith. As we were justified by faith, so by it we walk, for we are not under law but under grace. He who abstains from murder simply because the law forbids it is a wicked man, and not a believer.

21 Think of Calvin's temerity in saying that the apostle "improprie locutus est," and this for so petty and technical a reason as this: "nam si partes partibus reddere voluisset dicendum erat: sive justitiae in vitam." The apostle does (in ver. 19) guard his use of the figure of bondage; but here all is perfectly accurate — far more so than the correspondency suggested. "Righteousness unto life" might be gravely misunderstood and seems in every way a questionable statement.

Romans 7

The apostle had already laid down that sin should not have dominion over the Christian, because he is not under law but under grace. He now unfolds the relations of the believer, even had he been a Jew, to the law; and this he does with admirable wisdom which the mass of his best expositors that it has been my lot to see, not to speak of others, have failed to appreciate “Or are ye ignorant, brethren, for I speak to [men] knowing law, that the law has dominion over the man as long time as he lives? For the married woman is bound to the living husband by law; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband.” (Ver. 1, 2.) Thus death is the grand principle, as with sin, so with law. It is indeed a confessed and universal axiom. It was fitting to take up the woman rather than the man, because he is treating of our responsibility to do the will of the Lord; and it is emphatically the woman’s place to obey her husband. But this, as he demonstrates, is quite independent of the law, which simply deals with man alive in the flesh. Now his thesis in the preceding chapter was the death of the Christian with Christ, which is no less true and forcible when applied to the law as to sin. During the husband’s life the wife is bound; if he have died, she is quit. Death severs the bond. “Therefore then, while the husband liveth, she shall be called an adulteress, if she belong to another man. But if the husband die, she is free from the law so as not to be an adulteress by belonging to another man.” (Ver. 3.) It is difficult to conceive a blow more destructive to the common notion of putting the Christian under the law as his rule of life. Two husbands

are intolerable. Not only is the law not the actual husband, but the apostle will not hear of Christ and the law. It must be Christ alone. To admit of any other association is to be false to Him. If the law had been the old husband, such is no longer the relationship of the Christian. Death having come in, the former obligation terminates, and there is freedom to belong to another without fear of adultery, even to Christ exclusively. Compare for our practice Phil. 3:13, 14.

“So that, my brethren, ye also have been put to death to the law by the body of Christ that ye should belong to another — him that was raised out of [the] dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.” (Ver. 5.) Far from its being the aim of God to maintain the rule of the law, the express design and effect of grace is to bring the Christian (even if a Jew formerly) out of the old relationship into an absolutely new one founded on the death of Christ, that he should henceforth belong exclusively to Him risen from among the dead, and this in order to glorify God by fruits acceptable to Him.

It will be observed, however, that the apostle carefully abstains from the least insinuation that the law is dead. Not so does God deliver. The law lives to curse and kill all within its sphere. But we by death with Christ pass out of its power to touch us; and having a new husband, even Christ risen, we dare not allow any other spiritual rule: else we are guilty of what is most grievous in His eyes and an utter breach of our new relationship. And this alone secures fruitfulness Godward. Subjection to Christ fulfils the law without thinking of any one or thing but Him. You cannot serve, you ought not to serve, two masters.

“For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sins that [were] by the law wrought in our members to the bearing fruit to death; but now have we got discharge from the law, having died in what we were held, so as for us to serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter.” (Ver. 6.)

Thus evidently the flesh and the law (as we may add the world) are correlative; and the Christian belongs to neither, but to Christ, and to Him risen from the dead. We are no longer in the flesh; we were there, and to this state the law applied: it is made not for the righteous, but the unrighteous. The Christian is dead to law, not it to anybody. Not only does the law work death and condemnation to the unbeliever, but the Christian who meddles with it as a rule for his path will prove it, if taught of God, to be a rule, not of life, but of death. As Christ is our life, so is He our pattern and power through the Holy Ghost, who forms us according to the word which reveals Him to our souls.

It is scarcely needful to point out how false is the doctrine of the common text and translation, which the margin corrects. If true, Antinomianism would follow, than which nothing is more false and evil. Death to law as well as to sin is the fruit of Christ’s death and resurrection, and the privilege of the Christian. The law lives to condemn every living soul who pretends to a righteousness of his own.

The passage on which we now enter has been the occasion of as extraordinary discord in thought and comment as any other in the epistle, and I cannot but think with small fruit as to intelligence of God’s mind revealed in it. The source of the difficulty is the ordinary

one — ignorance of the Christian's position or standing, and consequently of his relation to the law. Had the six preceding verses of Romans 7 been understood, there would have been no such obscurity and no room for such divergence among those who have discussed it. But death with Christ to sin and law is an unknown region, and the loss to souls from ignorance of it is incalculable.

The point, which divides the mass of those who have written and preached on it, as well is of multitudes of those influenced by them, is the question whether the experience described is that of a natural man or of a Christian. It is assumed on both sides that one or other it must be. But the assumption is an error, and the failure of both lies exactly here. It is impossible rightly to understand the passage if applied either to a natural man or to a Christian. There may be, there is, a transitional state constantly found in souls when they are born again, but not yet in conscious deliverance; and this is the precise state, here in question. Paul may have passed as most do through this experience more or less during the three days, when without sight he neither ate nor drank. He was converted then, no longer therefore a natural man, but not yet filled with the Holy Ghost. Certainly he personates the case and reasons it out fully from verse 7 to the end of the chapter. It is the case of one quickened, but not yet submitting to the righteousness of God. Hence, being jealous for God but ignorant of the full place in which redemption sets the believer, such a soul places itself under law; and the operation of the law is therefore exhibited to us. There is an awakened conscience, but no power. If the new nature were not there, such experience could not be: if the Holy Ghost were there, power would follow, as we

see in Romans 8 where we have the proper normal state of the Christian. The state described, however, is in no case I believe final, but transitional, though bad and legal teaching may keep a soul in it till grace acts fully, it may be, on a deathbed, or what is equivalent.

“What then shall we say? [Is] the law sin? Let it not be. But I should not have known sin unless by law; for lust also I had not known unless the law had said, Thou shalt not lust. But sin, having taken occasion by the commandment, wrought out in me every [manner of] lust; for apart from law sin [is] dead. But I was alive apart from law once; but the commandment having come, sin revived, and I died; and the commandment that [was] unto life was even found for me unto death. For sin, having taken occasion by the commandment, deceived, and by it slew me. So that the law [is] holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good. Did then the good become death to me? Let it not be; but sin, that it might appear sin, working out death to me by the good, that sin might become excessively sinful by the commandment.” (Ver. 7-13.)

Thus the apostle takes pains to relieve the law of all censure. Far from this, it was the excellency of the law which was so fatal to the sinner. It knows no mercy; it cannot mitigate its terms or its punishment. By the law is the full knowledge of sin, said the apostle in Romans 3. So here, whether objectively or in inward consciousness, law is the means of its discovery, not from any defect in law but from the sinfulness of sin, which is here personified as the foe that is seizing a point for attacking man. But here the apostle is occupied with the proof not of guilty acts but of an alien rebellious nature, and hence singles out the last commandment,

the prohibition of covetousness or lust, as the most adapted to convict of sin, not merely of sins. And how true this is! Who does not know the irritation produced by a restraint on the will? So all manner of lust is excited, for apart from law sin is dead: let the commandment have come, and all is over. It never did, it cannot, improve the flesh, but contrariwise provokes it by the curb applied. What is really wanted is a new nature and a transforming object; but law neither communicates the one nor reveals the other: grace does both through Christ our Lord. The fault is solely in the first man, the deliverance is exclusively in the Second. Law sets forth what man ought to be, but condemns him necessarily for the sin it makes active and manifest, without the smallest power to save from it any more than to strengthen against it. On the contrary, says the apostle, “I was alive apart from law once, but, the commandment having come, sin revived and I died.” Thus what pointed to life only proved an instrument of death. But if the living man die, law cannot quicken the dead. It is the Son’s to quicken whom He will, even as the Father does. But here again the apostle is careful to lay all blame on sin, which, having taken occasion by the commandment, slew by it the deceived man. Thus the law is vindicated, the nature it in vain appeals to is alone in fault; for the commandment is holy, just, and good. Did then the good become death to me? asks the apostle. Not so; it is sin here again he treats as the true culprit, “sin that it might appear sin, working out death to me by the good, that sin might become excessively sinful by the commandment.” Could the Jew, however prejudiced against grace, however prepossessed in favour of law, complain with justice? Is it not the evident truth?

The apostle turns now to a discussion of the working of the law, and the discovery which the renewed man makes of no good thing in him, that is, in his flesh. It is one set free reflecting on his state when under law. “For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal,22 sold under sin.” (Ver. 14.) Thus it is opened by the technical expression of christian knowledge, and this inwardly. But the soul is shut up to a sense of its own overwhelming evil. Only observe it is the bitter sense of bondage to sin, and not the love of sin. Still, though it is one born again, there is no strength whatever. “For what I work out I know (or, own) not, for not what I wish I do, but what I hate this I am doing. But if what I do not wish this I am doing, I agree to the law that [it is] good; but now [it is] no longer I that work it out, but the sin that dwelleth in me.” (Ver. 15-17.) It is no small anguish for the soul to feel, who had thought that to be forgiven was all, and that after this nothing but light and joy remained. And now to find oneself weighed down by a constant inward dead weight of evil, to prove experimentally that one is a slave to sin, effort only making it manifest, is a distress as grave as it is unexpected. He learns, however, that it is not himself that loves sin, for he really hates it. Sin is there, and it is not himself now, as he learns even in this painful experience. But what a wretched state! what slavery!

It is evident that the state described is not that of deliverance; it is not therefore the normal state of the Christian, but one of transition. The reader will be perhaps as pleased as I with the substance of the following note, which I did not expect from Doddridge. “The apostle here, by a very dexterous turn, changes the person and speaks as of himself. This he elsewhere does

(Rom. 3:6; 1 Cor. 10:30; chap. 4:6) when he is only personating another character. And the character here assumed is that of a man, first ignorant of the law, then under it, and sincerely desiring to please God, but finding to his sorrow the weakness of the motives it suggested, and the sad discouragement under which it left him; and last of all with transport discovering the gospel, and gaining pardon and strength, peace and joy by it. But to suppose he speaks all these things of himself or the confirmed Christian — that he really was when he wrote this epistle — is not only foreign but contrary to the whole scope of his discourse, as well as to what is expressly asserted, Rom. 8:2."

It is a question of power coming in, not of will; for he is supposed to will the contrary, but alas! does what he wills not. Thus the moral character of both natures is made plain. The flesh never goes along with the moral judgment and desire of the renewed man while under law. But it is well to observe that there is another discussion in verses 18-20 leading to the same result and closing similarly, only with greater emphasis personally in its course. "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, no good dwelleth; for to will is present with me, but to work out the good [is] not; for I am not doing good which I wish; but evil which I wish not, this I do. But if what I wish not, this I am doing, [it is] no longer I that work it out, but the sin that dwelleth in me." (Ver. 18-20.)

It is a renewed "I," but obliged to feel that it is powerless. The hated evil continually gains the day, and the good that is acknowledged and valued slips through undone — a dreadful lesson, yet the truth of our nature, wholesome and needful to learn. Grace turns it to

excellent account, and ere long, if there be simplicity and subjection of heart through the Holy Ghost to Christ.

In all the previous process it is striking to see how totally eclipsed is every object and power of faith. It is throughout self, though not self indulged and gratified, but self proving to itself intense cause of misery and disappointment. Christ in the end becomes all the more welcome; and the deliverance is of grace, not activity of self, through Him. After this activity in the energy of the Spirit can safely follow: before it, if possible, it would only veil the knowledge of self from us, and so far hide the truth and foster both self-love and self-righteousness.

It will be observed too, how admirably the apostle, while asserting fully the new place which grace gives by our having part with Christ in His death, guards the law from all impeachment. Let the Jew be ever so sensitive, God’s honour is safe; and it was not Paul who forgot or wounded it, whatever the adversaries of the gospel averred. As the law was not sin, so it was not death. The entire fault lay in man’s sin, not in God’s law. The converted feel this and cleave to the law, let it be ever so peremptory and painful. But it never does nor can deliver; on the contrary, it demonstrates the abject, thorough, hopeless bondage to sin in which our nature is held — the more felt, the more the sanctity of the law is owned. Under law, therefore, the renewed soul finds peace impossible. Impossible in this state to do anything but condemn oneself. This is true and good as far as it goes, but it is not the christian state, though it is the condition in which Christians must find themselves till

they know deliverance from their state of sin, and not the forgiveness of their sins alone.

We see progress before full sense of emancipation comes. It is in the second discussion, not the first, that the soul is represented as saying “in me, that is, in my flesh, no good dwelleth.” The distinction of the new nature from the old becomes more apparent, though power is still wanting. The next verses show us how the misery is brought to a crisis, but through grace to a close.

Verses 21-23 furnish the conclusion from the discussion we have seen doubly pursued. “I find then the law for me wishing to do the right thing that evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God according to the inner man, but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that is in my members.” Guilt is not the matter in hand, but power, or rather the total absence of it; so that, with the best possible dispositions and desires, all ends in captivity to sin, though it is now hated. It is not the soul in the death and darkness of nature, but renewed. God is loved, evil abhorred; but the soul finds itself powerless either to give effect to the one or to avoid the other. There is progress notwithstanding, sad as the experience is still, and slow as the soul itself may be, to realize or allow it. Hence, he now speaks of the opposition he finds in his members, the law of sin that is there. There is a growing sense of distinctness, as well as of internal conflict. This does not give peace any more than power — far from it. As far as feeling goes, never was he more intensely miserable.

But the deepening of the darkness precedes the light of day. New light dawns when all seemed most forlorn. “Wretched man I! who shall deliver me out of this body of death?” This expression of distress, not without hope, yet bordering on despair, is the direct road to the Deliverer. The mistake was looking to himself, the humiliating process was the discovery of his own powerlessness for good however loved, against his own evil however honestly detested. All turns on the question of a Deliverer outside self. All expectation of victory over self by himself is proved to be the sheerest vanity of vanities. Another becomes the true and sole resource. Who that other is remains not for a moment an object of hesitation to the believer. The inquiry has only to be raised in order to receive the most decided and triumphant answer. “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Jesus is not alone the one ground of pardon through His blood-shedding; He is equally the Deliverer from the withering sense of death which the believer experiences when, honestly seeking to subdue his own will and work out the good he delights in and eschew the ill he hates. Broken to nothingness by the continual proof of his own failure, spite of prayer, watching, and efforts of every conceivable kind, he abandons himself as hopelessly wretched, looks out of himself inquiringly, and answers at once the demand of his soul with a song of thanksgiving for Jesus.

The Spirit of God, however, takes care at once to guard the soul, now humble and filled with praise, from the illusion that the flesh is changed for the better. Not so: the two natures retain each its own character. “Therefore then I myself with the mind serve God’s law, but with the flesh sin’s law.” (Ver. 25.) We shall see more

of the deliverance itself, and its consequences, in the following chapter. Meanwhile we learn here that, if the flesh acts at all, it can only be to sin. Such is its law. Deliverance does not alter the bent of man's nature, which is the same in all, in the Christian as in the unbeliever. Only the former, not the latter, has a new nature, deliverance in and through Christ, and the Holy Spirit as the power of enjoying his privileges and of walking accordingly, as we shall soon learn.

22 The best authorities (, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, etc.) read σάρκινος, not σαρκικὸς as in the received text. The difference is that the former is a confession of being mere flesh physically. So it is in 2 Cor. 3:3; Heb. 7:16, and probably in 1 Cor. 3:1 (but not in verses 3, 4, where the other form is clearly right). In Rom. 15:27; 1 Cor. 9:11; 2 Cor. 1:12; 2 Cor. 10:4; 1 Peter 2:11, it is σαρκικός, in most of which the physical idea of flesh would be out of place. In our text the difference is of some importance as corroborating the scope of the passage that the will was not engaged. Were this meant to be expressed, σαρκικὸς would be the more proper term.

Romans 8

We have seen in Romans 7, first, the doctrine in the opening verses; then the discussion of the manner in which the law works in the soul that is born again but that does not realize the deliverance with which he began, not only conflict under law but the discovery of the two natures, and besides of one's own powerlessness though renewed — an experience which closes however not in the utter wretchedness which is its immediate result but in looking completely out of self to God's deliverance in and through Christ, though the two natures abide none the less for all that, each with its own unchanged characteristics.

The beginning of Romans 8 is in some respects (as indeed in a larger sense is the entire chapter) a summary and conclusion in relation to the previous reasoning. Still the argument and the revelation of the truth are also pushed on, though there is allusion to the points already cleared in the discussion from Romans 5:12 to the close of Romans 7. Nothing can well be conceived more striking than the grandly explicit, and distinct, and comprehensive affirmation of verse 1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus." It is the broad truth laid down with all clearness for all who are set in this new place of acceptance — "in Christ Jesus." For such he could not say more, he would not say less, as to the question before us; and what he says is said absolutely and peremptorily. There is purposely no loophole for modifying or enfeebling the deliverance.

Therefore I cannot at all agree with those who admit that the clause in the received text and ordinary translation is (i.e., thus the latter half in the Authorized Version)23 immaterial. Believing it to be spurious on the best and ample authority, I am of opinion that it is of great importance to the force of the passage that the gloss added should be rejected. These words are of the greatest value in verse 4; they are an incubus, a dead weight, in verse 1. Here. they would necessarily tend to act as a qualifying clause and throw the soul on an examination of walk as the means of certifying that one is in Christ Jesus. Now the duty of self-judgment as to my heart and ways is freely admitted; but it is not the way to ascertain that I am in Christ. If I did gather from my walk and spirit the assurance of such a standing for my soul, it would be in the highest degree self-righteous and presumptuous. The man whose assurance was founded on the good estimate he had formed of his own inward and outward ways would be an object not enviable but of the deepest pity. The true place of self-judgment for the Christian according to scripture is, while holding fast that by grace we are in Christ and hence possessors of the highest privileges, that we should detect our shortcomings and their causes in order to humble ourselves for practical inconsistencies of any kind measured by that exalted standard. If introduced here, it would dislocate all truth, impair all grace, and eventually destroy all the springs of power in walk.

The passage then in its true form denies all condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. It is not sins proved nor sins remitted in God’s righteousness through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; nor is it even

the love of God shown so much the more because the object of it is a sinner ungodly and without strength. All this is in view of the sinner as such, though supposed to believe in Jesus. But here the old man is seen to be crucified, and the believer dead with Christ and alive to God in virtue of Him risen from the dead. In a word, they are viewed as being in an altogether new place, in Christ Jesus; where condemnation is not, and cannot be. It is not a question of degree but an absolute fact, true of all real Christians. They are one as much as another in Christ Jesus and outside condemnation. To say that in proportion as he is imbued with the Spirit of Christ he is free from condemnation is to miss the truth here revealed, however momentous it surely is for the Christian to be thus imbued. But here I repeat it is a question of the place grace gives them in Christ and not of their measure of making it good in feeling and ways. "In Christ" rightly understood precludes all question of degree or doubt quoad hoc. Bring in the walk, and therein at once we find abundant grounds, I will not say for doubt (which is always unjustifiable and profitless), but for sorrow and humiliation, and the more so because we are "in Christ Jesus."

We have seen the precious principle of no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus re-asserted with yet greater strength and absoluteness than when first introduced in the latter half of Romans 5. Not only are such not condemned, but there is no condemnation for them. They are in Christ, and there no possible condemnation can reach. Undoubtedly they are justified; but what is said goes farther than justification by blood. Justifying of life is supposed; but there is more, as we

shall see presently. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus freed me from the law of sin and death.”

Questions have been raised here as to “the law,” used at the beginning and at the end of this sentence. There is no real difficulty nor ground for doubt. The apostle has already given us to see his use of the term for a given principle acting uniformly, as when he speaks of “law of faith” (Rom. 3:27) in contrast with “law of works;” and later still “law in my members,” or “of sin,” there contradistinguished from the law of my mind.”

The meaning then is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus acting constantly to a given end. Undoubtedly this is only since the gospel was preached, but it does not therefore mean the gospel. Nor does the apostle say life only, but “the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” In the distressing conflict under law, described in the latter portion of Romans 7, there was life: else there would have been insensibility to sin; but not the power of the Spirit working in and with it: else there would have been liberty, and not the bondage that there was then.

John 20:22 may illustrate the expression. The Spirit is not apart from quickening the soul; but here was more. It was life more abundantly, life in resurrection. Jesus risen breathed on the disciples, already quickened, and said “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” It was not mere conversion; still less was it the appointment to an office or the conferring of a gift (χάρισμα). It was life according to the position of Jesus now risen from the dead and no longer under law, and with this the Spirit is distinctly associated. The fruit of this we see in the disciples thenceforward. It is not that they might not

make mistakes in thought, or word, or deed; but we see after this a liberty, joy, and intelligence unknown before.

So here “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus freed me from the law of sin and death.” For the last time in this discussion the “me” is spoken of. If the distress was personal, so is the deliverance; if he had reasoned out the case of one bound under law, transferred in its application to himself, so to himself he transferred the application of the freedom enjoyed. Sin and death were no longer a governing principle, and this by the very fact of the life in Christ which he had by the Spirit. It is not, as Theodore of Mopsuestia (in loc. p. 67, ed. Fritzsche) thinks, and many since, that he is anticipating the resurrection or future state, but the actual condition of the Christian. The freedom was his by the Holy Ghost when he left off seeking victory over indwelling evil by efforts under law, was willing to yield himself up as powerless for the good he desired, and submitted to the righteousness of God. Then the Spirit working in the life given proved Himself to be not of weakness any more than of fear; but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Thus it is plain that the resurrection of Christ, which is the fountain of the life as we have it in Him, is the link between our justification and the practical holiness which God looks for and secures in the Christian. It is erroneous to treat this verse, or even the first, as a mere summary of justification. Calvin is nearer the mark than such as Haldane and Hodge who so limit it. Nevertheless, as I do not think the leader of Geneva warranted to speak as he does of the apostle’s language, so it appears to me that he betrays his own defective acquaintance with the gospel in the same sentence. “By

the law of the Spirit he improperly designates the Spirit of God, who sprinkles our souls with the blood of Christ, not only to cleanse us from the stain of sin as regards guilt, but to sanctify us to true purity."24 The mistake is exclusively in the commentator, who did not comprehend the profound and accurately expressed wisdom of the apostle. To have confessed his own ignorance, when he found himself out of his depth, would have been more modest, rather than to have adopted language hard to reconcile with a becoming sense of God's word. Does He call things improperly? Thus far Calvin's temerity, the more glaring because of the ignorance betrayed in what follows. For we have here to do, not with the blood of Christ sprinkling souls, but with the Spirit acting with the fixity of a law in the life which is ours in Christ — a life which is in resurrection power and hence has freed us from the power of sin and death: otherwise sin and death must have governed. It is no question of pardon here but freedom from the constant operation of sin and its wages. Our very life, now that the Spirit is given, declares and proves us freed.

"The law of sin and death" does not mean the law of God, as some of the divines strangely said through making "the law of the Spirit" to be the gospel; it simply means the uniform principle of the flesh in moral character and in result. Power is in the Spirit who has shown us our place in Christ and set us free as alive to God in Him. Thus the common place of no condemnation to those that are in Christ is shown to be inseparable from a new life in the power of the Spirit in Christ risen, which freed us from sin and death as a law; and this is made intensely personal. "The law of the Spirit of life in

Christ Jesus freed me from the law of sin and death." The next two verses will explain how God in His grace has effected this, without enfeebling, yea, maintaining in no other way so well, His holy condemnation of evil — of our evil.

Evidently, then, the resurrection, the death and resurrection of Jesus, is the basis of all this doctrine. It was viewed as the seal of redemption at the close of Romans 4. For He was delivered up for our offences and raised for our justification. But there is much more in His resurrection. It is a spring of life, and this too in the manifestation of victory over all the consequences of sin and death. Such is the power of Christ's resurrection even now for the believer as far as concerns the soul. And herein lies the real and mighty link between justification and practical holiness. Not only has the Christian been justified by blood, but he has justifying of life in Christ; yea, the life of Him risen from the dead when all charge and judgment have had their course, sin been put away, and God glorified. Where this truth is not seen, a godly soul may well have fears, if not anxieties, as to the issue, and must naturally insist on the guards due to the grace of God in redemption; where it is simply and fully seen, there must be — there ought to be — confidence in the heart purified by faith. Not that there is not here below the need of habitual self-judgment; but, along with this, one is entitled, in looking to Christ dead and risen, to be as sure of the character of His life as of the efficacy of His blood. In both the believer finds his blessedness. But some, it must be spoken to their shame, are ignorant of the true character of God and of deliverance in and by Christ the Lord. Emancipation from the law of sin and death is the

effect, as the apostle declares, of the law of the Spirit of life in the Saviour. The moral ground of this on God's part is shown in verse 3, the practical result on our part in verse 4.

The same uncertainty which obscures the force of verses 1, 2, prevails as to verses 3, 4. Some regard the question handled as exclusively justification; others as no less exclusively the extirpation of the dominion of sin. It appears to me certain, that, while the subject is sin rather than sins, the apostle is summing up, and hence not confining himself to a single point, and that each of the contending parties has missed not only truth held by their opponents, but much which both have failed to see. Imperfect views of redemption occasion, if they are not the same thing as, these defects. The new place of the believer is feebly seen on either side. With this the chapter opens, not Christ in the believer (though this is also true, and will be shown shortly in the chapter), but the believer in Christ, and hence "no condemnation" proclaimed. Next, it is shown that the very life given, being in the power of the Spirit, the life of Christ risen, is the witness of our deliverance. Neither sin nor death remains a law to us, as we see in the state described in Romans 7. But there is more. The powerlessness of the law is confronted with the efficacy of redemption, and this to the moral end of the believer's practical obedience. Such is the outline and connection of the four verses, as will appear more in detail presently.

"For what the law could not do, in that25 it was weak through the flesh,26 God having sent his own Son in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the law might be

fulfilled in us who walk not according to flesh but according to Spirit." (Ver. 3, 4.)

There is no need to supply anything, as the first clause, grammatically, is in apposition with what follows; doctrinally, in contradistinction. It was not within the power of the law to meet the case, for though law spiritually applied might detect sin, the characteristic sin of fallen human nature, it must condemn the person too in whom the sin was found. It was therefore wholly unavailing for the purposes of grace; it could curse, it could sentence, it could not save. It was essentially therefore for sinful man a ministry of condemnation and of death. "The flesh," or natural condition of the race, was a state that admitted of no alternative. God would and did take the matter in hand, not by Moses through whom the law was given, but by the mission of His own Son. "Grace and truth came — was — through Jesus Christ." Then, and by Him only, was this seen in the world. "The Word was made flesh." God sent Him in likeness of flesh of sin, in real flesh and blood; not like a man, but in truth a man; in likeness not of flesh, but of flesh of sin. Such was the flesh of His mother, and of her was He born as truly as any son of any mother; but without an earthly father as to His birth. What was begotten in Mary was of the Holy Ghost. Wherefore also the Holy Thing that was in due season born was called the Son of God — for this reason of His supernatural and holy generation; though for higher reasons also of divine and eternal glory, of which not Luke but John is the appointed herald.

God sent Him then in likeness of flesh of sin, not in sinful flesh, but in its likeness; and in Him, the Son, the Father was glorified in a world departed from God, of

which Satan was the prince; tried as never man was tried, and found perfect in each and all, in word and deed, in thought and feeling, inwardly, outwardly, every way, perfect; as God the Father had never before found in anyone or anything. Yet blessed and refreshing as is such a sight in such a world, and in such a nature, fraught with infinite results for the divine glory, all had come to nought for the deliverance of any from sin's guilt or power, if God had done no more. Christ had glorified the Father as a holy, obedient, dependent man, who never did, never sought His own will, but God's. But man was wilful, wretched, guilty, lost. God sent His own Son therefore, not alone as the exhibition of human perfection, and divine grace and truth withal, but also "for sin," περὶ ἁμαρτίας. It is the very reverse of an indefinite statement, being the well-known technical expression for sin-offering (as in Heb. 10, and the LXX.), and therefore distinctly pointing to the death, as the previous clause to the life, of Christ.

Thus was solved the otherwise insoluble problem: God had done it in and by His own Son to His own glory, and thus holily and righteously for sinful man. Impossible without the death of the Son of God. But now in Him, a sacrifice for sin (not more acceptable in His life than a sin-bearer in death, when consequently God must and did forsake even Him), God executed sentence of condemnation, not on sinners but on sin, sin in the flesh, and this expiatorily; for He made Jesus, who knew no sin, sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. There is therefore now no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus. Not only has the Christian a new life in Christ risen by the Spirit, of which the law is liberation and liberty; but God laid

the moral ground for such grace as this, in the utter condemnation of sin in the flesh, by His manifestation to take away our sins, in whom is no sin.

Thus was vindicated the free gift of God to us, eternal life, the righteous groundwork on which even now we possess in Christ that risen life with which no sin ever mingles, though we have still the old and evil nature of our own to mortify day by day.

And if the Son of man was glorified, and God glorified in Him thus, was there no present moral result in those whose new life He was in the infinite grace of our God? This could not be; and the apostle adds in the next words the answer. God so wrought in Christ, in order that the requirement (the righteous claim, τὸ δικαίωμα) of the law might be fulfilled in us that walk not according to flesh, but according to Spirit. This, I cordially grant, applies not to justification, as so many of the divines erroneously teach. It is the practical consequence of justification, or rather of the infinite work of the Saviour, in those who receive Him; but this is no reason why we should overlook, with many other divines, the equally sure and yet more solemnly important basis for our holy walk in His atonement.

Another remark it is well to add on verse 4:- how admirably it falls in with Romans 6:14! It is only when the Holy Ghost works in a soul quickened with the life of Christ risen from the dead, by virtue of redemption through His blood, that power follows against sin. When practically under law, i.e., labouring to correct and improve the flesh, as too many saints are (like the case described in the latter half of Rom. 7), there is no power; and, spite of a renewed mind, there is constant failure

and grief of heart in consequence. Christ, not the law, Christ in grace and truth, Christ dead and risen, is the sole power of holiness by the working of the Holy Spirit in us; and the heart answers in love to God and man, so that what the law required of those under itself, but in vain, is really fulfilled in those who are not under law but under grace.

The apostle proceeds to contrast more at length those who walk according to flesh with those who are in Christ. He shows that in both cases there is a nature with its own objects. It is not a question here of some faithful and others failing; “for those who are according to flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those according to Spirit, the things of the Spirit.” Each class has its own sphere, which engages its mind and feelings. Manner or measure is not before us; but flesh and Spirit, or rather those characterized by them, go out after their respective natures and love or hate accordingly. Duty has its place, and is invariably claimed and regulated by the relationship in which people stand; but here another topic is under discussion, not so much relative position and its responsibilities as the new principle and power of the Christian compared with all other men. He is characterized, not by flesh (i.e., human nature fallen, estranged from God, and as we shall see, enmity against Him) but the Spirit, and this identifying itself with the very being and state of the Christian, just as we see in the case of demoniacs that they were bound up with their evil possession, so that the man and the unclean spirit could only be severed by God’s power. Further on we have the Holy Spirit treated as an indwelling person, who acts in and with the believer; but here it is a characteristic state predicated of the Christian,

contrasted with that of all other men out of which he is brought by faith in Christ. For all were alike in the same state, “in flesh,” as born of Adam; but those according to the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit, things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man to consider, things which God hath prepared for those that love Him.

Here it may be profitable to observe that the Spirit is not once brought before us in the first great division of our Epistle (Rom. 1 - 5:11) till redemption, the remission of sins, was fully established, cleared and done with. It is only in the conclusion (Rom. 5:1-11) which winds up this part of the apostle’s argument that he introduces (ver. 5) the earliest mention of the Holy Ghost. “And hope maketh not ashamed. because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” In the appendix of doctrine on the divine deliverance, not from sins, but from sin, the method of procedure is exactly similar; the Holy Spirit only reappears in Romans 8 which is the conclusion to this most momentous addition. Only here, as connected more with practical state and walk, we meet with a rich development and great variety of application, instead of the passing though sweet allusion of Romans 5.

Nor will the thoughtful Christian find it hard to discern the wisdom of God in both. For even in the face of this remarkable omission of the Spirit in the discussion of man’s unrighteousness, and then of God’s righteousness in the gospel by faith of Christ, man is prone enough to drag in what God has left out; and believers continually doom themselves to a lack of peace with God by an inquisitive search in themselves after the effects of the Spirit which might satisfy them of their renewal and

acceptance. Now it is not denied for a moment that none but the Spirit quickens by the word, revealing Christ to the soul; yet this truth, acknowledged on all sides, makes the absence of reference to the Holy Ghost given so much the more notable.

Till redemption is known, God would direct the eye to Christ: He alone who died for the sinner is entitled to give him comfort in respect and in spite of his sins. His blood alone cleanses from all sin. It may be, it is, wholesome to look within as well as without, and to learn more and more what a sinner I am; but God will have me to look outside myself to Christ exclusively for pardon. To look within for righteousness by the Spirit enabling me is illusive, nay ruinous. I must be content with, and rejoice in, the blessedness David describes of the man to whom God imputes righteousness without works. Like Abraham, I need not be discouraged by my own weakness, or the inability of all around to help; I ought like him to give glory to God; for it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification. And therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

After all this it is that God speaks to us of the gift of the Spirit, and the love that is shed abroad in our hearts by Him. We can bear this truth then, as then only indeed we are sealed by the Spirit. For though the Spirit can and does quicken one dead in trespasses and sins, He never seals a soul in such a state; He seals only where there is life and cleansing by the shed blood of the Saviour. Christ no doubt had the Holy Ghost descending

and abiding on Him apart from blood; but He was the Holy One of God and came to redeem others, not to be redeemed. But none other was or could be sealed save as a consequence of His redemption. Hence we see in the Acts and the Epistles of the Apostles that the Holy Spirit was given in His name, even the quickened not being thus sealed till they submitted themselves (which was not always an immediate sequence) to the righteousness of God.

But here the allusion is brief. There is no dwelling on the internal operations of the Spirit till we come to Romans 8. The reason seems manifest. It would not be meat in due season till the mighty result of Christ's death and resurrection was applied to our nature, to our conscious and intelligent deliverance (by faith of His work) from the sense and power of sin, as well as from guilt by our sins against God. Christendom affords solemn lessons, not only in the past but in the present, of the dangers those run who take a different route. For what is the necessary result of mixing up an inward search after the fruits and witness of the Spirit with the anxieties of the soul anxious, and it may be quickened? It can be none other than either to buoy him up with a joy founded on feelings more or less self-righteous, or to plunge him, if conscientious, into the depths of distress, endeavouring to extract a miserable comfort from the very fact that he is so harassed with a sense of sin while he clings to the barest hope that he may be a child of God.

When the apostle has set forth fully the work of redemption, when we know, as believers in Christ, not merely the sins effaced by His precious blood, but sin in the flesh condemned — both morally in Him who was absolutely free from it, yet withal in grace to us bearing

its consequences judicially as a sacrifice for it that there might be no condemnation to those that are in Him — when this is learnt solidly by divine teaching, we are in a position to profit by the fullest instructions in the ways of God by His Spirit in respect of us. Here accordingly there is neither silence nor stint.

But it cannot be too rigidly insisted on that God's condemnation of sin was on the cross in the sacrifice of Christ for it. Those who deny that the soul's deliverance can be till we actually die, are no less in error than others who affirm that it means the new and sanctifying power of the Spirit by Christ. Both have to be taught a great truth which they have overlooked. Undoubtedly there is more before us than justification from our sins. It is a question of how to be rid of the burden of sin, indwelling sin; and till we lay hold of the revealed answer in Christ, the Spirit convicts of sin, instead of delivering from it. The answer is that God condemned sin in Him who was sent in the likeness of flesh of sin; but as a sacrifice for sin. Therefore to faith sin is as completely annulled as our sins — both righteously, but in grace, both by Him who for both suffered at God's hand that we might be delivered and know our deliverance now by the faith of Jesus Christ our Lord. We must not confound the effect of this in victory over sin with the act of God who thus condemned sin in the flesh. Christ's own personal overthrow of Satan and manifestation of uniform and spotless holiness here below would have but riveted condemnation on us more hopelessly, had He not also suffered for us on the cross. His sinlessness is incontestable; but it is ignorance and false doctrine to say that the condemnation of sin in the flesh is owing to it, not to His sacrifice for sin.

Multitudes of divines may crowd the valley of indecision, and so say or write; but it is in vain. May their error perish, but not themselves! The sacrifice of Christ is the ground of our emancipation by the Spirit of life from the law of sin and death, as it is in order to a holy walk. The law, holy as it is, could effect neither; it claimed but never received righteousness, as it condemned the sinner without ever reaching sin in the flesh. This God did in Christ's sacrifice for sin, with its infinite blessing for us in both standing and walk. The law dealt with the old nature, the flesh. exposing its sinful character, but weak through it. The Spirit strengthens the new nature; and thus the believer, feeding on the word, walks accordingly, loving God and his neighbour.

Then follows the explanation why those who are in Christ walk according to the Spirit. If they were after flesh, the mind and affection would be on the things of the flesh. Source, character, and conduct go together. Flesh is never sublimated into spirit; nor does spirit sink or change to flesh; for, as the Lord said, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Even Adam unfallen was not spirit. Hence there was no question of resurrection or of heaven till all of original state was lost by sin. The Last Adam brings in the "better thing." Flesh cannot rise above itself, though it may fall into the depths of Satan. Even in its best estate we may perhaps say, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I [Christ] shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

And as the essential character thus differs, as well as the range and objects of flesh and Spirit, so also the

issues. “For the mind of the flesh [is] death, but the mind of the Spirit life and peace.” (Ver. 6.) The flesh has not one pulse of life Godward, however active in its pursuits and pleasures here. On the other hand, the mind of the Spirit, its exercise of thought and feeling, is life and peace. It was so in Christ; and so it is in the Christian. How a sinner is to find either life from God or peace with God is not the subject-matter in hand, but the moral bent and result of flesh and Spirit. Flesh satisfies itself, or at least its desires are set on things seen and felt apart from God or His word; the Spirit cannot rest short of the love and the glory of Christ. And as this only is the life of the Spirit, so it is peace of heart. In every sense God has called us in peace; whereas, there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. How could it be otherwise with fallen humanity? “Because the mind of the flesh [is] enmity against God; for to the law of God it is not subject;” nor need one wonder, “for it is not possible. But they then that are in flesh cannot please God.” (Ver. 7, 8.)

Awful conclusion for man as he is! Would that he laid it to heart as the truth, the sentence pronounced by the Judge of all the earth! No fruit for God grows on that tree for ever. There is and must be for the believer a new life in order to fruit-bearing. Not the things that are seen, the things of the flesh, but the revelation of the unseen, the word of God Himself, seen by faith in Christ, nourishes this life; for without faith, the same apostle tells us in another epistle, it is impossible to please God. Now the flesh never trusts God; its mind is enmity against Him. The law brings in His authority and interdicts to the flesh its own way, which is everything to it. Hence its independence proves to be enmity against

God; for in virtue of seeking its own will it neither does nor can subject itself to His law. Obedience is essentially incompatible with the self-will, the ἀνομία, of the flesh, which would cease to be itself if it obeyed God. Hence the application of the principle to the unrenewed. “And they that are in flesh cannot please God,” whose complacency is in the man that ever sought and did God’s will, not His own, and thus ever practised the things agreeable to His Father.

To be in flesh then is hopeless ruin, its mind being at variance with God, and in utter insubjection to His law; and this is the sad condition of all the sons of fallen Adam. It is not however the standing of the Christian. As in the beginning of our chapter he is said to be in Christ and consequently outside every possible condemnation, so here it is said, “but ye are not in flesh but in Spirit, if indeed God’s Spirit dwell in you.”

Thus the indwelling of the Holy Ghost is the witness and proof that we are “in Spirit,” and consequently not in flesh. But it would be a mistake to conclude that this condition was not reached and supposed in the preceding chapters. Indeed Romans 7:5 unquestionably implies the contrary — “for when we were in the flesh,” etc.; consequently we are not in the flesh now as Christians. So in Romans 6, the saints were bondmen of sin but now freed from it, bound therefore to reckon themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus, under grace and not under law. This cannot be without life and the Spirit. The man who is alive of that new life takes the place of death at the word of the Lord, and attests the end of the old man in his own person. But in Romans 8, for reasons already given, the apostle is free to develop the relation of the Spirit to the Christian, and

His various operations in and with the soul as far as would be suitable to the epistle in hand. We are in Spirit, if at all events God's Spirit dwell in us. Now that it is evident that man is equally weak and ungodly, now that he has learnt that the way of God is not by victory over sin, but (owning his total powerlessness to recover or do well) by the work of Christ and death with Him, he can safely hear of the ways of the Spirit. He will not now seek by efforts to get free, for he has surrendered to the solemn and humbling fact of what he is as well as confessed his misdoings. God is wise and good in this as in all else: for if He strengthened the converted soul in its desire to gain the victory over indwelling evil by the work of the Spirit, it would make the work of Christ incomparably less prized and the soul satisfied with itself under pretence of trusting in the Spirit.

In truth scripture knows no such thing as trusting in the working of the Spirit in us as distinguished from trusting in ourselves or in our works. For what the Spirit enables us as God's children to do is ever counted as our own, and will be remembered and rewarded accordingly when God proves Himself not unrighteous to forget our work and the love shown to His name.

Deliverance is by death — the death of Christ, with whom we died. But we are alive to God in Him, and the Spirit dwells in us. We can then without presumption say that we are not in flesh. We are not viewed as mere men, characterized by the first Adam state and responsibilities; as it had been already shown that we are not under law, like Israel, but under grace. Not, I must add, that we are not responsible, but that our responsibility is of a new character, founded on the new relationship which grace has given us when delivered

from our old state of ruined men. “Ye are not in flesh.” Nothing short of this is the due language of the Christian. It is the most general expression for nature, for man as he is; and, as Christians, such is not our condition. We are “in Spirit,” not merely under the dominion of our own renewed mind; but that which was first set before us as being “in Christ” is here said to be “in Spirit,” a condition formed by the action of the Holy Ghost who is glorifying Christ according to the will and mission of the Father.

Let us bear in mind that it is more than being born of the Spirit, which in fact embraces all saints, and is not more true of the Christian than of the Old Testament or of the millennial saint. But to be “in Spirit” goes farther, and is proved by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit after Jesus died, rose, and went on high. “But ye are not in flesh but in Spirit, if at all events God’s Spirit dwell in you.” Christ risen is a life-giving Spirit, as we see in John 20; exalted, He sends down the Holy Spirit as power. (Acts 2.) If one really believes in Christ — i.e., the gospel, he receives the Spirit and so can be said to be “in Spirit.” This is the sole recognized condition, though there may be a state short of it for a season. The case described or personated by the apostle in the central and latter part of Romans 7 is that of one born of the Spirit, but not yet “in Spirit,” which is the proper christian state.

Observe that it is no question here of measure, or of moral disposition, but of new facts in the realm of grace. Certainly he of whom they are true is intended to realize their truth and to walk accordingly. Still it is important to see that God reveals to the Christian, not as a special privilege of a favoured soul here and there, but as a

broad certain characteristic of those now called according to His purpose, that they are not in flesh but in Spirit. There is no mingling of the two states. We were in the one; we are now in the other. It is not a state, again, after our death physically, but after Christ's death, at least when it can also be said that we died with Him. It is therefore true of the Christian now in this world, absolutely true from the beginning of his career on earth as a Christian till its close. I speak of course of the true believer only.

Is there no partial state recognized here? No fluctuating, no uncertainty, no mixing up of the old Adam state and Christ? Not in the slightest degree. "Ye are not in flesh but in Spirit." Is the Christian then without the flesh? Clearly not; but the true state and statement of the case is, not that he is in flesh, but that flesh is in him. The old nature is there, and ready to break out into sin if there be not self-judgment, watchfulness against the enemy, and looking to Christ. The flesh is beyond doubt in the believer: only he is no longer in flesh, but in that new estate of which Christ is the display and the Holy Spirit is the power and character. The flesh is an evil thing, always to be hated and in nothing allowed. The Christian however is entitled to know that he is not in flesh, but that he is clean contrary to it as to his condition — in Spirit, always supposing that God's Spirit dwells in him. Anything anomalous or intermediate is not here taken into account. The apostle contrasts this previous natural state with the full christian position, not strictly speaking, with the new birth. Thus the Spirit's dwelling in the believer is used as the then public testimony on God's part. This must be modified in the present confusion of doctrine, as well as the absence of

manifestations in power. Yet the great substantial truth abides unchanged.

“But if any one hath not Christ’s Spirit, he is not his.” This parenthetical statement is to be weighed without deducing, as is often done, what it was clearly not intended to convey. Thus some would draw from it that the Old Testament saints must have had Christ’s Spirit in the sense here discussed, as others again would deny a condition of soul in which one may be quickened, as in the latter part of Romans, without being sealed, examples of which are so frequent in the Acts of the Apostles. But the fact is that the apostle is now treating of one who is no Christian at all save in outward name, like Simon Magus, in contrast with those. who have Christ’s Spirit. And this seems to be confirmed by the use of αὐτοῦ rather than αὐτῳ. Where the soul submits to divine righteousness in Christ, the Father seals with the Spirit. Here I suppose He is designated “Christ’s,” not as if it were another Spirit than God’s, but as having displayed Himself there above all in the perfection of a life consecrated to God from first to last. Grace gives the Spirit to all that believe on Him now, not necessarily when the soul is first ploughed up, but assuredly on receiving the word of truth, the gospel of salvation. So sure is it, that if one has not His Spirit, one is not of Him.

It is evident that the apostle is here closing the answer to the question in the latter verses of Romans 7: “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?” In the answer there are three parts. The first is, that as Christians we start with a position of deliverance in Christ (Rom. 8:1) and the possession of a life of liberty (ver. 2), in both its parts founded on and

justified by the cross of Christ (ver. 3). There could be, and there ought to be, no deliverance, unless sin were righteously atoned for and blotted out before God. Ought a single sinner to be set free, if God's glory were enfeebled by it? But it is not so. On the contrary never was such glory brought to God as by the cross of the Lord Jesus; never such a display of righteousness as well as of love as in the cross; and more than this, there never can be such a display again. The one spot and hour and act and person that stands out from the whole of this world's history from eternity and to eternity, distinct from all that ever was or ever will be, is the cross of the Lord Jesus; and yet it was in consequence of this very cross that God could deal in such tender mercy before it came; and it is in consequence of it that God will never rest in His love till all sin is completely gone, all evil judged, and all His mercy has had its full result in the accomplishment of His purposes. No wonder therefore that the cross of the Lord Jesus has brought in a signal change even now. It would not have been worthy of God had He not given by it a present deliverance to him that believes in Christ.

This deliverance then consists of these two parts: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that we are placed in and as Christ before God. For Christ was not an individual solely, who simply came and did a great work for others, but apart from bearing our sins He is a public man in an infinitely better sense than any other could be. The queen, for instance, is a public person. As sovereign she gives expression to whatever is the law of the land; her sign-manual is supreme authority. Properly speaking there is no statute law without her. I use this merely as an illustration. But the

Lord Jesus is a public person in an infinitely higher yet closer and nearer way, because no subject could be said to be in the sovereign as the Christian is in Christ. She may represent the people that she governs, but there could be nothing more intimate in their relation to her. The wonderful truth of redemption shows that the Lord Jesus is a public person so far as to give us a place in Himself above, and not only in identifying Himself with our guilt before God which He did once for all on the cross. In another sense He died for every man. Nothing can be more certain than that both are true, that He died for those that believe, and that He died for every man — with this difference, that the believer alone can say that He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. But it is the guilt of the natural man that, Christ having died for all, he nevertheless rejects Him. Yes, the deepest aggravation of unbelief is that, though Christ came for every creature, none would have Him. Not a living soul would have had Him unless by the special grace of God that opens a believer's eyes and inclines his heart to receive Him. This God does for the elect, though all be responsible.

But the Lord Jesus is more than a Saviour who died for us and our guilt. He is now the great pattern of One who, having been under the most intolerable judgment of sin, rose from the dead perfectly delivered and in the fullest sunshine of divine delight and peace and joy to show us where the Christian is and how God looks upon him. Is not his place in Christ Jesus, risen from the dead? Is he not entitled to look up and say, There is where I am? I am not denying that here we are still walking in this poor wretched world; but God's word warrants us as Christians to receive what He has done

in Christ and to say that we are thus in Him. As a man, I look back at Adam and see his sin, the power of his natural affections carrying him away. When he fell, did he remain the noble creature he was before he fell? Alas! he was deceitful, yet insolent, willing to throw the blame upon his wife or upon God in order to excuse himself. So every sinful man is apt to be not only bold against God but a coward with a bad conscience. And this is what we are in our natural state, some showing more of the insolence, others of the cowardice. There is not a bold man that is not sometimes a coward, and alas! there is no man so timid that he is not sometimes insolent. How complete the moral havoc before God and man!

God then has brought in this perfect deliverance now, but only for the soul in its standing in the first place. He that has received Christ has this wonderful boon, not only his sins forgiven, but his sin so judged that God can and does put him in Christ, and as Christ before Himself. He is entitled to repeat the language of faith and say, I am in Christ Jesus, and there is therefore no condemnation. How can there be condemnation for Christ? It is Christ that settles and determines the place that grace has given me as a believer. Consequently I may humbly say, as the word of God for my soul, There is no condemnation.

But there is more than this. He will not allow it to be merely vague, lest it might appear intangible general blessing, but as pointed and personal as can be. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” It is not merely the death of Christ Jesus. His death in itself never gives full christian liberty. It met my guilt, but I want more than this; I want a power of life that has won the victory.

And this is what I have through grace. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus freed me from the law of sin and death.” No wonder therefore that people, when not aware of this, are always occupied with a miserable toil under the law, rather hoping than knowing their sins forgiven. But the blood of Jesus, His mighty work, in death, simply meets their guilt and puts away the iniquities of the old man. Do you not also need the power of a new and risen life? This is what follows. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus freed me from the law of sin and death.” Such is the second part of the deliverance. First, there is no condemnation in Christ; next, this power of life in Christ is mine; and both these things are vindicated by the cross of Christ which he mentions in the following verse. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” The practical consequence follows: “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Is there then no flesh? There is the old evil nature in the believer; but he is not in flesh, he is in Christ. You cannot be in sin and in Christ at the same time; you cannot be in Adam and in Christ together. You were in Adam as man, but are in Christ as a Christian. Hence the apostle goes so far as to declare that the Christian is not in flesh at all. Does this mean that we are perfect and nothing else? Not in the least. It does suppose that you are made perfect in Christ, but it admits the humiliating fact that flesh is in us: otherwise we should never do wrong at all, there would be no self, no vanity or pride in us. But if we are not in flesh, as has been

often said, flesh is in us as a matter of fact. “Ye are not in flesh” is God’s estimate of the deliverance already given us in Christ Jesus.

Verse 10 does not speak about our being in Christ, but rather the converse, which is sometimes forgotten by the children of God. Not only am I in Christ, but Christ is in me as a believer. The effect of knowing that I am in Christ is that there is no condemnation: not merely am I not condemned in this or that, but all condemnation is absolutely annulled. There could not be anything of the sort for the Christian. God must condemn His own Son if He condemned those that are in Him; and every Christian is in Him. I grant you that people may make a bad use of this, but those who go on thus are not to be regarded as Christians at all, as indeed they never were. They were professors and nothing but professors; light-hearted men that would treat the Lord Jesus as they would one of their fellows, and the grace and truth of God as a common thing, making God the servant of their own lusts. Now He can be a Saviour from all evil, but never a servant to the will and passions of men. But what He loves is grace, where a poor sinner, miserable because of his sins, and hearing the announcement of His gift of Christ, comes to Him to be saved. Could God with Christ in His presence say No? Contrariwise, the measure of His salvation is that, first of all, as to our standing, we are put in Christ risen from the dead, who is his life in the power of the Spirit. Next, there is the active working of the Spirit of God in the believer. This is what is spoken of here: “If Christ be in you, the body [is] dead because of sin, but the Spirit life, because of righteousness.” If I allow the body its own will, there is nothing but sin produced. How am I to get power

against its dragging me into sin? Hold it for dead: this is the prescription. “If Christ be in you” — he is not speaking of unbelievers, but simply about Christians. To them the word is, If Christ be in you. Remember, this is what you are to do: count the body as a dead thing; do not pamper it, never yield to it. It there be the allowance of the active will therein, it is not merely the body, it becomes then simply “flesh.” Where rein is given to the will, irrespective of course of God’s, the body is but the instrument of sin, not of righteousness. Thus the way for the Christian to get power against the sin that is in him is to count the body dead. Is he that is dead to allow such and such an evil thing to work? When you cease to hold it for dead, there is sin; but if you do, the Spirit works in moral power. “The Spirit [is] life, because of righteousness.”

It is only so far as you do not yield to your own will that sin is practically null and void, and the Spirit of God acts freely. The apostle is looking at the actual working of the Spirit of God in us. It is not life simply viewed as ours, but as in exercise, a matter of experience day by day. What is between these two points (i.e., the soul’s deliverance as in verses 1, 2, and the resurrection of our bodies)? “If Christ be in you, the body [is] dead because of sin, but the Spirit life because of righteousness.” Righteousness is not found simply by seeing that I am in Christ. This alone will not do. A man who merely talks about being in Christ and makes this his Christianity will turn out very bad indeed. He is merely making Christ a means for getting off eternal condemnation and present responsibility, but this will not do. As sure as you have got Christ and you are in Christ, Christ is in you; and if Christ is in you, take care you do not allow self to work.

Where the body is not treated as dead but as alive, and is allowed to have its way, sin must be the result. If you treat it as dead, its career is cut short, its course is closed, and the Spirit of God deigns to become the sole spring of what you are seeking.

And let no one suppose that this is bondage. It is christian liberty. To do a thing because you must do it is never christian liberty. A slave thus works because he must; and we also, when in a low state, are apt to make a law of everything. When the affections are not flowing, we are only kept from what is openly evil, because there is a servile dread of doing what our consciences know is contrary to God. When this is the case, I am forgetting my ground of duty. What is it? Even now Christ is in me. If Christ be in me here, I am responsible to do His will. How is this to be done? I have got my body: if I allow it to have its own will and way, it will land me in sin. Treat it as dead; and let the one spring of what you desire be that which pleases the Holy Spirit. “The Spirit [is] life because of righteousness.” There is no practical righteousness produced in the Christian, except by the power of the Spirit of God. If the body is allowed loose rein in what we desire, it is only sin. The Spirit, on the contrary, is life in the practical sense, and this is the only way of righteousness for our walk.

But then there is a third point of the deliverance, this is, that, “if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you” (which we have been shown now to be the case, not only dwelling in us but also life because of righteousness), “he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by [or rather because of] his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” This is a rich and precious word. As sure as you now have the Spirit of

God dwelling in you — the Spirit that raised up the humbled man Jesus, He that raised up the glorious One, who was made Lord and Christ, will raise up your mortal bodies. We have to mark the contrast of His personal name “Jesus” as compared with what follows. “He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies” and this “because of his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” Deliverance is then complete.

I grant you there is no power intrinsically, there is mortality, working in our bodies; but “he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, because of His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” What a sure hope and full portion is that of the Christian! For thus I am delivered in my soul; I am called to give my testimony practically by the Holy Ghost that I am delivered, instead of being a man under law or in the flesh; and, again, I shall be raised. Even this mortal body shall be quickened — not a new body created and given me, but this mortal body shall be changed. This is no mere fresh creation but the most glorious proof of God’s love and grace towards us. The mortal body shall be raised because of His Spirit that dwelleth in us. The Holy One who now dwells in us will never let go His claim to the mortal body in which He now dwells. He dwells in us, because of the risen life of Christ that is in the redeemed. If redemption had not been accomplished, and the life of Christ had not been given to us, He could not dwell in us; but where these are, He as it were says, There I must be. The Holy Ghost cannot be separated from Christ in the believer. He acts as one who loves to be there to the glory of Christ; and thus He strengthens us, the active mighty spring of good and the watchful guard against evil. “The Spirit [is] life because

of righteousness." But as sure as this is the case, "if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies because of his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

The practical conclusion of the apostle follows. "So, then, brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live according to flesh. For if ye live according to flesh, ye are about to die; but if by [the] Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (Ver. 12, 13.) The deliverance of the Christian gives him the fullest title against the flesh; and he has the power of the Spirit that he should live according to Christ, not according to flesh. The structure of the phraseology is peculiar, but I believe admirably wise. The sentence looks unfinished and sounds as if another member were wanting to complete it. But God is always right; and no addition is needful or even admissible: if anything were added, it would but detract from the force of the truth as now stated. "We are debtors not to the flesh to live according to flesh." Used to the schools and forms of man, one waits for some such statement to be added as that we are debtors to the Spirit or to Christ the Lord. This the inspired writer avoids saying. He knows the tendency to legalism, and would cut off excuse first. He would maintain us in liberty, the full liberty with which Christ set us free. But there is no enfeebling of responsibility. On the one hand, "If ye live according to flesh, ye are about to die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live" on the other hand. The former is a natural and necessary consequence; the latter is a gracious and assuring pledge from God.

“For as many as are led by God’s Spirit, they are sons of God.” (Ver. 14.) Here we begin to hear of our relationship in contrast with the place of servants or slaves, which Israel had under law. It also paves the way for the introduction of the Spirit as the personal agent, instead of being viewed simply as characterizing our new nature and status in contrast with flesh. But it is not correct to say that υἱὸς Θεοῦ differs from τέκνον Θ. in implying the higher and more mature and conscious member of God’s family. The true distinction is that the former is the less intimate of the two and does not necessarily suppose a proper birth-tie. It need not go beyond public position by adoption, without being really born into the family, but in full contradistinction in every case to the place of a slave. Hence John, who treats of life, never speaks of us as “sons;” for the word is wrongly rendered so in John 1:12 and in 1 John 3:1, 2. It should be “children,” as being truly born of God. Nor is this at all enfeebled by the fact on the other side that Jesus is never called τέκνον but υἱός. It would be derogatory to, and a denial of, His eternal glory to speak of Him as God’s τέκνον (child). But He is Son (

υἱός) in more senses than one. He is Son of God as born in time and viewed on earth in His predicted association with Israel as their Messiah and king. (Psalm 2.) He is determined as Son of God in power by resurrection from the dead. (Rom. 1.) And what is more important than all, and the basis of all, He is Son of God, only-begotten Son in the Father’s bosom, entirely apart from the time of His manifestation or the results of His work of redemption, Son of the Father in His own nature and personal relationship in that eternal subsistence which is essential to the Godhead and characteristic of it. For

this last we have chiefly to consult the Gospel and Epistles of John. Nothing therefore can be more correct than the language of all the inspired writers; nothing more feeble than its appreciation by theological writers even with the facts and words before their eyes. But the source of their failure is quite intelligible: a sense of Christ's glory as inadequate as of the derived privileges of the Christian.

Thus we have seen the weighty and momentous fact that the Holy Spirit in distinct personal action associates Himself with the Christian. It is not only that He produces a new spiritual being and estate into which those who are Christ's are now brought: this we have had largely, but there is more insisted on here. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Not merely must one be born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5); not merely did the disciples receive the Holy Spirit, as Spirit of life more abundantly, when the risen Jesus breathed on them (John 20:22); but now the Holy Ghost, personally present, guided these richly favoured saints in the conscious dignity of God's sons. There is liberty where He is, not law; yet the moral result which law demanded grace produced; for if they in dependence look to the Lord Jesus, and to their God and Father, He on His part is no spirit of weakness or of cowardice, but of power and of love and of a sound mind, and by Him are they thus led.

"For ye received not a spirit of bondage again to [or for] fear; but ye received a spirit of sonship, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Ver. 15.) Gentiles though they were (for there is no allusion here as in Romans 7 to such as know the law), they were not brought into the spiritual

condition of the saints in Old Testament times, especially indeed of those under law, who through fear of death were subject to bondage during the whole of their life. Out of this the Jewish saints were brought by the gospel, which equally met the Gentile who had never experienced the legal discipline, but had lain here and there, seemingly overlooked in their wild course of lawlessness and idolatry. The one as much as the other received a spirit of adoption or sonship, as indeed it is said elsewhere: “because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” The Holy Ghost could not but act in unison with the Son who had revealed the Father, and would give the sense of no relationship short of sons. The slaves had morally closed their history, not only by persistent rebellion, but by war to the death of the Son of God. From a lost world grace was saving, and placing those who believed in the Lord Jesus in the position of sons; and the Holy Ghost personally deigned to lead them, beside imparting a nature conformable to God and distinct from man though made good in man. It is in contrast then not merely with Gentile license and boldness, but with Jewish bondage and fear; and the Spirit gives us to cry, Abba, Father. So cried Jesus in Gethsemane, not on the cross. If we cry thus, it is the expression of dependence on and confidence in our Father, not of a suffering such as His, where His utter abandonment draws forth the still deeper and essentially distinct “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, heirs also; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if indeed we suffer with

[him] that we may also be glorified with [him].” (Ver. 16, 17.)

Thus the Holy Spirit takes part in all. Does He content Himself only with imparting a new and divine nature? By no means. He has His appropriate internal witness; He Himself bears it with our spirit that we are of the very family of God, as indeed we are born of God. But now it is not alone the fact but the conscious joy of it. Christianity is not objective only, but just as remarkable for the gift by grace of inner power and comfort; the Son reveals the Father, and gives the Spirit. It is not merely the gospel believed, but a real inward witnessing of the Spirit with ours that we are God’s children. There is far more no doubt; but this there is, and it is of consequence to recognize it. Some may have substituted it for the testimony to Christ and redemption; but we must avoid the error of denying it. He would not be absent from the joy of the saint. Have we not this consciousness of being God’s children? Whence have we it? Is it a process of reasoning from the gospel? God forbid. Let us call realities by their right names. It is the Spirit itself witnessing with our spirit that we are children of God. How Calvinists or Arminians misuse it may be of importance in each case; but this is the truth of God, realized in every simple-minded Christian, whether opposing parties hear or forbear.

Here the reasoning, it will be remarked, is not to our being God’s children, but from it. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God: the inference is, that if children, we are also heirs. Wondrous to say, we are “heirs of God;” more wonderful still, “joint-heirs with Christ.” Israel were the lot of Jehovah’s inheritance. Not such is our place; we are

heirs of what God possesses; and this is both asserted in all its fulness as well as accounted for in our added title — “joint-heirs with Christ.” We are to share all things with Him, for as all things are His by right of creation and redemption, so are they ours by His grace who has placed in the utmost possible nearness to Himself. There is indeed the condition of suffering with Him in order that we may be glorified together; but this He makes good in all that are His. It is not suffering for Him; for all Christians do not. But all suffer with Him, who have the divine nature, even Himself as their life, in an evil world, which constantly wounds and tries those who have that nature. It will not be so in the millennial age; when, as the state of things will preclude suffering, so there will be no specific glorification with Him as the hope of such sufferers. Special trials and rewards will be no more, though there will still remain the reigning in life by one, Jesus Christ our Lord, for ever, But the reign with Him for a thousand years will be past, as also concurrently the place of suffering with Him.

Thus our association with Christ brings us into the new place which He has entered by death and resurrection, and into the relationship of sons. Yea, the Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs — heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, the Heir of all things. But this supposes moral conformity with Him in this world, before we are conformed to His image in glory as in verses 29, 30, if we are suffering together that we may be also glorified together. This suffering flows from possessing life in Him whilst passing through a scene where all is opposed to Him; and the indwelling of the Spirit, instead of hindering this holy sorrow, is rather the

spring of energy both in keen apprehension and deep feeling of every way in which Christ is dishonoured, and in meek endurance of all by which we may be tried according to the will of God. Hence, if this place of suffering in the world as it now is be a necessary consequence of divine life surrounded by all that is working out its way of misery, estrangement, and rebellion against Him, it is an immense privilege to suffer with Christ, cheered along the road by the prospect of sharing His glory.

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present season [are] of no account in comparison with the coming glory to be revealed in regard to us.”27 No Christian doubts that the apostle estimates according to divine truth; and certainly if none had by God’s sovereign will and power of the Spirit such a vivid foresight of the coming glory, none of those that followed Christ ever tasted as He of sorrows by the way. And this is made known to us that we may rest and rejoice in the reckoning. The divine excellency will then shine forth unhindered, and we shall have the fellowship of His delight everywhere.

Far as the distance may seem between creation in general and those whom grace has now taken out of its ruin and associated in so intimate and complete a way with Christ as the Christian knows it, there is a link of the most direct and momentous sort. “For the earnest expectation of the creation is waiting for the revelation of the sons of God. For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but on account of him who made [it] subject, in hope that28 even the creation itself shall be freed from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.” Here, as it is a passage of very great interest and value, so ignorance of the

truth conveyed has embarassed most of those who have sought to expound it, whether orally or in formal commentaries. There is no real difficulty where the main drift of the apostle is caught. The perplexity, as is usually the case, is brought in with notions extraneous to his reasoning. Let us then consider briefly the truth conveyed, and that which has made it obscure to the mass of readers.

Both the present sufferings and the future glory in the apostle's mind touch on the creation, which he here personifies. It is represented first of all as on the stretch of outlook, waiting for the revelation of the sons of God. Externally His sons do not differ in bodily appearance, power, or glory from the rest of mankind; they may be weak, they may suffer, as also they fall asleep or die while the Lord tarries on high. But after the resurrection or change, at His coming, they are to be manifested in glory with Christ when He is thus manifested also. Creation too awaits this blissful moment. Its deliverance from its actual misery hinges on them and their revelation.

Nor is there any ground of surprise at such a connection with men; for creation was made subject to vanity, not of course by its own will, but on his account who made it subject. Man was set by God as the head of the lower creation. When he fell, creation shared his ruin. When the sons of God are revealed at the appearing of Christ, there will be a proof that it was made dependent on them, and that the hope of emancipation is not in vain. If it was righteous that by the fall of its head creation should be subjected to vanity, how consistent and worthy of God that the redemption of His children and heirs should be followed by its glorious retrievement!

To explain this of the Gentile world, as is done by Whitby and others, is poor indeed; as also Doddridge's notion that it is merely the whole unevangelized world looking out eagerly for such a remedy and relief as the gospel brings, by which humanity would be secured from vanity and corruption, and inferior creatures from tyranny and abuse.

The apostle however is not speaking of the prevalency of the gospel of grace, but of the incoming and display of glory, and hence of the divine power which will free the creation, ruined by man, according to His own counsels. When the heirs are glorified around the great Firstborn and appear with Him in glory, then and thus is the inheritance to emerge from the thraldom under which it has long groaned, "the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Compare Isa. 11, Isa. 12, Isa. 25, Isa. 32, Isa. 35-51, Isa. 60-65; Jer. 31-33; Ezek. 36-48; Dan. 2:44, 45; Dan. 7:14, 27; Dan. 12; Hosea 1:11; Hosea 2; Hosea 3:5; Joel 3; Amos 9; Obadiah 17, Obadiah 21; Jonah (typically); Micah 4, Micah 5, Micah 7; Nahum 1:15; Hab. 3; Zeph. 3; Haggai 2:6-9, 21-23; Zech. 2:4-13, Zech. 6, Zech. 8-14; Mal. 3, Mal. 4. It is the regeneration of which our Lord spoke when His rights shall be made good in the full and duly ordered blessing of Israel on earth. (Matt. 19.) It is the administration of the fulness of times when God's will is to gather up together all things in Christ, the things which are in the heavens and the things which are on the earth, even in Him in whom we also have obtained an inheritance. (Eph. 1:10, 11.) For the reconciliation is to take in all things, not merely the saints who are now reconciled. (Col. 1.) This will be the rest of God (Heb. 4);

and then will be manifested the wide and various circles of blessedness and glory, fruit of pure grace, to which we are come before they come in fact for the earth (Heb. 12), the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, who shall reign unto the ages of the ages (Rev. 11), as is set forth in a crowd of other scriptures.

The creation was not made (as it now is) in decay, degradation, suffering, death. That God originally designed that it should be in such confusion and misery would be hard to digest; but the scriptures teach the contrary, as it shows that, whilst subjected to its present disorder on account of man's guilt and ruin, it longs not in vain for deliverance, but awaits in hope His revelation in glory. The very struggle of everything for life and against sickness witnesses that it is fallen to rise. Thus not only is the riddle of what now is solved by God's account of the past, but His word casts its own bright light on the future; for, though subjected to vanity, it was "in hope that even the creation itself shall be freed from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." It is only by faith that any enter into the liberty of grace; and this is the portion even now of God's children under the gospel. Creation cannot of necessity know such liberty, being unintelligent even where it is animate; but even itself shall exchange the slavery of corruption by which it is now held down for the liberty of glory when the children of God are glorified. Thus all will be vindicated on God's part, and all in due order. There can be no communion between us and creation in grace; there will be in glory when the power of God deals with all creation in honour of Christ's death, whose blood has bought not the treasure

only but the field, the world which contained it, yea, all things.

“For we know that the whole creation groaneth together and travaileth in pain together until now; and not only [so], but ourselves, having the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan in ourselves, waiting for adoption, the redemption of our body. For by hope were we saved; but a hope seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he also hope for? But if we hope for what we see not, we await with patience.” (Ver. 22-25.) Here is the most decisive evidence, were more wanted, of the distinction between the creation29 on the one hand and the Christian on the other. And observe that the contrast is drawn most sharply and exclusively; for “all the creation” is distinguished from “ourselves.” Again, the mistake of embracing impenitent souls within “the creation” here intended is no less plain; for it is certain that, as their will is engaged, contrary to what is said of the subjection of the creation to vanity, so their earnest expectation awaits anything rather than the revelation of the sons of God, and they will be cast into hell instead of being delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of glory.

As Christians then we are not deceived by appearances and the mind and will of man who would fain hide the testimony to his own guilt and ruin in the wretchedness of creation dragged down by his fault. For we know that it is all in groans and throes till now: neither Christ’s coming in grace and humiliation, nor the gospel preached in the power of the Spirit sent down from heaven set this aside, but called believers to glory above it, and to virtue in spite of it. Yet the groaning of creation was not only unintelligent but selfish, though in

no way a matter of indifference to God, whatever it may be to dreamy or hard philosophy. And ourselves too, having the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan in ourselves, awaiting as sonship the redemption of our bodies. For the body of the believer has not yet experienced the power of Christ, and thus we have our link with the groaning creation. And the Spirit gives us so much the more to groan because we have access by faith into this favour in which we stand and we exult in hope of the glory of God. Our groaning therefore is not unintelligent, nor is it simply because of our personal suffering; but in fellowship with Christ, in horror of abounding evil, in love of good despised, in yearning after man and in desire for God's truth and majesty. The Spirit, though of power and love and discreetness, makes us so much the more long for the day, when we shall be changed and manifestly sons of God as sons of the resurrection. It is not the sorrow of ignorant unbelieving uncertainty, but of the inward mind and heart over what is far from God and unlike Him, because of knowing what He is in Christ and in full confidence that we shall be like Him in that day. For we have only salvation by hope, not yet seen or in present possession; we hope for it complete according to Christ risen, and with patience await. It is well worth while.

We have seen the function of the Spirit in bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, as we saw previously the new condition which He forms in contrast with the flesh, and in which we now find ourselves by grace — in Spirit if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in us. Then we had the apostle contrasting the creation as it now groans with the liberty of glory when the sons of God, the heirs, are manifested in glory

at the appearing of Christ; and along with this, the groaning of the saints, whose bodies are not yet delivered, no longer because of selfish feelings but in the interests and sympathies of divine love.

Now we are told of the relation of the indwelling Spirit to this state of weakness and suffering.

“And likewise the Spirit also joineth help to our weakness; for we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedeth30 with unutterable groanings, and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what [is] the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedeth for saints according to God.”

Thus the blessed Spirit of God will not be severed from our weakness, now that He deigns to take His abode in us because of Christ’s redemption. Even he who could work signs and miracles did not differ from his brethren by exemption from infirmity. Rather was Paul, the greatest of apostles, more than any other sensible of it. Caught up to the third heaven (whether in the body or out of it, he could not tell), he gloried of such an one, not of himself save in his weaknesses. And when he prayed to the Lord for the removal of the thorn for the flesh given to him, what was the answer? Not its departure; but “my grace sufficeth for thee; for my power is made perfect in weakness.” “Most gladly therefore,” says he, “will I rather glory in my weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

It was not otherwise with the perfect pattern of all excellency in man here below. “Jesus wept.” He was deeply pained, sighing sorely in His Spirit. He knew what to say and what to do, conscious that the Father always heard Him. But we do not know what we should

pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself pleads for us with groanings unutterable. It is not now simply Christ with us but the Spirit in us, condescending to give our groanings a character entirely above the mere feelings of human sorrow. We feel the evil of the misery; we do not know what to ask; but at least we groan. Wondrous grace! the Spirit associates Himself with our groaning; and the searcher of the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit. Instead of slighting the ignorance which cannot ask a suitable means of relief, He interprets us by His mind who dwells in us, and who intercedes for saints (for of them only is it a question) according to God. It is not merely “according to his will,” as in the Authorized Version, but according to Himself. The inference of Macedonius from the passage is the working of the spirit of man wholly ignorant of God’s mind which he altogether missed; nay, it is worse than this, it betrays the beguiling power of the serpent, for it evinces that enmity to God and man which not only loses all the comfort of the truth but turns the word to the dishonour of the Holy Spirit. For the unhappy man concluded from the text that the Spirit must be inferior to God and a creature, because He prays to God for us. He knew not grace, he appreciated not the moral glory of God which stoops to serve, as love must do, if it save sinners in an evil world. Man can understand power in God; but love, especially love active spite of evil, humbling itself, and sympathizing, he overlooks and denies even to the denial of God Himself in those of whom it is predicated. The believer knows it as his deepest joy, and never adores with so full a sense of what God is as when he sees the Father declared in the Son, and knows that even his groans come up before God clothed with a divine character because of the Holy

Ghost who is in us by the grace of our God. Just as evil spirits identified the miserable man who was thus possessed with their demoniacal character, and an individual was called Legion because many demons were entered into him; so the Spirit of God not less but more in divine goodness and power identifies us with Himself spite of our weakness and our ignorance, not for a moment lowering His own dignity but meeting us in love as only God could, and as even God would only in virtue of redemption.

These verses are a transitional link from the work of the Spirit in us to the bold challenge in the conclusion of the chapter (ver. 31-39), grounded on the assurance that God is for us against all adversaries and spite of every weakness. That they may be rightly viewed thus is apparent. First, there is a distinct allusion, in the opening words, to the previous clause, which traced the value and comfort of the Spirit in helping our infirmity. For He, when we know not what to pray for as we ought, Himself intercedes for us with unutterable groanings, yet according to God. Secondly, on the other hand, they are in bearing still more intimately a groundwork for what follows; for they set forth in a striking and connected manner the purpose of God as far as it is consistent with our epistle to treat of it.

We do not know what we should pray for as we ought; “but we do know that to those that love God all things work together for good, to those that are called according to purpose. Because those whom he foreknew he also predestined [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, that he should be the firstborn among many brethren. But whom he predestined, those he also called; and whom he called, those he also justified. but

whom he justified, those he also glorified." (Ver. 28-30.) The chain is thus complete from His own purpose in eternity to their glorification for eternity. It is the activity, extent, and scope of the grace of God for its objects apart from all circumstances, and, as we shall see later, in spite of them, let them be what they may, because they are but creature causes or effects, whilst God is for us and supreme above all, not a mere causa causata, but the one causa causans.

Even Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12, did not know what to pray for as he ought; but the Lord was faithful and made the sufficiency of His grace known — an answer far better than the prayer. And yet not Paul only, but even we know that all things work together for good — not merely shall, but do now, and this for others as well as ourselves, for those that love God. Otherwise sorrows irritate. Here they are twice blessed, blessed to those exercised by them, blessed to other children of God; in short, to those that love Him and to those that are called according to purpose, for this is here carefully stated, lest the love of God on our part might enfeeble the thought of grace on His. Hence purpose and calling according to it are put forward.

It is important to observe that the apostle does not speak of a passive or naked foreknowledge (ver. 29) as if God only saw beforehand what some would be, and do, or believe. His foreknowledge is of persons, not of their state or conduct; it is not what, but "whom" He foreknew.

Further, those whom He foreknew, all of them and no others, He also fore-ordained to be conformed to the image of His Son. It is plain and well to note that we

have the end bound up with the beginning; for the conformity here spoken of is not of that sort which is now produced in the soul practically by the Spirit through the word. The latter is most true, and often insisted on elsewhere, as in John 13, John 15; Rom. 12, Rom. 13; 1 Cor. 5, 1 Cor. 6; 2 Cor. 3:18, 2 Cor. 7:1, Gal. 5:16, 25; Eph. 2:10, Eph. 4, Eph. 5, etc. 1 John 3:2, 3, combines both: “We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him is he is.” This is the conformity to the image of His Son of which the apostle here speaks; whereas the moral work in the heart of the believer is spoken of in the following verse: “And every man that hath this hope in him (i.e., founded on Christ) purifieth himself even as he (Christ) is pure.” There is and can be no less a standard for the Christian, whatever may have been the rule by which the Jew was tried. The purifying goes on now within us, but answers rather to the central teaching of our chapter; the likeness to Christ in glory, which will be seen in us when Christ is manifested, is the conformity to His image which is here assured to us.

It seems harsh, however, with Augustine and others to drag in sins here among the “all things;” for though no doubt grace can turn everything to account, scripture is the more careful to guard against the least real appearance of dealing lightly with that which is morally offensive to God.

Thus God fore-ordained the objects of His foreknowledge to conformity with the image of His Son in resurrection glory. Then they will be as He, according to divine counsels, in the predestined condition of man, the first-born among many brethren. The corn of wheat which died, but sprang up again, will have borne much

fruit, Himself alike the pattern and the power; for nothing short of this meets the purpose according to which we have been called. The saints shall be manifestly then sons of God being sons of the resurrection, when He will transform the body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory. For if God delights in His own Son as the risen man, such and nothing less is the destiny to which He has ordained us beforehand. Nevertheless, whatever the communion, rightly will our Lord have His due place in that bright family — the chief or "Firstborn among many brethren."

Verse 30 pursues the matter, connecting the ways of God in time with what is before and out of time. "But whom he predestinated, those he also called." It is not only the call of grace in a general way, but made effectual to such as He foreknew and foreordained. "And whom he called, those he also justified." Justification, like the call, is in time, and even subsequent to the call by the gospel. The Calvinists greatly err who teach that Christ rose because we were justified, a notion as subversive of sound doctrine as of holiness, and quite opposed to the scriptures which bind it up with faith.31 But this is not the only danger here.

For on the other side the Arminians are in error who apply συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνος τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ (conformed to the image of His Son) to holiness, as verse 30 abundantly confirms. For while foreknowledge, predestination, calling, and justification are set out in regular order, the series is suddenly closed by the words "but whom he justified, those he also glorified," without one word about that spiritual conformity which we all confess to be a necessary condition in the salvation of a soul.

Was this omission an oversight of man, or divine intention? The latter only, I am persuaded; and with a wisdom by no means hard to discern. We are here in presence of the apostle's unfolding of God's purpose in its application to us and our security in the face of all difficulties and dangers. Now it is clear that the inner work would draw off to questions of our state. However important this may be, it were out of place here, besides the fact that it had been already insisted on with care and fulness after the opening verses of this chapter. In its own place the Holy Spirit had pressed it strongly and with solemn warning for any and every soul bearing the Lord's name. But here God would give the believer the unmingled comfort of what He is for us; and this excludes what He does within us, wholesome and indispensable though it may be.

It will be observed too that (

ἐδόξασεν) "glorified" is an aorist, no less than the other verbs in verse 30. This is due to a similar reason. All is looked at from God's side and purpose, not as if the call, justification, and glorification were already accomplished facts, but because the Spirit is emphatically asserting the whole from first to last, as assured in His eyes and by His word who does these things, known from eternity in His own everlasting now.

We now enter on the distinct portion which closes this division of the epistle, where the apostle interrogates and, I may say, challenges all adversaries in presence of the rich and varied provisions of redemption.

"What then shall we say to these things? If God [is] for us, who [shall be] against us? He who spared not his

own Son but gave him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?" (Ver. 31, 32.)

It is no longer that we are in Christ and Christ in us, nor is it the witness and work of the Spirit in us whether in joy or sorrow; but the deduction from all that God is for us, not only superior to all that would hurt us, but leading to the bold question, Who dare be against us? All is measured by God's gift of His own Son, not spared but delivered up for us all; a plain and irrefragable answer to every doubt both of the reality of His love and of its extent; and this for the entire family of God. There was one object above all dear and precious to God, His own Son; and it was His own Son whom for us He spared in no way, but for us all surrendered Him to all that is dreadful in our eyes, to His heart infinitely worse — who knew His Father's love and felt evil as none but He could. That God should in His grace secure all things to us after such a gift is what we cannot but feel to be easily understood and suitable to His love, if not even necessarily due to the glory of Christ. Nothing can be lacking by the way: in the end we shall share all things with Him who is the Heir of all things. He made all, has reconciled all and will take all under His glorious sway; but we shall reign with Him. He is head over all to the Church which is His body, says our apostle elsewhere. Here he does not pursue the counsels of God but affirms the principle of grace in righteousness as applied to our individual relationship. It was no sudden thought but a settled design which went right through to glory with Christ, after the full trial and demonstration of the uniform and complete failure of the first man. It is now a question of the Second man and of those that are His; and thus it is as plain as it is sure that God is for them;

and if so, who is against them? Our sins have been remitted, sin in the flesh condemned, ourselves believing in Jesus and His blood, yea dead with Him and alive in Him to God: who then is against us? God has proved Himself for us where we had most ground for dread, and dread of Him above all; for against Him had we sinned. But in nothing has He shown His grace so deep and conspicuous as in our hopelessly evil state; in nothing so exhibited the worth and efficacy of the redemption through His Son. We are entitled then in faith to ask: “If God [is] for us, who [shall be] against us?” We are entitled to count that He who spared not His own Son will along with Him lavish on us everything good for us now, everything glorious by and by.

If His Son is the measureless measure of His love to us, “who shall bring a charge against God’s elect?” In this epistle the Spirit glories in connecting the objects He is handling with God. Not only is the righteousness, the grace, the glory, God’s, but so also is the gospel at the very commencement, and so here are the elect. The enemy had better beware of meddling with God’s elect. What did Satan make of it when it was only Joshua the type of One greater, only about Jerusalem that he dared to resist? Did not Jehovah then take up the matter for the encouragement of the guilty whom He meant to save in sovereign mercy? Did He not declare that He had chosen Jerusalem, a brand plucked out of the fire? Not more distant but nearer is His relationship with us; not darker but far more clear the revelation of His grace to us since the death and resurrection of His own Son. Just as God interposed for the high priest in Zechariah 3, so here (says the apostle), “[It is] God that justifieth: who [is] he that condemneth?” This I think is the true way of

arranging as well as punctuating the clauses. The Authorized Version impairs the link between the end of verse 33 and the beginning of verse 34, as also between the rest of verse 34 and verse 35; while others seem to me to injure the force by putting a note of interrogation at the end of verses 33 and 34.

Remark here that God is represented as the Justifier. It is not only that we have been justified by faith, justified before God, but He justifies. How does He justify? Is it not with that absolute perfection in which He carries on His work and His ways? Is it less perfect where He justifies those He destines to be conformed to the image of His Son in virtue of His infinite work on the cross?

But if there be an analogy with one prophet, there is a clear allusion to another. Isaiah 1. introduces God's elect Servant, substituted for Israel who had rejected Him, and shows that He was not more certainly the obedient and suffering One than the Jehovah God of Israel who made heaven and earth. Hence whatever the indignities He endured, the issue is sure, and all through He reckons on the fullest vindication. He in the midst of His shame, though thinking it not robbery to be on equality with God, can say "the Lord Jehovah will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord Jehovah will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up." (Isaiah 50:7-9.)

What Christ says in the prophecy the apostle does not hesitate to apply to the Christian. How blessed is this identification! It is the more striking too because immediately follow words descriptive neither of Himself nor of the Christian who now enjoys His righteous vindication along with Him, but of the godly remnant who have to walk in darkness, though trusting in the name of Jehovah while they obey the voice of His servant (ver. 10), and of the godless mass who with increasing unbelief turn to every refuge of lies to end all in sorrow, shame, and judgment. (Ver. 11) This brings out very definitely the peculiar blessedness of the Christian through known redemption, and the indwelling of the Spirit who glorifies Christ in their behalf as cannot be with even the righteous remnant.

It was needful to point out our distinctive position before a psalm is quoted (ver. 36) where we are viewed in circumstances analogous to theirs. For both are true: we have much that is common to all saints till Christ comes; but we and they have respectively what is characteristic and peculiar. Compare Psalm 44:22.

"[It is] God that justifieth: who [is] he that condemneth? [It is] Christ that died, but rather was raised, who is also at [the] right hand of God, who also intercedeth for us: who shall separate us from the love of Christ? tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? even as it is written, 'For thy sake we are being put to death all the day; we were reckoned sheep for slaughter.' Nay but in all these things we more than conquer through him that loved us." (Ver. 32-37.)

Here not only have we Christ presented in the full extent of His work from His death on the cross through resurrection to His presence and activity of intercession for us at God's right hand, as the ground for the challenge, Who shall sever us from the love of Christ but the difficulties and perils and sufferings for us along the road are mustered and arrayed in all their strength in order to prove its fidelity and unfathomable depth. Certainly, if we now, as the godly of old and ere long in the latter day, taste somewhat the bitterness of the way and the obstacles the enemy puts before us, Christ drank that cup and more to the dregs. Not only did He drink what was and could be His alone; but which of our afflictions was He a stranger to? Deeper by far, and felt according to the competency of His person to estimate and suffer, they became only the demonstration of His perfect love to us, Himself all the while the faithful witness. Christ who is risen and on high has been in them all, having gone down incomparably lower than the lowest of us. None of these then shall separate us from the love of Christ.

Thus God has proved Himself for us, first, in the gift of His own Son and of all things with Him; secondly, in justifying us Himself according to His value for Christ and His work; thirdly, in the love of Christ who has borne witness of its strength here below in all possible trials that could separate us from any other as surely as He is exercising it for us before God in virtue of redemption. "In all these things we more than conquer through him that loved us."

"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,32 nor height nor depth, nor any

other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ver. 38, 39.) Here we have still deeper difficulties, not the visible, but the invisible, the spiritual; but after all (sum them all up as the apostle does in his climax), they are but the creature, and they are arrayed at their strongest in order to be blotted out as nothing in presence of the all-vanquishing love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

For here, as the suited winding up, let it be remarked that it is the love of God, rather than of Christ as in verse 35. Each is exactly in place; the love of Christ as evident in suffering to the utmost for us here, and animated with the self-same love in His intercession in heaven for us who suffer still where He suffered; the love of God none the less real if less in sight, His immense and unchanging love whose grace planned all, gave all, forgave all, justified all, sustains all, and will bring all to that fulness of love and joy and glory which can satisfy such a God and the redemption of such a Saviour. If "the love of Christ" is our boast for its tender fidelity in fathoming all depths and pleading our cause above all heights, the immutable strength of "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," before all and through all and to all eternity, imparts the fullest rest and confidence to our hearts.

23 The great uncials, B, C, D, F, G, with some good cursives and ancient versions omit, while A, D (corr.), omit the last part. The English Version even so is incorrect; for, if genuine, the meaning would be "those in Christ Jesus who walk," or "those who in Christ Jesus walk," etc. (not "them which are in Christ Jesus who walk.")

24 “Legem spiritus improprie vocat Dei Spiritum, qui animas nostras Christi sanguine aspergit, non tantum ut a peccati labe emundet quoad reatum; sed in veram puritatem sanctificet.” — In loc. cit. ed. Tholuck.

25 The expression

ἐν ᾧ seems to be used with a certain variety of application. It is either want of knowledge or strength of system which alone can account for the effort of some moderns to restrict it to the sense “wherein.” Nevertheless it never, that I am aware of, passes the bounds of correct usage, so as to be used, as Grotius says, for ἐφ᾽ ᾧ, which expresses the condition or occasion under which a thing is done or occurs; while ἐν ᾧ is the time, sphere, state, or power in question. Alford is singularly vacillating; for whilst on our text he says “because” (not ‘wherein,’ as in Romans 2:1, but ‘in that’) and refers in his margin to Hebrews 2:18; on the latter text he says, 4 ‘in that which,’ and remarks, “The ordinary rendering is to take ἐν ᾧ as equivalent to ‘forasmuch as,’ ‘in that,’ English Version, and to justify it by the Hebrew.But it is doubtful whether ἐν ᾧ has ever this meaning absolutely.(!) It seems only to approach to it through ‘quatenus,’ ‘in as far as,’ which is an extension of its strict meaning, ‘in that particular in which,’ ‘wherein.’ (!!) And this slightly extended meaning is preferable in all the places usually cited to justify the other: e.g., Rom. 8:3; Heb. 6:17.” It is a little strong to send us to a reference and then to nullify the meaning first, and add there a new reference (Heb. 6:17), where he contradicts himself again and substantially confirms his first statement, for he there says, “in which behalf,” nearly equivalent to “wherefore,” which he expressly prefers to “in which.”

26 I reject the notion that

διὰ τῆς σαρκὸς means “in having to act through the flesh,” or “through the medium of the flesh.” No doubt the construction is decisive against “on account of the flesh;” but διά with a genitive often means in a given state, though oftener still “by means of.”

27 The phraseology seems to me choice and precise. It is not ἡμῖν, which after ἀποκαλυφθῆναι would be ambiguous and is already appropriated to the sense of receiving spiritual communication. It is not ἐν ἡμῖν, which makes or tends to make the glory concentrated and terminated in us. Εἰς ἡμᾶς leaves room for us to be reached by the glory but takes it in universally.

28 Or, “in hope: because.”

29 Theodoret (in loc. ed. Sirmondi, tom. iii.) seems to err on the side of comprehending too much; for he includes not only the material universe, heaven, earth, sea, air, sun, moon, all the visible, but the invisible besides, angels, archangel(s?), powers, authorities, principalities. It is true that he is not consistent; for, in commenting on verse 20, he is obliged to restrain the subjection to vanity to all the visible creation by the decree of the Creator; yet in verse 22 he extends it even to the invisible on the rather far-fetched plea that, if angels rejoice over a repentant sinner, they must needs be saddened at the sight of our delinquencies. The same writer, I may add, is quite wrong, like others since his day, in fancying that by the first-fruits of the Spirit, the apostle implies the gift to us of manifold more of the Spirit in the age to come. The reader will notice how commonly current errors are due to the fathers, or

perhaps independently to the same corrupt root of unbelief which slights the teaching of the scriptures.

30 The received text inserts here

ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν contrary to the best authorities. It seems to me implied, and needless to say, if not rather narrowing the thought. In the following verse we have ὑπὲρ ἁγίων expressed in its due place.

31 It is mere ignorance, and a superficial mind, to infer that διά must mean the same thing in the two clauses of Romans 4:25 any more than “for” by which our translators render it. In the first it means “because of,” in the second, “for the sake of;” or “on account of” in both cases, but with a force decidedly different, as Romans 5:1 ought to prove to any fair mind. We cannot be justified apart from faith, but on that principle and by that only.

32 This is the true place of

δυνάμεις according to ample authority of the highest order. The oldest Greek MSS. which give the place of “powers” as in the common text are two uncials of the ninth century, but they are supported by several very ancient versions which were (probably through inadvertence) swayed by Ephesians 1:21, Ephesians 3:10, Ephesians 6:12; and Colossians 2:15.

Romans 9

The apostle now enters on a new section of the epistle in Romans 9-11, the main object of which is to reconcile the indiscriminate call of Gentiles and Jews with the special promises made to Israel. In this task he overthrows the fleshly pretensions of those who rested on nothing but a line of natural descent from Abraham; he proves that special promise has from the first been the principle of God; he points to sovereign mercy as the only hope for a people such as even Israel had shown themselves to be; he annihilates the poor and selfish and proud reasoning which arraigns the rights and righteousness of God, when the fact is that man is utterly unrighteous before Him; he demonstrates that according to the Jewish prophets Israel would be rejected, Gentiles called, and only a remnant of the ancient people saved; he shows that their rejection was owing to their failure in meeting the law of righteousness which they had deliberately chosen instead of the righteousness which grace gives by faith, while the Gentiles received it gladly, Christ being the grand test for both; he insists that this did not hinder his love and prayer for Israel that they might be saved, but salvation could only be by accepting Christ the end of the law for righteousness to the believer according to the secret of grace intimated in Deuteronomy 30, supported and carried out by Isaiah 28:16 and Joel 2:32, which last opens the door of faith to more than Israel, even to those who, if they had not the law, might hear the glad tidings of good things (Isaiah 52), which God sends out. He points out that the very unbelief of this on the part of the Jews fulfils Isaiah 53; that the Psalms (Ps.

19) attest the wide-spread universal message of God, and that, while the law warned them of God's provoking them to jealousy by a no-people, the prophet (Isaiah 65) is bolder still and explicitly announces God found by those who sought Him not (Gentiles), while Israel are condemned as a disobedient and gainsaying people. But the apostle would not close the subject without the most distinct statement, as well as proof from the prophets themselves, that God had not finally cast off His people Israel: first, there is always a remnant according to the election of grace, of which the apostle himself was witness; secondly, their fall was expressly to provoke Israel to jealousy, and therefore not to reject them even for a time; and, thirdly, on the ruin of the Gentile by unbelief and slight of God's goodness as of Israel before, all Israel shall be saved according to the written word of God (Isaiah 59), all His ways of mercy and wisdom causing the apostle to burst forth into thanksgiving and adoration. Such is the general outline and argument, which maintains responsibility on the one side and the promises of God on the other, and reconciles the indiscriminate ways of God in the gospel now with the accomplishment of a special glory for Israel as well as the general blessing of Gentiles or the nations in the age to come on earth. Heavenly grace is not in question here. Hence it is the olive tree, not the one new man, of which we read.

The apostle then begins this most instructive episode, in which he explains the ways of God, with the solemn assurance of his fervent affection, and hence his distress for Israel in their present low estate and exposure to judgment.

“Truth I say in Christ; I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in [the] Holy Spirit, that I have great grief and unceasing pain in my heart, for I was wishing33 — I myself — to be a curse from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to flesh.” (Ver. 1-3.) It is plain that he alludes there to the love Moses had proved so well, as God records it in the law; and he intimates that he loved them not a whit less. It was a wish that had passed through his soul. He does not refer to the days of his Pharisaism; for great as his zeal was, his love as a Christian and an apostle was far deeper as well as wholly unselfish. In his old unenlightened condition there was no question of such a feeling for them; as he had no right sense of their peril any more than of his own. On the other hand he does not lay it down as the deliberate wish of his present mind; but as a passionate self-sacrificing desire which had been in his heart, impossible no doubt, but evincing the strength of his burning love for Israel, as well as his sense of their extreme peril and utter ruin.34 Hence he dwells on his ties of relationship with them.

This leads him to speak of their privileges. Those who hate others lose no opportunity of detracting from them and denying at any rate favours that seem peculiarly theirs from God. Love makes the most of what is possessed by its object. Judged by such a test, there could be no doubt of the love of the apostle who sets out the marks of God’s goodness to Israel as none else had ever done before, not even Gamaliel, least of all his Sadducean enemies. Who could produce from tradition, yea, from the living oracles themselves such a bright roll as Paul here unfolds before those who ignorantly taxed him with making light of the blessings God had

vouchsafed to his kinsmen according to flesh? “who are Israelites, whose [is] the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the lawgiving and the service and the promises; whose [are] the fathers, and of whom [is] Christ as to flesh, that is over all God blessed unto the ages. Amen.” (Ver. 4, 5.)

Thus he gives them the divinely conferred name of victory with God and man, which they derived from their father Jacob; then he alludes to the name Jehovah deigned to call them by in His summons to Pharaoh — “my son, my firstborn.” Next he directs attention to the shechinah or glory-cloud which led out the people from Egypt through the wilderness into Canaan. After this he speaks of those solemn covenants which God made first with the fathers, but assuredly at least including that which He will make in the latter day with the sons. Then he names the lawgiving, before which all the boasts of ancient or modern times are but the merest smoke compared with the blaze of Sinai or the marvellous condescension which deigned from the tabernacle to treat of their least as well as greatest matters. The religions services or ordinances of worship next follow; for they justly claim to be the only ritual with its priesthood which God ever instituted for a people on earth. This however would have been short indeed without “the promises;” as these naturally are followed by “the fathers,” and all is crowned by the Messiah. And here beyond doubt the apostle does not hide His glory. Let the Jews say all they might of Him whom they expected, they can never rise above what Paul delights to tell of Messiah. Alas! they would fain lower Him to the measure of their own desires; and, worse still, modern unbelief in Christendom answers to the old darkness of

Judaism. The apostle however does not more surely lay down His descent from the fathers as to flesh, than His proper Godhead in His other and divine nature, “He that is” (says he) “above all God blessed for ever. Amen.” A more illustrious testimony there cannot be. But Satan for a while had blinded the eyes of Israel, so that they forsake their own mercies and deny a truth which, did they but see it, they would recognize as both their brightest jewel and the solid ground of all their hoped for blessing.

Very needless difficulty has been raised about the terms ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων

Θεός. The Noetian heretics of old drew from this and other scriptures that God the Father suffered. Others in opposing so flagrant an error were too anxious to restrict ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων to the Father, especially as He is unquestionably so qualified in Ephesians 4:6. But there is no real difficulty; and it is only ignorance or heterodoxy which finds any; for scripture is plain in attributing not merely θειότητα but θεότητα to Christ. He is God, as is the Father, and also the Holy Ghost. They are each and all styled Jehovah, the name incommunicable to the creature, let it be ever so exalted. The Son did not deem it a matter of plunder to be on equality with God. He emptied Himself in taking a servant’s shape; whereas even the archangel is at best but a servant and never can be other: it is Michael’s blessedness and part to be serving God. Not so the Son: He humbled Himself to take the place of a servant, being in His own proper nature and dignity infinitely above it. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered; He had only known what it was to command; but, taking that position in communion with the love and

counsels of the Father, He was therein the perfect pattern of all lowly obedience. How base to take advantage of His grace to despise His glory!-to be so occupied with the humiliation to which He stooped to glorify God the Father, and show us both God and man in His own person and ways, and above all to accomplish redemption — to be so filled, I may say, with the circumstances of shame into which He went down in love as to forget who He is in Himself that for us descended so low! No; He that was the perfect man was very God, equally with the Father and the Holy Ghost. All things were made not only by Him but for Him.

But is not this true of the Father? Assuredly: yet this in no way impeaches the title of the Son. Scripture is plain as to both. God as such in the true and full sense is and must be supreme. This attaches to the persons in the Godhead. Differences there may be and are; but not in this. To deny supremacy of the Son or of the Spirit is to fall into the Arian heresy or the Macedonian. No doubt, as in Ephesians 4:5, Christ is contradistinguished as “one Lord” from the Father; and so similarly in 1 Corinthians 8:6. This however, far from derogating from His intrinsic divine glory, only shows us another glory which He receives as the exalted man who is made Lord and Christ. He, and He distinctively, has the official place of lordship, though of course as a term of dignity it belongs alike to Father, Son, and Spirit; and so any one can see who will take the trouble of comparing the scriptures.

There is no discrepancy in the authorities here that affects the sense, as in 1 Timothy 3:16. Manuscripts and versions proclaim the truth with an unwavering voice: Christ is over all, God blessed for ever. The notion that

Θεός is wanting in the citation of the early ecclesiastical writers is a mistake. They all read as we do, unless we conceive that Chrysostom omitted ὁ before ὤν, as, the Augian and Boernerian MSS. did τό before κατὰ σάρκα, which was probably mere inadvertence. What the Pseudo-Ignatius (ep. Tars.) or the Constit. Apostol.35 may say is of no moment. As to Athanasius, not only is it not true that he ever wrote περὶ δὲ τοῦ εἶναι ἐπι πάντων Θεὸν τοῦ σταυρώθεντα φοβοῦμαι ("I fear to say that the crucified One is God over all"), but it was not even the Pseudo-Athanasius who is so represented, but the Pseudo-Arius in answering the citation of this passage. Wetstein therefore was wrong here and betrayed his Arian animus. (See Athanasii Opp. i. 125 B, ed. Col. 1686.) Erasmus is equally wrong in thinking that Cyprian and Hilary left out "Deus;" for it is only omitted by careless editors, and is found in all good copies. As to Origen, his wildness was such as to weaken the weight of his assertions; but what he does say, in answer to Celsus' charge that the Christians made Christ God the Father or greater still, is that, while some might be hasty enough to aver τὸν Σωτῆρα τὸν μέγιστον ἐπὶ πᾶσι Θεόν· ἀλλ᾽ οὔτι γε ἡμεῖς τοιοῦτον οἱ πειθόμενοι αὐτῳ λέγοντι, κ.τ.λ. Now I do not admit that Origen (contra Cels. 7:14) was justified in quoting the last clause of John 14:28 (which he misquotes) where it was a question of the Son's Deity, while the text speaks of His place of earthly subjection. But even he does not go so far as to deny supreme Godhead to the Son; he does deny, as all taught of God must, the monstrous folly that the Son has power over God the Father. The doubtful opinion of Eusebius may indeed be cited, who did restrict, it would seem, τὸν ἐπὶ πάντων Θεόν to the Father;36 but it is well known that he was feeble as to

the great truth of Christ's Godhead if not an Arian. But these seem really all who have been exaggerated into "multi patres qui Christum τὸν ἐπὶ πάντων Θεόν appellari posse negant" (Griesbach in loco), save indeed that by manifest fallacy it is assumed that to call the Father so is to deny it of the Son. But this is only the mistake handed down through Wetstein to the critic of Jena. The fact is that the fathers as a whole applied our text to the Lord Jesus without a suspicion of its incompatibility with Ephesians 4:6. They are both equally true, is the Father and the Son are equally God. I grant that they speculated dangerously sometimes; and of their crude assertions controversy and heresy have availed themselves: the latter to cover its aberration from revealed truth; the former to make councils or the Pope the only securer of the truth, as against the earlier fathers and (what is worse) holy scripture. But from Irenaeus to Theophylact among Greeks, and from Tertullian to the middle ages among the Latins, it could be easily shown that the passage was accepted as we have it now in the Authorized Version and in the ordinary orthodox sense. Cyril of Alexandria is most express in contradicting from this text the Emperor Julian who was rash enough to say that Paul did not speak of Jesus as God. Nor is there a single name of sound reputation opposed to this.

The ingenuity of criticism however, having neither various readings nor ancient versions to invoke, is not content with misrepresenting the testimony of the early christian writers and has strained itself in the most violent efforts to effect a diversion by the help of points; as it is well known that they are wanting in the most ancient copies. The Complutensian editors punctuate

fairly. Erasmus, not in his earlier editions but later, suggested a period after σάρκα, as had been done before by the writers of two MSS. of the eleventh and twelfth centuries usually numbered 5 and 47 in the conventional list of Pauline copies. Lachmann and Tischendorf acted on this; and Vater clenched the rent quite as effectually by putting the cut-off clause or clauses within marks of parenthesis ended by a note of admiration. Now not only is this severance, however managed, in opposition to the mass of punctuated manuscripts, all ancient versions and citations, but, what is of more weight still, it is contrary to the invariable idiom employed to express such a blessing (or on the contrary a curse). The regular formula is to open the sentence with εὐλογητός or some kindred word.37 Here therefore to bear regularly the desired punctuation the words should have run: — Εὐλογητὸς ὁ ἐπί π. θ., the ὤν in this case being worse than useless. The only apparent exception produced is from the Septuagint of Psalm 67, (68) 19 , κύριος ὁ θεὸς εὐλογητός. But judging by the old Latin quoted in Holmes' and Parsons' note, "Dominus Deus benedictus est," it is no exception, because it is an assertion about God, not an ejaculatory blessing. The latter follows immediately; and then the usual order appears. The former clause may indeed be an interpolation; as there is no Hebrew text to found it on.

Further, the incongruity of such a doxology here, remembering the apostle's grief just expressed and the relation of the Jews to the Messiah, is also a decisive disproof; and, lastly, it would utterly mar the beautiful antithesis so characteristic of the apostle, even in the

opening of this very epistle, in which he contrasts the human line of the Messiah with His divine dignity.

Another mode of punctuating, also suggested by Erasmus (who perhaps did not know that a Viennese MS. 71 of the twelfth century, represents it), and adopted by Locke, places the stop after πάντων with a shorter clause taken as the blessing, and is even more objectionable, as it is pressed by the additional difficulty that we ought in that case to have the article with Θεός. It should stand Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεὸς εἰς τ. αἰ. ἀμήν. But after all it would not effect what is desired, for it would connect ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων with the Christ; and it is impossible to have a stricter predication of supremacy. It is not merely, as Hippolytus and others thought, that the Father delivered all things to the Son, an important but different truth. Here we have what He is; and He is over all, being essentially divine.

Conjectural emendation of the text is another device of unbelievers to defraud the Lord of His glory; but this may be dismissed into its native obscurity. Even the Grotian expedient of dropping Θεός is contrary to all authority of MSS., and would be useless if conceded; for ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων is the strongest affirmation in itself of divine supremacy. Quite as futile was the effort to lower the sense of Θεός by reference to 2 Thess. 2:4, and to translate the clause here, “who is as God,” etc. For, first, the supposed analogy is cast out of that verse on the best authority; and secondly, it would tell, if genuine, in the opposite way; for certainly the man of sin will not claim to be God in an inferior sense. The absence of the article is a sign that character is meant to be conveyed, and has nothing to do with inferiority. Compare Romans 1:21.

On the whole then the reader may rest assured of both the text and the sense of this most impressive testimony to Christ the importance of which may be in some measure inferred from the evident desire of so many since the Reformation, Catholics and Protestants, without reckoning Arians or Unitarians, who have done what they could to neutralize its force. Thanks be to God who vouchsafes the truth to be in us and to abide with us for ever.

Two things then the apostle had asserted with the utmost strength in the preceding verses of the chapter — his burning love for his brethren after the flesh and consequent grief at their low estate and danger; and his sense of their privileges far fuller and stronger than their own, demonstrated above all in his estimate of their Messiah's glory whom they depreciated and had even rejected to their own ruin. This last however is not openly said but unmistakably implied; for the apostle treats their difficulties with the utmost delicacy, caring for their souls with a love truly divine. Whether the expression of his grief then or of that glory of Christ which they refused in unbelief raised the question, which the free grace preached to the Gentiles indiscriminately with the Jews of itself put in the most direct form, whether such a proclamation of grace to every soul, Jew or Greek, be compatible with the special promises to Abraham and to his seed? The Israelite instinctively resented the gospel as annulling his distinctive place of favour, and viewed the apostle's deep concern for their salvation through faith in Jesus as an impeachment of God's pledges to their nation as vouchsafed to their fathers. How could this plighted troth be sure, if the Messiah had come and been

rejected by them? if the door was now as open to the Gentile as the Jew? Where the value of the promises in either case? Did not the apostle's teaching clash with the trustworthiness of the divine word to Israel? This is fully met now.

"Not however as though38 the word of God hath failed; for not all those that [are] of Israel [are] Israel; nor because they are Abraham's seed, [are] they all children, but, In Isaac shall a seed be called to thee.39 That is, [it is] not the children of the flesh that [are] children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned for seed; for this word [is] of promise, According to this season40 I will come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only [so], but Rebecca also, having conceived by one,41 Isaac our father (for not yet having been born, nor having done anything good or bad, in order that the purpose of God according to election should abide, not of works but of him that calleth), it was said to her, The elder shall serve the younger, according as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." (Ver. 6-13.)

The reasoning is as conclusive as it is concise and clear, founded on proofs from Old Testament facts and words which a Jew certainly could not gainsay. Did he reason from the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? From this very history the apostle refutes their unbelieving abuse of all. The word of God therefore retains all its force. Man only, the Jew specially, is proved to be faulty. Their objection assumed that God was bound to bless the entire race in natural descent from Abraham. But this would open the promises to the Ishmaelites. Not so, cries the Jew: the promise is only in the line of Isaac. Then, might the apostle rejoin, the natural descent is an

unsound principle; for this embraces the Arabs sprung from Abraham after the flesh no less than the Jews. They themselves therefore to exclude the Ishmaelites must fall back on the promise tied to the line of Isaac. Promise therefore, not flesh, decides. How the answer of the apostle exemplifies the truth of the Jew and circumcision that God praises, stated already in the end of Romans 2, needs no proof. Hence it is equally said of Israel and of Abraham's seed. It is universally true. Fleshly descent alone insures no inward blessing. The Israelite indeed in whom is no guile is more than one of Jacob's posterity: all of Israel are not Israel, nor are Abraham's seed all children. Compare John 8:37, 39. God must be left free; and He is pleased to call Isaac, not Ishmael after the same sort. The call flows from grace and is inseparable, in the restrictive personal sense here intended, from choice. Far from disputing it, the Jew could not hear the case without falling under its irresistible force; for he wished not to take in the sons of Ishmael and must therefore agree to the necessity of God's call, not mere natural line, in order to constitute an adequately valid claim. And this is made more telling by the striking circumstance that Isaac was born in an exclusively natural way like Ishmael but according to a distinct word of promise on God's part.

The apostle follows up the argument by a still closer instance; for Ishmael was born of a slave, a concubine, Isaac of the wife. But what of Rebecca? She was in no sense a bondmaid, but bore to Isaac twin sons. No case can be conceived therefore more in point. Yet without the children being yet born or having done anything good or ill which could determine between them, God revealed His purpose respecting the younger or lesser of

the two, so that election might thus stand fixed and indisputable where His authority is owned.

Hence the apostle contrasts the call of God with works, rather than our faith, so as to cut off the poor semi-Pelagianism of such as Chrysostom of old or Tholuck of late, which would make election governed by the foreseen superiority of one to the other. Language cannot more precisely contradict this, the natural thought (not of natural men only but) of reasoning or imaginative saints. Esau had done no ill to disqualify him, Jacob no good to qualify him; but, before either of the twins was born, God in the exercise of His sovereign will chose that the greater should do service to the lesser. Such was His purpose. Their works had nothing to do with the matter and are excluded, so as to rest all on the caller, God Himself.

On the other hand, there is no ground favourable to that absolute reprobation which Calvin deduces from this place.42 Not a syllable is hinted as to hating the unborn Esau in Genesis 25. Man hastily infers reprobation of the one from the choice of the other. This is unfounded. Out of two who have no claim to choose one to a superior place is to exercise will; but to show favour in one case is not therein to condemn the other. They were in themselves both born in sin, as they no doubt grow up in sins. This is to be obnoxious to condemnation, which turns on man’s sins, not on God’s purpose. It is not Jehovah’s word to Rebecca, but by Malachi which speaks of hating Esau. It was at the very close of the Old Testament, after Esau had displayed his unrelenting enmity to Israel. The love to Jacob thus was free; the hatred had moral grounds in Esau.

The assertion of divine sovereignty, though a necessary truth which springs out of the very nature of God, is repulsive to the natural mind. Yet no other thought consists with right, when the subject is duly weighed; and every scheme which man substitutes is unworthy of God and unbecoming to man. The doctrine which denies God His majesty is self-convicted of falsehood; equally so that which would represent Him as indifferent either to sin or misery. He is light; and light is incompatible with the allowance of the darkness which reigns in the heart and ways of man. He is love; and love is invariably free and holy. Doubtless He is almighty and He will judge the sin which despises or rebels against Him as well as the offences which the world seeks to deal with. And what is the universal state of mankind, which this Epistle had carefully proved not of the Gentile only, but yet more of the Jew who boasted of the living oracles which condemned his iniquity and transgression? It had stopped every mouth and brought in the whole world guilty before God.

When a sinner is awakened by the Holy Spirit to his own guilt and state before God, he owns this frankly, and justifies God in condemning himself, though crying for mercy which to his adoring wonder he finds already proclaimed to him in the gospel.

But man as such, ignorant of himself and of the true God, disputes the fact of his own utter and inexcusable evil and looks not to God, but rather writhes under His word and cavils at His ways. This, as it is the feeling of natural men in general, so particularly found expression in the probable objection which a Jew might feel. This the apostle confronts. “What then shall we say? [Is there] unrighteousness with God? Far be it. For to

Moses he saith, I will show mercy on whomsoever I show mercy, and will compassionate whomsoever I compassionate." (Ver. 14, 15.) That is, it is mere mercy and compassion on God's part wherever shown, not only without desert but in full view of the most grievous and destructive demerits. No one who feels his own real wrongs against God ever raises a question of righteousness with Him. Confounded at the sight of his guilty insubjection and disobedience and in short ungodliness, he is struck dumb before the concurrent and continual proof of the astonishing goodness and patience of God, were it only in dealing with Israel. So to the Jew (and of course for the profit of ourselves and all the world) the apostle alleges the solemn and most gracious words of Jehovah to His servant in Exodus 33. So apt a testimony, among almost countless passages applicable in principle, there is not in the Bible.

Consider the circumstances, and the conclusiveness of his answer will be apparent, though at first sight it might seem singular to meet such a question with such a citation. And can anything he more characteristic of divine revelation than this? Haste pronounces that irrelevant and unreasonable which, when fairly and fully searched, proves alone right and true, alone suited to meet man as he is, alone consistent with the character and glory of God.

The national history was scarce begun before all was morally ended by their idolatrous apostasy from Jehovah at the foot of Sinai, where the people with Aaron at their head danced naked before the golden calf. Unrighteousness with God! There was assuredly the grossest unrighteousness in Israel; and what could righteousness with God do but call aloud for their

irrevocable condemnation? On that ground the objecting Jew, like the unbelieving Gentile, only shuts himself up to sure and unsparing judgment; for there can be no doubt of man's guilt, and justice on God's side has but to pronounce and execute the sentence of perdition.

Is God then bound to this and nothing else? He must be, on the blindly suicidal principle of man self-righteous yet unrighteous, who in his hurry to blame God forgets that it would be to his own helpless ruin. But God, though He can justly answer a fool according to his folly, may not in His grace. He has resources in Himself on which to fall back.

So in the passage before us the people disowned that Jehovah had delivered them from the house of bondage in their cry, "As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." (Ex. 32:1) Thereon Jehovah not only plagued the people for their idolatry (ver. 35), but told Moses to go up thence, "thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt into the land which I sware," etc. Forthwith Moses pitches the tabernacle without the camp, so that every one who sought Jehovah might go out there. But he does more; he there intercedes for the people, insists that they are Jehovah's people, and would turn the assurance of going with himself into one of going with him and them. "For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." Then, when Moses beseeches Him to manifest His glory to him, He says "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of Jehovah upon thee,

and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."

Thus the bearing of the declaration is as evident as it is appropriate and unanswerable. For a people in such a case to harbour the thought of unrighteousness with God is a monstrous forgetfulness not only of their actual state in relation to Him but of their only hope in His sovereign mercy. Once before they took the ground of righteousness in accepting the law; but before the tables of stone were brought down, they had forfeited every thing by their infraction of the most fundamental precept of the law. Hence hope there could not be, unless in His compassion. They had shown out what they were, and the sooner because of their self-confidence. Now it remained to learn what God is; and this is His word even in presence of the foul dishonour they had done Him: "I will show mercy on whomsoever I show mercy, and I will compassionate whomsoever I compassionate."

Things were no better in the apostle's day. For the people had meanwhile so gone on in idolatrous rebellion that God at length swept them away, first Israel by the Assyrian, then Judah by the Babylonian. And now the returned remnant were under Roman bondage, and had been guilty of rejecting their Messiah, as well as of quarrelling with God's grace to the Gentiles. It is plain then that man is apt to be most self-righteous when he has least reason for it. "Not this man but Barabbas" cried they all. "We have no king but Caesar" answered the chief priests. Their moral degradation was complete; their faith was null and void. Ill would it have become such a people at such a time to ask "Is there

unrighteousness with God?" It is just there, however, that the human spirit is most ready to dispute with God.

But the word is exceedingly broad and deep: where does it put any man? where the sinner? We Christians should surely know that only grace saved or could save us, as it called us with an holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. When a soul is truly broken down and judges itself with integrity and a spiritually enlightened conscience, how sweet is the feeling that there is righteousness nowhere fully, truly, and intrinsically but with God, confessing its own manifold and utter unrighteousness, and welcoming His own expression of sovereign mercy! It is only hard self-righteousness which holds out and disputes. Faith bows before the God of mercy and blesses Him. If only low and bad enough in my own eyes, I shall be but too thankful for the mercy that was sovereign enough to come down and find out me; if I can rest on the word of truth, the gospel of salvation, for such a sinner as myself, shall I pare down or narrow the indiscriminate riches of His grace to any other? "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." There may be an allusion to the frustration of Isaac's notorious wish, and of Esau's efforts to gain through the chase, and of Jacob faulty enough to lose all by his trickery but for sovereign mercy which secured to him the promise. It is certainly the conclusion of grace against man's vain confidence in his own will and exertion.

But the greater the grace, the greater the sin of resisting God in it. Hence the other side needs to be presented. For the God who shows mercy is the judge of

all, and will prove what it is to set at nought all that He is. So Pharaoh did of old; and what was the consequence? “For the scripture saith to Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.” (Ver. 17.)

The king of Egypt was a thoroughly selfish, cruel, and profane man when God first sent him a message by Moses and Aaron. The effect of the summons on such a spirit was to bring out his blasphemy against Jehovah and more savage oppression of Israel. And as sign and his miracle told on his conscience, but evil desires and counsels prevailed, Pharaoh became incomparably worse till the obduracy of the king shocked his servants, and even after the concession was wrung out, false hopes of vengeance on Israel lured him and them to find a grave within the opened waters of the Red Sea. God thus made a most striking example of Pharaoh, not a mere exposure of his malice, but of His own power on that background, so that His name might be thus told abroad in all the earth. Never does God make a man bad; but the bad man Pharaoh, made yet worse by his resistance of the most striking divine appeals, He made manifest, raised up as he was from among men to such a height, that his downfall might tell on consciences far and wide throughout the world. Hard at first, God sealed him up at length in a judicial hardening. Such He warned the Jews by Isaiah should be the case with their impenitent hearts, and so He executed it when they rejected Christ (John 12) and the Holy Ghost’s appeal in the gospel. (Acts 28:25-28.) “So then to whom he will he sheweth mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” In both cases the unrighteousness is solely with man, who

is, as far as he is concerned, irremediably evil and ruined; before God acts either in grace or in judgment for the display of His own great name to the wide, rich, and endless blessing of all who heed His word. He is always holy but always free. On the other hand fallen man is always evil and deserves condemnation. God freely acts in grace here, freely acts in judgment there, that any soul may beware of provoking His indignation and learning what He is in his own destruction, and that the guiltiest of sinners may know that no man is too far gone to be beyond reach of His mercy. I speak of man as such, not of such as have believed through grace.

These verses present a fresh objection, and the apostle's answer worthy of all attention not only in itself but as an inspired specimen of the best method of meeting a cavil, first with a moral remonstrance and then more directly.

"Thou wilt say then to me, Why then doth he yet find fault? For who withstandeth his purpose? Nay but thou, O man, who art thou that answerest again to God?" (Vers. 19, 20.)

The objection seems founded on the absoluteness with which the mercy of God as well as His hardening had been asserted by the apostle just before. The unbroken will of man avails itself of this to resolve all question of good and evil into the divine purpose. But this is a mere human deduction which loses sight of the moral glory of God as well as the responsibility of the creature. It offends therefore against first principles, and would destroy all truth, holiness, and righteous judgment.

Undoubtedly the purpose of God does stand, and there is no creature which does not in the end subserve His will: yet Satan, little as he intends it, only clenches it

most when he seems most to succeed by his lies and destructive power in thwarting and persecuting those who are precious in the Lord's eyes. Take the cross itself as the plainest and most unanswerable example. But should this enfeeble our moral judgment of creature wickedness? Does it deny the fact that Satan and man are responsible for all they do against Him, or that both must be punished for it? Hence Peter taxes the men of Israel with the guilt of crucifying the Messiah: "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God ye have taken and by hands of lawless men have crucified and slain." How different is the holy and perfect word of God! Everything is in its place, not one side only but both. God has His determinate counsel and foreknowledge. The Jews played their evil part, the Gentiles theirs. They together, however at variance in thoughts and feelings, manifested their characters and their guilt; but in the very same fact they fulfilled the prophets and gave occasion to the display of the holiest judgment of God and the accomplishment of the work of His grace.

Hence the ground of reasoning is wholly fallacious. The probation of man discovered his evil state, the fruit of his first departure from God who was dishonoured by him when all was very good, and whose every fresh trial only served to demonstrate with increasing evidence the depth and extent of sin and the irremediableness of the flesh. The wisdom of God is such that He can and does turn all that man pursues in his heartless folly to the account of His purposes; but this is altogether independent of man's will which is always and inexcusably evil. Not only therefore is God free to

censure man, but He will judge him for all by the Lord Jesus at the last day.

If it were true, as Calvin says, that those who perish were destined to destruction by the will of God, the case were hard indeed. But scripture never really speaks thus, and the language of the texts usually cited in support of such a decree, when closely as well as fairly examined, invariably avoids such a thought, however near it may seem to approximate.

In truth it is but the expression of the heart anxious to gather an excuse for its own wilful evil and a plea against judgment from the irresistible will of God. Yet better is known in the heart of hearts all the while. It is never said in scripture that sin was God's purpose; but man fallen under sin is the platform where He does display His ways, counsels, and even Himself. God did not make any man to be evil; but from all (being evil already) He does choose according to His sovereign will and show mercy to some, not all, though all be no more guilty than the some may have been. It would be perfectly just to destroy all. But if pleased to spare whom he will, who shall say to Him, nay? It would be to set up a claim of superiority over God, and is really an attempt to judge Him. Now whenever a sinner is converted, he feels and owns the just judgment of God, even though such a recognition sanctions the execution of the divine sentence against one's self, yet withal never quits in despair, but looks and cries, feebly at first perhaps but with increasing earnestness, for mercy.

Cavils of the sort always presuppose the conscience not yet searched and the will not bent and broken before God. Neither insinuations of unrighteousness with God,

nor the plea of the necessity of man's sinning as a part of God's purpose, could satisfy, or emanate from, a repentant soul. So the apostle first of all answers with a rebuke: "Nay but thou, O man, who art thou that answerest against God? Shall the thing moulded say to him that moulded, Why didst thou make me thus?" Is it possible a man so speaks? It is equally irreverent and unholy. As this challenge why God (whose purpose is so firm, inflexible, and sure of fulfilment) should any longer find fault, blots out moral government and denies the difference of good and evil, so the audacity which disputes against God and practically defies His right to condemn wrong, proceeds on the assumption that He is bound to save every one alike, or at least to punish none; that is, bound to be worse than the basest of those who despise and rebel against Him, bound to a moral indifference which they would not tolerate in their wives or children, in their family connections, in their servants or their tradesmen! Such is the worth of human reason when it does not surrender to the word of God. The fall is ignored, and its ruinous consequences. God did not form man as he is, but good and upright; and He warned him of his danger and of the inevitable issue of disobedience. In every point of view therefore the ground of unbelief is as false as it is also a forgetfulness of the majesty of God and of the due attitude of the creature toward Him.

The apostle takes occasion to affirm the sovereign title of God in the most unqualified way. "Hath not the potter authority over the clay out of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?" Whatever the holy boldness of this language, however it is singularly free from swerving to the right hand or the

left, it would be easy to prove by countless witnesses how prone the best and wisest of uninspired men have been to err, even with this divine chart before their eyes to guide them. But it is easy to slip on either side: the hard thing is to hold only to the truth of scripture, and not to speak where it is silent. The apostle does not say that God has exercised the right which He beyond just question possesses; but the divine title is maintained in its integrity. We shall see in the next two verses how the right is used; but it was due to God and wholesome for man that His absolute right should be owned. How seldom those who talk of rights seem to think that God has any! They are absorbed in themselves, in man: God is in none of their thoughts. Yet surely if any rights are to be respected, His ought to be the foremost whose sovereign will gave us being and all things. If we count ourselves entitled to do what we will with our own, what can we say of Him to whom belong ourselves and all that we have?

His right then over man as over every other creature is incontestable: a right which unbelief disputes only because it has never seriously thought of the matter, or it yields to a spirit of manifestly outrageous presumption and rebelliousness. There are no rights if the Creator has none: if they exist at all, His must be absolute over us as creatures. He can form as He pleases and assign to us a position high or low in the scale of creation as it seems fitting in His eyes. In the verses which follow there is the further consideration that we are not only creatures but sinners, which necessarily must bear its bitter fruit and judgment from God. But His sovereign title it was important to affirm in itself before the introduction of the actual state or the doom of man.

The absolute authority of God over the creature has been so laid down that none can fairly dispute it. But this is far from being the whole case: His power is unlimited, His title incontestable. “And if God, wishing to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his glory on vessels of mercy which he before prepared for glory, us whom he also called not from among Jews only but from Gentiles?” (Ver. 22-24.)

The mind of God was to display His wrath in this evil world and to make known His power where men easily and willingly forget Himself. But the way adopted was admirable and worthy of His nature. Arbitrariness there was none, but “much long-suffering.” So He bore long with the corruption and violence of guilty man. Could man then justly tax God either with lack of compassion for himself or with haste to mark his iniquities? Impossible that a holy God could have fellowship with evil or be indifferent to it! But instead of promptly blotting out of this life the rebellious creatures who make of the world a field for incessant warfare against what they know of God, or who at least live negligent of His will though He has revealed it fully, the history of the world since nations began is the fullest proof of endurance on God’s part. He never made them as they are; but the sin of man now fallen He endured spite of countless and constant provocation. They sinned, they transgressed, they despised His mercy, they braved His wrath; but He endured with much long-suffering.

Sinful men thus living in enmity against God are here styled “vessels of wrath,” on the one hand; as those who believe are designated “vessels of mercy” on the other.

They are objects respectively of wrath and of mercy, and are figuratively supposed to contain each that quality which will issue in destruction or in glory.

But there is a shade of difference as distinct as it is refined and profoundly true which no reader should overlook. The vessels of wrath are said to be “fitted for destruction.” But it is neither said nor implied here, or anywhere else, that God fitted them for it. They were fitted by their sins, and most of all by their unbelief and rebelliousness against God. But when we hear of the faithful, the phrase is altogether different, “vessels of mercy which he before prepared for glory.” The evil is man’s, and in no case is it of God; the good is His and not our own. Not the saints, but God prepared the vessels of mercy for glory. More strictly He prepared them beforehand with a view to glory. That is, it was not their preparation while on earth, His only when the glory arrives. The apostle affirms here that God prepared them before unto glory. It was His doing. None doubts that they became by grace obedient, holy, and thus morally conformed to His nature; but it seemed good to the Holy Spirit to dwell here only on God’s preparation of the vessels of mercy beforehand for glory. Thus the riches of His glory are made known upon the vessels of mercy, for so they are called, not vessels filled with these or those spiritual qualities, however true this might be, but vessels of mercy.

But in this passage as elsewhere there is no sufficient reason to depart from the ordinary meaning of “glory” or to give the word the sense of God’s mercy. Nor does Ephesians 1:12 sanction this, where glory maintains strictly its own distinctive place, as will appear to him who thoughtfully weighs verses 6, 7, 12. The word grace

is undoubtedly and most properly left out of the last, where grace is not intended to be expressed any more than in verse 14 where it could not be. The Spirit looks onward to the day when the purpose of God shall be accomplished.

Such is the inheritance when the excellence of what God has given and made us shall be displayed. But the relationships to Himself which His infinite love has brought us into, and in which He has revealed Himself are far deeper. Hence the word in verse 6 is “to the praise of the glory of his grace,” the fulness of the revelation of Himself, as in verse 7 the abundant resources of His goodness, in view of our misery and guilt as once sinners. In all this then I see exact discrimination, not the confusion of different thoughts or words. No doubt then the wrath of God, long impending but long kept back, while He is sending forth the message of the mercy He delights in, will at length burst on those who have despised His warnings, but who will then prove what it is to be vessels of wrath. And the vessels of mercy will then be displayed in those scenes of divine excellence which no evil or failure shall ever sully.

Thus lost man will in the end be compelled to justify God and to take the entire blame on his own shoulders, who preferred to trust Satan as his friend and adviser rather than God; while the saved, however dwelling in bliss, will know and make known all as the riches of His glory, themselves debtors to His mere but unfailing and unfathomable mercy.

But the moment mercy is thus fully before the apostle’s mind, he by the Spirit turns to the magnificent proof and

exhibition God gave of it in calling — not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. The law distinguished and separated the people which was under it from all other nations which were not. Grace, as it supposes the total worthlessness not of the Gentiles only but also of the Jews, so it goes out and calls in not from Jews only but from Gentiles. Distinctions may be in place where there is still hope of man and the trial proceeds. Not so when the probation of the most favoured has ended in irremediable guilt and helpless total ruin. Then the door opens for mercy; and if God is pleased to exercise it, can the Jew pretend that the Gentile is not at least as good an occasion for mercy as himself? The greater the need, the misery, the darkness, the greater is the room for God to prove the depth and extent of His grace. On the footing therefore of His own mercy has God called (for it is a question of calling, not of governing a people already subsisting before Him under His law) even “us not from Jews only but also from among Gentiles.” (Ver. 24.) He calls in grace, freely to all, shut up to none, from Jews certainly but from Gentiles too.

The quotations taken from Hosea are worthy of all consideration, both in themselves and in the comparison of the references here and in 1 Peter 2:10. Some feel the difficulty; others, who do not seem to see anything particularly to be noted, prove how little they enter into the deep wisdom of God here displayed.

The call from among Gentiles is not the question with Peter, who accordingly does not cite Hosea 1:10. He contents himself with using Hosea 2:23, which he does not hesitate to apply even then to such of the Jews as came to the one foundation stone and became thus

themselves living stones. Writing to the strangers of the dispersion throughout a part of Asia Minor, he had only the believing Jews directly before him. Hence there is remarkable force in telling them that they were a chosen generation and a royal priesthood. This their fathers attempted to make their own at Sinai on condition of their own obedience; and, as we know, broke down immediately as well as unceasingly ever afterwards, till the final sentence was pronounced and God by Hosea pronounced the Jew Lo-ammi (not my people). The apostle now, addressing those who had received the rejected Messiah, not only predicates unconditionally of them under the gospel what was only offered to their fathers under a condition which utterly failed, but shows that they do not need to wait for the glorious kingdom of the Messiah to be revealed before they can be assured of the gracious reversal of the old sentence: “which in time past (says he) were not a people, but are now the people of God, which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” The shining of grace from Christ risen on those that are His assures even now, not yet indeed of the setting aside of the power of evil in the world, but of the bringing the believing Israelites addressed into distinct, present, and known relationship with God. If the many still persevered in their unbelief and its bitter consequences, this did not hinder God from cheering the godly remnant by the apostle’s employment of the prophet.

Our apostle cites the same scripture as Peter uses, and more fully too; but he also cites Hosea 1:10 almost precisely as it stands in the Alexandrian copy of the LXX. Is it then certain that he quotes these two passages from Hosea as applicable to the Gentiles being called to be

the people of God? This is generally assumed43 as manifest from the words themselves, and from the transition to Israel in verse 27, though many who say so confess that in the prophecy they are spoken of Israel, which, after being rejected and put away, was to be again received into favour by God.

But it is always well for the believer to search narrowly an assumption of the kind, more especially when an apparent discrepancy is thereby insinuated between the Old Testament and the New. It is wise to try our own hypothesis over and over again, for we may rest assured that the One divine author cannot slight a word He has written. “Scripture cannot be broken.” Is the assumption itself well grounded? We need not then dwell on the answers which are attempted to the difficulty which appears to me made by those who seek to answer it — answers with which those who give them seem themselves by no means satisfied, and no wonder. The question is as to the precise aim of the Spirit. For myself I cannot doubt that He contemplated the Jews and the Gentiles in the two citations from Hosea; for if He meant only the Gentiles in both, why quote them in so peculiar an order? Why place the fragment of Hosea 1:10 after that of 2:23? If on the other hand He means to illustrate the call of grace under the gospel first to the Jews, spite of their having lost their distinctive name of relationship, nothing can be more natural and appropriate than his use of Hosea 2:23 before 1:10 is quoted; and thus the apostles Paul and Peter are seen to be not only in perfect harmony with each other, but in their application exact to the evident bearing of the prophet. The common error sets all three in opposition. The very order too agrees precisely with the verse

before (24) in Romans 9 which is followed up by the citations.

But if this be so with the employment of Hosea 2:23 by the two apostles, if they both expressly apply to converted Jews that which the prophet expressly wrote of them and of them only, what of Romans 1:10? This, it is freely granted, may not be so obvious, but in my judgment it is on mature consideration no less sure. Yet why should the latter part of the verse refer to the sons of Israel because the former does? Let it be observed that there is a striking break or at least offshoot in the middle of the verse, which might most naturally prepare the way for another disclosure of God's purposes of grace. I allow that it is somewhat veiled; but this was proper and intended. The turning aside to call in Gentiles was intentionally concealed till the time came; but when it did come, enough was found, expressed hundreds of years before by the prophets, to prove that all was ordered and left room for and justified in passages here and there, which could scarcely have prepared any beforehand for so momentous a change but fell in with it expressly when it was a fact. So there is to my mind a similarly rapid transition in Isaiah 65:1, 2, of which the apostle makes use somewhat later in this very argument, and gives us divine certainty that, as verse 1 applies to the call of Gentiles, so verse 2 goes even farther than the early half of Hosea 1:10, for it intimates the rejection of Israel. The apostle guided by the Spirit was tender to his brethren after the flesh and would not yet set before them so unpalatable a truth. All he is proving here from Hosea is that, as the ruin of Israel does not preclude but rather gives occasion for the call of grace in the gospel to the Jews spite of their

dreadful estate, so the same prophet very remarkably leaves room for Gentiles to come in on a ground which shall yet bless Israel beyond measure and number. “And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said unto them, not my people, there it shall be said unto them, The sons of the living God.” I see no more reason to doubt that Gentiles were not by accommodation but directly and primarily meant in this striking portion than in the first verse of Isaiah 65. The same apostle who warrants the application of two verses of Isaiah in Romans 10 warrants the application of two verses of Hosea in Romans 9. The call of Jews and Gentiles he attests in the latter; the coming in of Gentiles and the rebellion of Israel he proves from the former.

Thus there is no ground whatever for the idea that the inspired Paul does violence to the prophet by applying to Gentiles what was written about Jews; or that the principle on which he quotes is merely that of analogy, instead of direct divine authority. Still less is it true that God makes so light of the ground on which He set Israel as to allow the theory that the nations had ever been in any similar position before the call of Israel, or that Israel has lost it irrevocably to let the Gentiles in, and thus merge all for the future on one common level. Not so: the Gentiles have not stood by faith, but become highminded and will surely, because of unbelief, be broken off the olive-tree, whereon they are now grafted; and as surely the Jews, not continuing in unbelief but truly repentant and blessing Him who is coming in the name of Jehovah, will be once more in sovereign mercy graffed into their own olive-tree. This will not be under the gospel. For as concerning the gospel they are enemies for our sakes, jealous that we should meanwhile

receive the truth and hating the grace which saves the vilest through Him whom they cast out. “But as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes,” as will be demonstrated in that day, when it will be no longer the call of indiscriminate goodness as now, which ignores all earthly distinctions and unites to Christ in heaven, but the fulfilment of the magnificent purposes of God for the world, according to which the Israel of that day, converted and restored to their land, will be the most intimate and honoured and important instrument here below for the universal blessedness of the race and the earth. As the election of Israel was before the gospel was sent out, so it will be after the gospel shall have finished its heavenly work. Then the purposes of God for Israel, which came to naught under the first covenant, will be made effectual and stand for ever under Messiah and the new covenant.

Meanwhile, if any from Israel are blessed, it is on the principle of God’s having called them, spite of the people being Lo-ammi, and giving them to obtain mercy anticipatively now, as the remnant will another day at the end of this age. But mercy now, as we of all men should know best, is not confined to them, but has called from among Gentiles also. Thus the two citations of Hosea were each equally required; and only the latter of the two used by Paul as the apostle of Gentiles, and in fact writing to saints at Rome, who were even more numerously Gentile than Jewish. Hence the reason and beautiful propriety of our finding the latter part of Hosea 1:10 not in Peter’s Epistle but in Paul’s.

But there is another feature, not palpable to the careless eye, but most real and in the highest degree confirmatory of a Gentile reference as originally

intended of God in the close of Hosea 1:10. Thus the Holy Spirit does not say merely (as Dean Alford for instance like others ancient44 or modern) “as a general assertion, that in every place where they were called ‘not His people,’ there they shall be called ‘His people’.” If Gentiles were not His people, like the Jews now for a time, those who receive the gospel are called, not “His people” merely as the Jews shall be, but “sons of the living God.” It is the special well-known title which grace now confers on all who hear the rejected One who speaks from heaven; and the emphasis is brought out the more powerfully, because it is said so expressly of Gentiles who never enjoyed the title of the people of God, if scripture is to rule our thoughts. There is thus a propriety in the new title which suits the actual state of things, rather than the millennial day and the relationship of restored Israel; and this too pre-eminently fitting in with the call of Gentiles, who, if by the Holy Spirit made willing to take the place of dogs, find “the crumbs” richer fare than those ever tasted who once were free of the Master’s table.

The apostle now goes a step farther. He had shown from Hosea the grace which will reverse the solemn sentence of displeasure pronounced on the Jew in view of the captivity in Babylon, as well as the rich mercy for the Gentile to which the gospel lends so bright a light. He cites Isaiah 10 for God’s ways with His people in view of the Assyrian. “Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: for [he is] completing [the] matter and cutting short in righteousness, because a matter cut short will [the] Lord make on the earth.” The prophet looks onward to the

close of the sorrowful history of the chosen people, when the Assyrian, whom God first employed as the rod of His anger, will no longer be a just object of dread, and those who used to stay themselves on a staff which smote them, or even on that broken reed, Egypt, shall stay themselves on Jehovah the Holy One of Israel in truth. It is the great crisis of prophecy, the end of the Lord with His people who prove Him to be very pitiful and of tender mercy, whatever the rough roads and stormy skies meanwhile. Israel may have been ever so numerous; yet not the mass but the remnant shall be saved. For He is finishing and cutting short the matter in righteousness. It will be no question then of patient mercy, but a matter cut short will the Lord make on the earth or land. And this is not the only testimony of the kind: from the beginning we read to the same effect. "And as Esaias hath said before, Unless [the] Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like as Gomorrha." Because He was dealing in righteousness with Israel, they should be cut down to the uttermost; because He was faithful to the mercy promised, His gracious power would hinder such a total extermination as befell the guilty cities of the plain. The remnant should be saved, a seed for sowing the earth afresh, when they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which Jehovah their God has given them. Great then shall be the day of Jezreel, when Jehovah will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. Ere it comes judgment must take its course; but in the end mercy glories over judgment, and the remnant, saved by grace, by grace is made a strong nation.

Plainly however, as the prophets lacked not the assurance of mercy to the Gentiles, so they still more abounded in warnings of judgment on Israel. This then was not the new testimony of grace which the Jews so keenly resented as interfering with their ancient privileges. Let them beware of fighting against God who had taught both these truths in the living oracles specially entrusted to themselves, and their boast, though certainly but little understood. If they therefore quarrelled with such a sentence, it was evidently not so much with Paul as with Isaiah and the Holy Spirit who had inspired him.

What a witness on the other hand of divine truth, of indiscriminate grace, that the gospel, in itself unprecedented and wholly distinct both from what was seen under the law and what will be when the kingdom appears in power and glory, does nevertheless find its justification from words both of mercy and of judgment uttered hundreds of years before by the various servants God sent to declare His message to His people! But as they blindly despised them and rejected His word then for idols, so now they fulfilled them yet more in the rejection of Christ and hatred of the grace which, refused by them, sought and was received by Gentiles, and thus yet more proved the word divine to the confusion of the unbelief which is as blind as it is proud and selfish.

Thus the case on both sides has been set out with the clearest testimonies of the prophets. It only remains to draw the conclusions so far.

“What then shall we say? That Gentiles that pursued not righteousness attained righteousness, yea,

righteousness that is of faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, arrived not at a law of righteousness." (Ver. 30, 31.) Such precisely had been the bearing of the living oracles to which the Jews justly pointed as their peculiar treasure from God; yet these oracles declared unequivocally what was borne out by the actual facts. The Jews were completely broken as a nation. They had enjoyed the most singular favours: how was it now? Why their disruption? Why the carrying away to Babylon? why their subjection without so much as the shadow of a king of their own to the iron dominion of Rome? I speak not, it was useless to speak to them, of still worse impending. If they neglected the words of Isaiah, if they sought not into the visions of Daniel, it was vain to expect that they would heed the warnings of the Lord Jesus. But their own prophets amply sufficed to interpret the actual state around them and to prove that Jewish rebelliousness to God was as certainly revealed beforehand as Gentile acceptance of His mercy; and these are precisely the great and invariable characteristics of the time that now is, which Christianity supposes and Judaism denies. In the Gentiles grace is displayed and triumphs; by the Jews it is for the present refused and calumniated. Yet does all this only accomplish the prophecies every Jew owns as divine. That Gentiles, spite of their dark ignorance, their utter indifference to God, should be brought to the right way, not of law indeed (the Jews need not be jealous of that) but righteousness on the principle of faith, righteousness outside themselves, by the grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, so that it might be through faith; that Israel, zealously in quest of a law of righteousness, had not reached it, was not more

patent, if the gospel be true, than if the ancient prophets be accomplished.

The moral ground also is as plain as the word of God. For the pretension of man to take his stand before God on his own obedience of law is refuted; as on the other hand grace avowedly goes out to the basest and most careless, giving and forming what is good, as well as putting away the evil to the praise of divine mercy, but withal righteously; yet it is no righteousness of law, but rather of faith, so as to be open to those who knew not the law, as well as to such of Israel as were broken down as to self and taught of God to receive only of His grace in Christ. Thus God has glorified Himself as truly as He has convicted the first man of entire hollowness and constant failure.

Israel then has not come to a law of righteousness. "Wherefore?" As it was through no lack of privileges from God, so it was from no want of their own efforts in pursuing after it. But they pursued wrongly. They overlooked, as unbelief ever does, both God and themselves; alike what is due to His majesty, what necessarily flows from His nature; and again, what sin has wrought in the moral ruin and incapacity as well as guilt of man: in short, "because [it was] not of faith but as of works.45 They stumbled at the stone of stumbling, even as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; and46 he that believeth on him shall not be ashamed." (Ver. 32, 33.)

Sinful man understands duty to obey with a commensurate reward annexed to success; and he is ever slow to conceive his own failure and inability to meet the just requirements of God. The last thing he

likes to do is to take all the blame of his evil on himself, unless it be to accredit the God he has wronged with real and perfect goodness toward himself in spite of his wrong against Him. But of all men the Jews were the least disposed to it and the most obstinate in their own thoughts. For why, reasoned they, should we have the law of God if it be not to attain acceptance with God by our faithful observance of its precepts? Where else is its value and its use? Error fatal to the ancient people, how much more in Christendom, where the gospel tells the wreck of Israel on this very rock of offence, that men who hear and bear the name of the Lord should not repeat it to their own yet surer destruction!

Unbelief of grace, self-righteousness, is far more inexcusable now than of old. For Christ the Son of God is come and has accomplished redemption; and the glad tidings God sends forth on the express ground of universal ruin in man that he may thankfully receive another, even Jesus, and rest on His work before God with peace and joy in believing. But men, baptized men, stumble still, as Israel stumbled, at the stone of stumbling, the Lord Jesus. If they felt their own real state, how would they not bless God for such a Saviour! But they were proud, and blind withal. They were satisfied with their own obedience, at any rate with their own efforts. They stumbled at the stumbling-stone; but the same Christ delivers the believer from hurt, from shame, from confusion. He was set, as Simeon said to Mary, for the fall and rising again of many in Israel and for a sign to be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed: no otherwise said Isaiah. (Isa. 28:16.)

33 There is no doubt that the imperfect will bear the idiomatic sense given in the Authorized Version: “I could wish.” (Comp. Acts 25:22; Gal. 4:20.) The question is, whether the apostle does not go farther here and affirm that he had actually so wished, not soberly, but still as a fact, not that he did or could so wish as a fixed principle. So the Vulgate’s “optabam,” supported by the other ancient versions apparently, spite of the Latin of the Polyglott. Erasmus gives “optarem,” and in the same sense E. Schmid, Schott, Naebe, etc.

34 Jesus alone could have this as His distinctive suffering and boast in love. It was to endure all and be made a curse and sin, and this not only for His brethren according to flesh but for His worst enemies. And in this, at cost of all, He lets us know what God is in love to us, but in His righteousness withal.

35 Even these spurious pieces seem to be only opposing the Patripassian or Sabellian notion (i.e., that the God and Father suffered), and affirming that He who did suffer was Jesus, not His God and Father who is over all.

36 I am pained, but bound, to protest once more against such words as are allowed to continue from edition to edition in Dean Alford’s work (in loco). “That our Lord (says he) is not in the strict exclusive sense, ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων Θεός, every Christian will admit, that title being reserved for the Father.” Every clause is a grievous blunder. Our Lord is in the strictest sense what He is said not to be, for ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ π. θ. is even stronger than ὁ ἐπὶ π. θ. Nor is it true that the Father is such in the “exclusive” sense, as he says; nor is it reserved for Him in a sense stricter than for the Son. He allows that Christ is ἐπὶ πάντων Θεός. Yet this, though true, is not

what the apostle teaches, but a proposition about Christ still more stringent than his expositor essays to deny. I trust and am willing to believe that the Dean of Canterbury wished neither to lower our Lord nor to adhere to a most objectionable statement; and therefore would one beg the correction on so grave a matter of words which neither faith nor yet logic can justify. To reason from human order to the divine nature and relations is ground as unsafe as it is false. No doubt in the creature, being essentially limited, the highest place for one excludes another. But it is the direct road to the worst gulf of error so to think of the Godhead, as to which we have only to believe what is revealed from on high. This may be hard to the natural mind; but it is unambiguous, and too clear for faith to deny or explain away.

37 Even Socinus was clear-sighted enough to see this and honest enough to acknowledge it.

38 The version of Beza, E. Schmid, etc. (which Bucer adopted before them, and Macknight since), “It is not possible,” errs, not so much in requiring τε as Calvin remarked (for it may dispense with this particle) as in the absence of the infinitive after it. Besides, even were it grammatically admissible, the other sense is better.

39 Or, thy seed.

40 Or, time.

41 There is no insuperable difficulty, I think, in

ἐξ ἑνός. There was in this case a single mother, also one father. Its object is to give emphasis to both, in contradistinction to the former case.

42 “Tamen ut discamus in nudo et simplici Dei beneplacito acquiescere, abhoc quoque intuitu nos tantisper Paulus subducit, donec hanc doctrinam stabilierit, Deum in suo arbitrio satis justam eligendi et reprobandi habere causam.” Joh. Calvini in omnes Pauli Ap. Epp. i. 121, Halis Sax. 1831.

43 “The meaning (says Calvin in loc.) is evident: but there is some difficulty in the application of this testimony; for no one can deny but that the prophet in that passage speaks of the Israelites. For the Lord, having been offended with their wickedness, declared that they should be no longer His people: He afterwards subjoined a consolation, and said, that of those who were not beloved He would make some (?) beloved, and from (?) those who were not a people He would make a people. But Paul applies to the Gentiles what was expressly spoken to the Israelites!” Again, a very different mind writes thus in our day on Hosea 1:10, “Both St. Peter (?) and St. Paul tell us that this prophecy is already, in Christ, fulfilled in those of Israel, who were the true Israel, or of the Gentiles to whom the promise was made, In thy seed shall all nations be blessed, and who, whether Jews or Gentiles, believed in Him. The Gentiles were adopted into the Church, which, at the day of Pentecost was formed of the Jews, and in which Jews and Gentiles became one in Christ..... And so St. Peter (?) says that this scripture [expressly commenting on the latter part, which Paul only applies to the Gentiles now called] was fulfilled in them, while still scattered abroad through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” (Dr. Pusey’s Minor Prophets.) On Hosea 2:23 the latter is still bolder: “This which was true of Israel in its dispersion was much more true of

the Gentiles. These too, the descendants of righteous Noah, God had cast off for the time, that they should be no more His people [not so; the Gentiles never had been as such in relationship with God as called nations, nor was Israel itself or any other people yet chosen], when He chose Israel out of them..... in reversing His sentence, He embraces in the arms of His mercy all who were not His people, and says of them all that they should be My people and beloved..... Israel was not multiplied by itself, but through the bringing in of the Gentiles." It will have been noticed from the queries, or without them by the careful reader, that both are obliged to depart, by their system of thought, from the language of the text.

44 It may be instructive to show by the following extract from Theodoret's comment that the errors of theology were introduced or at least sanctioned by the ablest of the early fathers. ταῦτα δὲ ὁ Θεὸς οὐ περὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν, ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν εἴρηκε τῶν Ἰουδαίων. τῳ γὰρ Ὡσηὲ κελεύσας λαβεῖν γυναῖκα πόρνην, καὶ μέντοι καὶ μοιχαλίδα, οὕτω τὰ γεννηθέντα παιδία προσαγορευθῆναι ἐκέλευσε, τὸν μὲν οὐ λαόν, τὴν δὲ οὐκ ἠγαπημένην, τὰ συμβησόμενα, Ἰουδαίοις προλέγων, ἀλλ᾽ ὅμως πάλιν ὑπέσχετο αὐτοῖς χρηστά, ὅτι καὶ οὐ λαὸς κληθήσεται λαός, καὶ ἡ οὐκ ἠγαπημένη, ἠγαπημένη. σκοπήσατε τοίνυν, φησὶν, ὅτι καὶ ὑμεῖς οὐκ ἀεὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἀπελαύσατε· ἀλλὰ ποτὲ μὲν λαός, ποτὲ δὲ οὐ λαός, καὶ πάλιν μὲν ἐχρηματίσατε καὶ ποτὲ μὲν ἠγαπημένη, εἶτα οὐκ ἠγαπημένη, καὶ πάλιν ἠγαπημένη. οὐδὲν τοίνυν ἀπεικὸς οὐδὲ ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος γεγένηται. συνήθως γὰρ ἀπεβλήθητε· ἀλλὰ κᾳν πάλιν θελήσητε. καὶ γὰρ τὰ ἔθνη οὐ λαὸς ὄντες, νῦν λαὸς χρηματίζει.

(Opera, ed. Schulze, tom. iii. p. 108.) Chrysostom is to the same effect.

45 There is excellent evidence to show that

νόμου and

πᾶς have been inserted by the copyists to add force, clearness, or symmetry to the apostle’s citations from Isaiah. But there is nothing so good as the divine word as He gave it.

46 Copyists probably added

πᾶς from Romans 10:11.

Romans 10

The connection of the opening verses of Romans 10 with Romans 9 is full of instruction for the soul. To many a mind it may seem illogical; but this is only the narrowness and infirmity of man who is apt to reason from himself, not from the truth. God's revelation affords the only sure basis; for He alone sees all sides of every object, He alone imparts the suitable affection and enables one to form the sound judgment.

So here the apostle had refuted Jewish assumption of inalienable privilege necessarily bound up with every member of the Abrahamic family, and proved, on the contrary, their ruin and indebtedness to the sovereign mercy of God. Again, he had opened out with irresistible force and clearness the Old Testament scriptures, which declare that God would call Gentiles in His grace, yea, that the mass of Israel should perish for their rebellious unbelief and a remnant only be saved, namely, whoever believed on Christ the stumbling-stone, who therefore is in principle as free to the Gentile as to the Jew. But this amazingly comprehensive and connected sketch of the revealed ways and certain counsels of God as to man on the earth did not at all interfere with his ardent love for Israel. Men often pervert a scanty portion of such knowledge to shut up their bowels of compassion from those who are to blame and under God's peculiar chastening. But it was not so with the apostle: "Brethren, the delight47 of my heart and the supplication toward God for them [is] for salvation." The substitution of "them" for "Israel," required by the more ancient and better authorities, appears to me really

stronger as being more expressive of affection than the common text. It was needless to define more clearly for whose blessing he was so earnestly interested, and this the more because of their great danger. The threatenings in the prophecies verified in Israel's deepening unbelief drew out his strong crying to God on their behalf, and this for salvation. For what short of it could satisfy a heart that loved them? To say that "internal as well as external evidence is against" αὐτῶν and for τοῦ Ἰσραήλ proves nothing but the unfitness of him who could so speak to judge of questions which demand not learning only but critical acumen and spiritual discrimination.

"For I bear them witness that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." "Zeal of God" is an objectionable rendering, like "faith of the Son of God" in Galatians 2:20. The Greek genitive is far more comprehensive than the English possessive case, and admits of an objective force as readily as a subjective. "The love of God" in that tongue equally means God's love to us or ours to Him: the context alone decides. Here there can be no question of the intended force. The Jews were zealous for God but not according to right or true knowledge (κατ᾽ ἐπίγνωσιν). This filled the apostle's heart with so much the more affectionate care; for their zeal carried them the farther in the wrong direction, as ever must be in divine things where faith does not regulate according to the revealed mind of God.

"For they being ignorant of the righteousness of God and seeking to establish their own righteousness have not been subjected [or submitted themselves] to the righteousness of God." No doubt, these self-righteous

Jews were not justified before God. But the apostle goes farther, as indeed the principle goes deeper. They ignored the righteousness of God, not merely the doctrine of justification, though this of course follows. But they were ignorant of God's righteousness revealed in the gospel. Man's merits composed the basis of their hopes, eked out by divine promises, by priesthood, rites, and observances. Messiah Himself was regarded as the crown and complement of their privileges, not as a suffering substitute and a Saviour in the power of His resurrection after having borne their judgment on the tree. Hence they could only see an arbitrary choice backed up by their own confidence in their superior claims and deserts, but no ground of righteousness on God's part such as the Christian knows there is by virtue of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; no thought of God as through atonement just and justifying him that believes in Jesus. The grace of the Saviour by His work enables God to act righteously in accounting just us who believe, while it humbles us who own the truth of our utter sinfulness instead of leaving us to gratify self by setting up a righteousness of our own and hence keeping us from submitting to His righteousness in Christ as the sole ground of justification before Him.

Verse 4 has given rise to very various opinions. One which has prevailed from ancient times and perhaps still more among moderns, is that Christ is the accomplishment of the law. But there seems no ground whatever to confound τέλος with πλήρωμα. Others again take it in the sense of "object" or "aim." But the simplest meaning as decided by the context appears to be "termination," though we know it is also used for "issue" or "result." And in this meaning the representatives of

the most various systems coincide: Augustine and Luther on the one hand; Meyer, De Wette, etc., on the other. “Christ is [the] end of law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” The Christ of God is made unto us righteousness. “By law is knowledge of sin.” Righteousness cannot be had thus; only the believer is justified. Yet so sure is this result, that it belongs to every believer.

The apostle then contrasts the two systems and this by citations from the law itself. “For Moses describeth the righteousness that is of the law, that the man that has done the things shall live in virtue of them. But the righteousness that is by faith thus speaks, Say not in thy heart, Who shall go up to heaven? that is, to bring Christ down, or, Who shall go down into the abyss? that is, to bring up Christ from among dead (men). But what saith it? Near thee is the word, in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach, that if thou confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in thy heart that God raised him from among dead (men), thou shalt be saved.” (Vers. 5-9.) Faith applies when all is lost under law and its righteousness is impossible.

First then is quoted Leviticus 18:5, which is indeed a general recognized principle of the law, as the spirit is embodied in many passages. The ground of the other side is found in Deuteronomy 30. I do not agree with those who conceive that the apostle has put the smallest strain upon the latter citation. As in the former he speaks of life or living, not of eternal life which is God’s free gift and only in Christ; so in the latter his use of Deuteronomy is most profound. Moses is setting before Israel, not only the consequences of their unfaithfulness, but the divine mercy which meets them in their ruin

when their heart turns to Him spite of the broken law. Now Christ really lies under the law however veiled. “The Lord is that spirit,” where those who read only the letter see nothing of Him and abide in death. But He is ever before the Holy Ghost. Hence the righteousness of faith did not cast the repentant Jew upon his own efforts, let them be ever so great.

“Say not in thy heart Who shall ascend to heaven? that is, to bring Christ down, or, Who shall descend into the abyss? that is, to bring up Christ from among dead (men).” Man could do neither. Had it been possible, neither would have suited the glory of God. He in grace meets man. It was the Father who sent His Son into the world. It was by the glory of the Father that He was raised from the dead. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son;” and God raised Him from the dead. On both truths the scriptures of the New Testament are most explicit. But what says Moses in this very passage here cited? “Near thee is the word, in thy mouth and in thy heart.” The blessing is at the doors. Christ is given and preached. It is for man to name Him with his mouth and to believe with his heart. There is no question of heights to be scaled or depths to be sounded, which would put honour upon human earnestness and ability. Christ is proclaimed for the simplest to confess Him, and to believe on His name. “That is, the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in thy heart that God raised him from among dead (men), thou shalt be saved.” The outward expression is put first, not of course as most important, but as that which first comes into notice to the praise of Jesus: nevertheless it is of no value for the soul save as the

embodiment of faith. “In thy heart” does not seem to be meant as a measure of affection, however truly there ought to be love for Him who first loved us. It does suppose however that the heart is interested in the truth, and that it is brought to desire what it hears to be true, instead of any longer fighting against it — brought to rejoice in the conviction that it is the truth of God.

Hence, believing in thy heart as well as confessing with thy mouth, the blessing is thine. If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in thy heart that God raised Him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved. It will be observed that there is here no mention of death, but of resurrection. Death does not of itself imply resurrection; but resurrection does necessarily involve death. Jesus then is confessed to be Lord: why fear, why be anxious, if He who has undertaken to save is above all? You believe in your heart that God raised Him from among the dead. It is not only then that love came down to meet you and suffer for you, but power has entered, where Jesus was crucified in weakness. God entered the grave of Jesus in power and waked Him up — has raised Him and given Him glory, that our faith and hope might be, not in Christ only, but in God. He is for thee. He has proved it in raising up Jesus from among the dead. “Thou shalt be saved,” — not forgiven only — but “saved.” “If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

Thus we see in Deuteronomy, when the legislator has closed all the precepts and rites of the law, and shown Israel rebellious and ruined under that order of things, he does not fail to hint at the resources of grace. He supposes the Jew cast out of the land because of his

infidelity to the legal covenant and of course to God Himself. Nevertheless though he could not draw near after that manner, the word was nigh him, in his mouth and in his heart. This is the word, says the apostle, which we preach. It is Christ, end of law to every one that believes. So it will be at the close of the age for the godly Israelite, who from his land of exile turns to God in the sense and acknowledgment of the people's ruin. If unbelievers were hopeless because they could not go up to Jerusalem, or cross the deep, for tithes or feasts or sacrifices, faith accepted the word which met their need in grace where they were. Christ ended law, yet was righteousness for the believer, and for every believer. It is too late to speak of living when the law is broken and you are banished in consequence under the sentence of death. Christ then is the one spring of confidence; but if for righteousness, He also closes law to every believer. The word of faith speaks a wholly different language from that of the law. Confessing Jesus as Lord (or the Lord Jesus) and believing that God raised Him from the dead is the word of faith; and it is not received only but preached. God is energetic in His grace and sends out the message far and wide.

Thus there is the very reverse of looseness or a merely imaginative ingenuity in the apostle's employment of the Pentateuch. The gospel anticipates indeed but is on the same principle of grace towards all which Deuteronomy 30:11-14 holds out to the outcast Jew. For, according to the outward letter and man, their case will be seen to be hopeless. But with God all things are possible; and faith rests on God, who brings out in due time what was then among the secret things that belong to Him, in contradistinction to His revealed ways in the law. In

Christ now revealed all is plain; and the Christian does not wait for a future day. To him it is indeed always the time of the end; and he looks for Jesus day by day, knowing that He is ready to judge the quick and the dead, and that God is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. The repentant Jew in the latter day will by and by be awakened to recognize the reality of His grace towards him; and he will find the word very nigh him, in his mouth and in his heart, ashamed alike of his sins and of his self- righteousness, broken in spirit and looking to God and to the resources of His mercy. So does the soul that receives the apostolic preaching now.

He had used the order of mouth and heart as in the original words of Moses. And so in fact it is that the gospel goes forth and exhorts men. We hear the confession of the mouth and trust the belief of the heart accordingly. But it is plain that the inner reception of the word must precede and accompany the outer expression of it in order to a true and full work in a man. The apostle knew this better than any of us, and lets us hear it in his next words: “for with [the] heart faith is exercised48 unto righteousness, and with [the] mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Thus the whole case is accurately stated, every objection anticipated and met. Without believing there can be no righteousness. We are justified by faith and in no other way. But if there be no confession of Christ the Lord with the mouth, we cannot speak of salvation; as our Lord said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that

believeth not [baptized even though he might have been] shall be damned."

"For the scripture saith, No one believing on him shall be ashamed." (Ver. 11.) Assuredly he whom God justifies can have no reason to be ashamed, but rather to be always confident and to rejoice in the Lord always. And here the apostle triumphs in the indiscriminate favour of the gospel. As before in Romans 3:23 he had insisted that there is no difference, for all sinned and do come short of the glory of God; so now there is none, "for the same Lord of all [is] rich toward all that call upon him." And this he fortifies by a citation from Joel 2:32; "for every one soever who shall call on the name of [the] Lord shall be saved." There he stops. On the great future day all Israel shall be saved; for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as Jehovah has said, and in the remnant whom Jehovah shall call. Meanwhile the Spirit avails Himself of His own comprehensive promises preceding the clause which specifies that localized blessing and gives all possible breadth to the "whosoever" so dear to the large heart of the apostle of the Gentiles; He had indeed foreseen and provided for all. And it is as beautiful to hear the apostle using the part which falls in with his broad argument as it is to know what comfort the special promise in the entire verse will bring to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the day that is coming.

But this predicted opening the door so widely to all that call on the name of the Lord gives rise to a new development of the argument. As the Gentiles did not call on the name of Jehovah, a fresh instrumentality begins to appear with a view to awakening them from the dust of death and furnishing such a testimony as

should draw out their hearts toward Him. It will be needed by the Israelites scattered up and down the earth among the Gentiles when their hour of national restoration draws nigh; but the Spirit applies it here, as He doubtless intended it, with admirable foresight to the Gentiles meanwhile. They must be called by the gospel in order to call on the name of the Lord for salvation. Preaching is thus eminently characteristic of the ways of God not under law, but since redemption. For “how shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without one preaching? and how shall they preach unless they shall have been sent? According as it is written, How beautiful the feet of those that announce glad tidings of peace, that announce glad tidings of good things!”

The law did not call any one. It regulated the ways of the people to whom it was given; and hence with it was bound up a priesthood which transacted their spiritual business with God, drawing near to Him in the sanctuary and representing the people there, with both gifts and sacrifices for sins. But the gospel supposes a wholly different state of things, in which the grace of God acts energetically, giving and producing what is according to Himself, on the proved ruin not merely of the Gentiles but of the Jews in the rejection of their own Messiah. Hence it goes out freely toward all, not merely to the Jews but to the Gentiles; and if these were the more necessitous, to them the more emphatically. Was the guilt, was the ruin, indiscriminate? So is His mercy; and the gospel is the witness which calls souls, not to do their duty as the tenure of life, but to believe in the Lord Jesus whom God raised from the dead, to believe for

righteousness and to confess for salvation. Thus it becomes a question not of the law; for on this score a Jew was himself condemned and the Gentiles knew nothing of it, and, if they did, could find in it no better hope than the Jews. For salvation is what a lost sinner wants; and as God's word demonstrates such a condition to be that of His own people, and salvation therefore to be their true want, so not even a Jew could deny the Gentiles to be lost sinners in the fullest sense. Would they then deny the Lord to be the Lord of any or of all? Would they affirm that He was poor, that He was not rich enough to meet the most deplorable need of all who should call upon Him? They might spare themselves the trouble of solving a question perhaps too knotty for Rabbis: God had decided it Himself long ago as Israel was sliding faster and deeper into the fulness of revolt from Jehovah. He had associated deliverance with calling upon His name; not with observance of law, which in fact those who had it had broken; and He had proclaimed it in terms so large as to encourage and warrant any one whatever. Consequently then the dealings of grace imply a testimony to be heard and believed by all that call upon His name; and this again, one to preach or proclaim it duly sent of God.

The cheering announcement of Isaiah 52:7 is the authority here cited; but here again we may observe the wisdom of the citation. The apostle does not quote the latter clause of the verse "that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" For in truth, according to the just sense of prophecy, the very reverse appears from that day to this. The days of vengeance were at hand for that Christ-rejecting generation, not of salvation for the holy city. And Jerusalem is still trodden

down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. But assuredly the joyful tidings must come, for the mouth of Jehovah has spoken it; and then how beautiful, yea, on the mountains (which the apostle did not cite) the feet of him that publishes glad tidings of peace, that tells glad tidings of good things, that publishes salvation, saying to Zion, Thy God reigneth! No dust will make their very feet otherwise than beautiful because of the good news they bear. It is not as in Nahum the fall of Nineveh, nor yet of Babylon, for Babylon, as punisher or punished, is heard of no more after Isaiah 48. We have from Isaiah 49-57 entered the still more solemn charge which the prophet lays in Jehovah's name against His people, not for idol worship but for the rejection of the Messiah. Yet here we have the glad tidings of His pardoning and delivering mercy after reaching the lowest depths of rebellion. The apostle shows that in this as in so many other respects the gospel anticipates what repentant and restored Israel will receive from God in the latter day, (and may we not add?) in if possible a deeper form of the truth. For grace, as we know it in Christ (even beyond earthly glory itself, let it be ever so pure as in that day), gives the deepest motives to the earnest spread of the good news: and who so fit to apply the prophecy thus as that indefatigable minister of the gospel, through whom mainly the gospel was even then present in all the world, and bearing fruit and making growth, as we learn in Colossians 1?

No; the watchmen of Jerusalem cannot yet raise their voice nor sing together; for Jerusalem is still in the hands of the cruel foe, and the hearts of the Jews are still under a tyrant more deadly still; but eye to eye shall

they see when Jehovah restores Zion, and the waste places of Jerusalem shall burst out and sing together after ages of desolation; for Jehovah will at length have comforted His people and redeemed Jerusalem when He makes bare His holy arm before all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of their God. But the grace of God is not idle nor inefficient. Zion remains in the hands of the stranger because Zion's sons received not their divine King, but slew Him on the tree by the hands of lawless heathens who could be swayed by them and join them in that fatal deed, out of which God has caused to shine the richest mercy for both, if they but heed His message. Hence He is sending out His gospel (as this epistle styles it), as Paul also had received grace and apostleship for obedience of faith among all the nations in behalf of Christ's name.

We see clearly too in this how the ministering of the preacher is tied to the gospel itself. How debasing as well as groundless to foist in man here as if he must be the sender, where the whole scope is to make nothing of him and to glorify God in all things by Jesus Christ our Lord! In no part of scripture is man said to send out the preacher: God keeps this prerogative in His own hands. Hence, said our Lord here below to the disciples, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth labourers into his harvest. And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, etc. These twelve Jesus sent out." He was man, and could pray and bid His disciples pray; but He was God, Emmanuel, Jehovah, Messiah; and so as Lord of the harvest He could and did answer the prayer by constituting the twelve His apostles and sending

them forth on their mission. And if once dead, He is risen and alive again for evermore, and still He from on high has given gifts to men. Believe not the enemy's lie that, because He is unseen, He has abdicated His headship or abandoned for one moment His loving care in supplying all that is needful for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Others who intrude into His place of sending out ministers of the gospel are but usurpers; and those who submit to be so sent are consenting parties (and for what?) to their Lord's dishonour. His will, His word, is plain enough: all that is wanted is an eye in us single to Christ. We shall then see clearly how deeply all this concerns His name, even if it cost us everything in this world. Doubtless the gospel comes through men, however truly sent from above men: only it is not for a man, or for any number of men, to arrogate the Lord's rights, who entrusts to His own servants His goods, to one five talents (to another two, to another one, to each according to his several ability); and who on His coming will reckon with those servants. Such is the doctrine of the divine word as set out dogmatically in the epistles and maintained even in the parables of the Saviour. How false is the practice of Christendom; and how hollow the evasions or apologies (they cannot be fairly called interpretations) of theologians! Why sell themselves to do this evil? Are they blind to results plain before all other eyes? Do they heed not the warnings in the unerring word of God of still worse ills at hand?

Thus prophecy speaks, not of a law to be done or of ordinances to be kept, but of a testimony in which God has complacency as being of His own grace, and so a

matter of faith. Even the Jew who had the law could only be blessed by the good news. The law had wrought ruin and condemnation and death for no fault of its own, but of Israel who had broken it and fallen under its curse. Good can only come by grace through a testimony sent them from God. But the prophet adds more in the following chapter, the solemn witness of unbelief even among the Jews. “But they did not all obey the glad tidings. For Esaias saith, Lord, who believed our report? So then faith [is] of report, and the report through God’s word.”49 (Ver. 16, 17.) Israel too, it is here shown, was to be in part at least unbelieving, if the prophet is to be credited; for the apostle abounds in testimonies from the Old Testament to make good his solemn charge against the rebellious people of God, and vindicate hence the going forth of the good news to the Gentiles. It was not merely Paul but their most illustrious prophet long ago who gave this appalling picture of Jewish unbelief. But being a question of a testimony sent out to be heard and believed, the way was open to reach the Gentiles who had not the law.

“But I say, Did they not hear? Yes indeed, Their voice went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (οἰκουμένης, the habitable earth). The apostle quotes from Psalm 19 a striking and most apt illustration of the universality of God’s testimony. For we readily see that the psalm divides into two parts, the works of God and the law of Jehovah alike testifying, one outward and universal, the other dealing with those who possessed it. The heavens belonged to no land in particular, nor do the sun and stars shine for Israel alone. They are for man in the earth at large according to the beneficence of Him whose rain falls on just and

unjust, and whose sun is made to rise on evil men and on good. Just so, whatever the circumscribed sphere of the law, the gospel goes forth in the grace of God without restriction. God is not indifferent, if the Jews were, to the Gentiles; He pities and has given a testimony to them in their dark ignorance. Compare Acts 14:17; Romans 1:20. This however is general, though enough to assert and exemplify the principle.

The good tidings then came by a testimony sent of God through those who preached, not by the law which could only show the Jew his duty and convict him of sin because of his failure under it. The only hope of good therefore for a sinner is from the gospel; but, if so, it goes out not to some only but to all mankind. And as Isaiah proved that the message would be slighted by the Jews (they that preached having to complain to the Lord, "Who hath believed our report?"), so the Psalms bear witness to a universal testimony of God in creation as illustrative of the principle that He thinks of and cares for, and would be known by, the Gentiles. Granted that the law dealt with Israel, has God nothing but the law? And what had the law done for them? or rather what had they done under it? "By the law is the knowledge of sin." This is wholesome no doubt, and should be humbling; but what a sinner evidently wants is far more that this, even salvation, and to this the law does not pretend, but the contrary. It can kill, not quicken; it can condemn, not justify. Grace alone can pardon, reconcile, bless, and this righteously through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. But this is the voice of the gospel, not of the law, and goes out, as being grace, to sinners indiscriminately, be they Gentiles or Jews matters little or nothing. They are needy, guilty, lost; and God is saving such by the

faith of Jesus proclaimed in the gospel, which goes out accordingly to all the world, being in no way tied to the land of Palestine or any other.

It was in vain again for the Jews to allege that this was a dealing without warning on God's part. He had not kept it so absolutely a secret that they should not have been apprised by His word in their hands. "But I say, Did Israel not know? First, Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy through [that which is] not a nation, through a nation without understanding I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold and saith, I was found by those that sought me not; I became manifest to those that inquired not after me. But to Israel he saith, All the day long I spread out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people." Thus not only is the general principle illustrated from the psalms, but the lawgiver is himself summoned to give his ancient testimony to the future intention of God in provoking the Jews to jealousy on the occasion of His ways with those who were not a nation, or a foolish nation — an evident allusion to His mercy to the Gentiles, not abandoning His people, but provoking them to jealousy, and in fact drawing out their irritation. Still more explicit is the greatest of the prophets, who says outright that God should be found by those who were not seeking Him, and make Himself manifest to those who did not ask after Him — a description certainly anticipative of His call of the Gentiles; the more suitable because in the same context He says to Israel that He spread out His hands all the day long to a people disobedient and contradicting.

A Jew would not deny the law, the psalms, and the prophets; no honest mind could dispute the interpretation. The application is incontestable. From

the beginning, in their greatest prosperity, and when their ruin was predicted formally and fully, such was the uniform declaration of the Holy Spirit. They should not have been ignorant. God had taken care to testify the unbelieving obduracy of Israel and the calling in of Gentiles. These find God under that gospel against which the Jews more than ever rage and rebel.

47 The word

εὐδοκία means benevolent wish, or good will, where it goes beyond complacency and good pleasure. Compare the usage of the verb εὐδοκέω. It is more than ἐπιθυμία or ἐπιπόθησις.

48 Literally, the verse runs, “it is believed… and it is confessed…”

49 B C D E, with some cursives, versions, and fathers, read Χριστοῦ “Christ’s” for “God’s;” F G, etc. omit either.

Romans 11

It was the prophet Isaiah then, after Moses, not Paul, who had distinctly pronounced Israel a rebellious people, spite of God's daily pleading with them, and the call of the Gentiles who had not sought it. It was in vain to quarrel with the gospel on this score. The question is raised consequently whether Israel was wholly to lose their position in God's favour according to promise. The apostle proves the contrary in this chapter.

"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? Far be it! For I also am an Israelite, of Abraham's seed, of Benjamin's tribe. God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew. Know ye not what the scripture saith in [the section of] Elias, how he pleadeth with God against Israel? 'Lord, they have killed thy prophets, they have dug down thine altars; and I only am left, and they seek my life?' But what saith the divine answer to him? 'I have left to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.'50 Thus then in the present time also there hath been a remnant according to election of grace; but if by grace, no longer of works, otherwise grace becomes no longer grace [; but if of works, it is no longer grace, otherwise work is no longer work51]. What then? That which Israel seeketh for he did not obtain, but the election obtained, and the rest were hardened; even as it is written, 'God gave them a spirit of stupefaction, eyes not to see and ears not to hear unto this day.' And David saith, 'Let their table be for a snare, and for a trap, and for a stumbling-block, and for a recompense to them; let their eyes be

darkened not to see, and bow down their back alway." (Ver. 1-10.)

This is the first answer to the question of Israel's total and final rejection. God foreknew52 His people when He chose and called them; and, knowing all their evil beforehand, He certainly will not cast them off. He has not done so, as Paul's own case proved; for he was no bad instance — he who had shared in the nation's guiltiest prejudices and bitterest unbelief and rejection of Jesus; yet had God called him. His love lingered over His poor unworthy people even now, as Paul was also a pattern for them who should hereafter believe on Christ Jesus to eternal life. On him first was the Lord showing the whole of His longsuffering: yet was he also an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin, the one recalling the ancient promises, the other subsequent sin, himself withal present electing mercy, a pledge of the future grace which would save the people fully. Were the exclusion absolute, Paul certainly could not have been brought into His favour. But there is further proof still. "Know ye not what the scripture saith" in the account of Elijah? The disheartened prophet saw himself alone faithful in that dark page of Israel's history — himself therefore the object of hatred unto death as far as king and people could. But the divine admonition let him know of a complete remnant, "seven thousand, such as bowed not the knee to Baal." Thus then in the present time also there has been a remnant "according to election of grace." It was electing grace now as then. The general state was at that time undeniably apostate: what was it in Paul's day?

This gives the apostle the occasion, never let slip by the Holy Spirit, of asserting grace in its exclusion of works — in their mutual exclusion, if we accept the received reading. But I do not see that the bracketed clause adds to the precision of the truth; whereas it was natural enough to tack it on, especially as the form in the Vatican copy seems in evident error (χάρις instead of ἔργον in the end of the disputed clause).

How then stands the case? “What Israel seeketh, this it obtained not, but the election obtained; and the rest were hardened.” It will be noticed that those we call ordinarily the remnant or righteous portion of Israel are designated “the election,” while the mass are called the rest or remnant. “Hardened” also is the right sense, rather than blinded (though this is also taught elsewhere). It may be that ἐπωρώθησαν was confounded in thought and sense with ἐπηρώθησαν, as another has pointed out to be the fact in the Vatican text of Job 17:7 in the LXX.

This leads the apostle to adduce the testimony of scripture, in the words (apparently mingled) of Isaiah 29:10 and Deuteronomy 29:4, followed up by the still more tremendous imprecation of David in Psalm 69:22, 23, all speaking of the ungodly in Israel. Here again the law, the psalms, and the prophets gave their joint overwhelming evidence in terms so vehement that the apostle had rather to bring in “strong consolation” from the unfailing faithfulness of God for at least a remnant as we have seen, before he established every word by these “two or three witnesses” for the general condition of Israel. What more apt to clench the question? What wiser course possible for the apostle?

But let me refer to Calvin's comment on these quotations; for, able as he was, pious too and grave in general, his narrow system exposed him here to adventure remarks on the apostle no less unworthy than presumptuous. "Quae adducit testimonia, quanquam ex variis potius scripturae locis collecta, quam ex uno loco desumpta sunt, omnia tamen videntur aliena esse ab ejus proposito, si ex circumstanciis suis ea propius expendas. Ubique enim videas excaecationem et indurationem commemorari, tanquam Dei flagella, quibus jam admissa ab impiis flagitia ulciscitur: Paulus autem probare hic contendit, excaecari non eos, qui sua malitia jam id meriti sint, sed qui ante mundi creationem reprobati sunt a Deo. (?) Hunc nodum ita breviter solvas, Quod origo impietatis, quae ita in se provocat Dei furorem, est perversitas naturae a Deo derelictae. Quare non abs re Paulus de aeterna reprobatione (?) haec citavit, quae ex ea prodeunt ut fructus ex arbore, et rivus a scaturigine. Impii quidem propter sua scelera justo Dei judicio caecitate puniuntur: sed si fontem exitii eorum quaerimus, eo deveniendum erit, quod a Deo maledicti, nihil omnibus factis, dictis, consiliis suis, quam maledictionem accersere et accumulare possunt. Imo aeternae reprobationis ita abscondita est causa, ut nihil aliud nobis supersit, quam admirari incomprehensibile Dei consilium sicuti tandem ex clausula patebit. Stulte autem faciunt, qui simulac verbum factum est de propinquis causis, earum praetextu hanc primam, quae sensum nostrum latet, obtegere tentant: acsi Deus non libere ante Adae lapsum statuisset de toto humano genere quod visum est, quia damnat vitiosum ac pravum ejus semen: deinde quia peculiariter singulis quam meriti sunt scelerum

mercedem rependit.”53 (Calv. in loc. i. 149, ed. Tholuck, Halae, 1831.)

“You may thus briefly untie this knot — that the origin of the impiety which provokes God’s displeasure is the perversity of nature when forsaken by God. Paul therefore, while speaking of eternal reprobation, has not without reason referred to those things which proceed from it, as fruit from the tree or river from the fountain. The ungodly are indeed for their sins visited by God’s judgment with the blindness; but if we seek for the source of their ruin, we must come to this, — that being accursed by God they cannot by all their deeds, sayings, and purposes, get and obtain anything but a curse. Yet the cause of eternal reprobation is so hidden from us, that nothing remains for us but to wonder at the incomprehensible purpose of God, as we shall at length see by the conclusion. But they reason absurdly who, whenever a word is said of the proximate causes, strive, by bringing forward these, to cover the first, which is hid from our view; as though God had not, before the fall of Adam, freely determined to do what seemed good to him with respect to the whole human race on this account, — because he condemns his corrupt and depraved seed, and also because he repays to individuals the reward which their sins have deserved.” I purposely cite from the Calvin Transl. series, Comm. on Rom., p. 417. Edinb. 1849.

One could understand a believer perhaps saying that the citations of an apostle seemed foreign to his purpose when not examined with their context; but is it too much if we denounce as irreverent no less than unintelligent the man who could venture so to speak, for no better reason than a blind love of his own scheme? It is

excellent and right that scripture should declare hardening to be an infliction of God after men have already proved their ungodliness. It is false and bad to say that Paul labours to prove here that the blinding was not because it was deserved but in consequence of eternal reprobation. In fact scripture teaches no such doctrine. Nowhere are any said to be rejected before the foundation of the world. Nor this only: they are punished at the world's end for their wickedness, not because of a divine decree. Indeed a judgment in this case would be nugatory. But they are judged each according to their works, and the lake of fire is their sentence; though scripture takes care after this to append the divine side, adding that, if any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire. So in a previous chapter of this epistle Paul had carefully shown how God, willing to show His wrath and make His power known, endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy which He had before prepared for glory. To me I confess it looks like the blinding influence of falsehood when men overlook the difference of vessels of wrath fitted on the one hand to destruction, and of vessels of mercy which He on the other hand before made ready for glory. It is guilty man who is the agent in sin and misery; God only who is the source of all the good, though His longsuffering be conspicuous most of all if possible in bearing with the evil who at last come into judgment.

In short then not only not Paul but no other inspired writer ever speaks of "eternal reprobation;" it is merely a dream of a certain school. So the curse of God follows, instead of causing, the impious ways of men.

Arminianism is wholly astray no doubt in reducing God's election to a mere foresight of good in some creatures; but Calvinism is no less erroneous in imputing the evil lot of the first Adam race to God's decree. They both spring from analogous roots of unbelief: Calvinism reasoning, contrary to scripture, from the truth of election to the error of eternal reprobation; Arminianism rightly rejecting that reprobation but wrongly reasoning against election. Like other systems they are in part true and in part false — true in what they believe of scripture, false in yielding to human thoughts outside scripture: happy those, who are content as Christians with the truth of God and refuse to be partisans on either side of men! Our wisdom is to have our minds open to all scripture, refusing to go a hair-breadth farther.

The next position of the apostle is, in great part, decided by the question: "I say then, Did they stumble in order that they should fall? Far be it: but by their trespass salvation [is come] to the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy. But if their trespass be [the] world's riches and their loss [the] Gentiles' riches, how much more their fulness? Now54 I speak to you, the Gentiles; inasmuch therefore as I am apostle of Gentiles I glorify my ministry, if by any means I shall provoke to jealousy my flesh and save some of them. For if their rejection [be the] world's reconciliation, what the reception but life from [the] dead?" (Ver. 11-15.)

Thus the very slip of Israel from its place of witness and depositary of promise, turned as it is through divine mercy into present favour towards the Gentile world, becomes an argument in the hands of grace to assure their future restoration. The apostle alludes to the words

of Deuteronomy 32, the bearing of which on the question is as evident as to the Jew their authority is indisputable. It was not Paul but Moses who declared that the Jew provoked Jehovah to jealousy, that he was unmindful of the Rock who begat him, the glory of God that formed him. It was Moses who testified that Jehovah said, “I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be; for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with [that which is] not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with [those which are] not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.” Undoubtedly it is the sure and solemn threat of God’s displeasure in turning from Israel to the Gentiles, as certainly as Israel used to turn from Jehovah to false gods. But the threat, now accomplishing after the utmost patience, and only accomplished when they added to their old idolatry the still graver sin of rejecting the Messiah and disdaining the gospel that offered them the pardon of these and all other sins by His blood, — the threat itself contains the no less sure intimation of restoring mercy in the end. For certainly He who acts with a view to provoke them to jealousy through blessing the Gentiles does not mean to cast them off eventually; rather the very reverse. One sees by such admirable reasoning and such profoundly accurate employment of the Old Testament scripture how truly it is the same Spirit who wrote of old by Moses working now by Paul.

Apart from any particular allusion, the state of things whether now or by and by accords perfectly both with the facts of Christianity and with the general prospects

for the world according to the prophets. For it is just when the Jews lose all their place and nation no less than distinctive rank as a witnessing and worshipping people in their land that we see the Gentiles gradually renouncing their idols, and the true God and His word incomparably better known than even of old in Israel. Revealed truth, having its centre and display in Christ, alone accounts for the eclipse on the one side and the possession of a brighter light on the other. Did not the Jews reject the true light which now shines on nations so long benighted in idolatry? Again, while owning the mercy of God, which has thus wondrously turned aside to visit the Gentile with the gospel during the continued unbelief and consequently dark and wretched nothingness of the Jew, who can overlook the rich and full stream of Old Testament scripture which depicts the joy and blessedness of the whole earth only when God causes His face to shine on Israel? “God shall bless us” (says the inspired Jewish psalmist); “and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.” It is right to preach, a privilege to look for souls to be blessed; but it is vain, because unscriptural, to expect universality of blessing and delivering power over the world as a whole till Zion’s light is come and the glory of Jehovah is risen on her. Then and not before shall the Gentiles come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising; then the nation and kingdom that will not serve Zion shall perish — a state of things in evident contrast with the grace that goes out now to Jew and Gentile indiscriminately, and gathers believing souls by the Spirit for heavenly and eternal glory, instead of being a display of the righteous government of Jehovah-Messiah in Israel and over all the earth.

Hence it is obvious with what strict truth the apostle could affirm that the salvation to the Gentiles, by the slip or trespass of the Jews, is but to provoke them to jealousy instead of being a sign of being abandoned for ever as a people by God. Nay further he could reason, in harmony with the prophets, that if their trespass is the world's wealth, and their loss and diminution the Gentiles' wealth, how much more their fulness? The apostle here accounts, or, if one will, apologizes, for his bringing in the Gentiles when discussing the destiny of Israel. He was speaking to the saints at Rome, "to you the Gentiles." Further, "inasmuch therefore as I am apostle of Gentiles, I glorify my ministry:" how or why should he forget the divine mercy to such hinging on God's ways with Israel that now occupied him? Especially too as he was thereby seeking to further that provocation to jealousy for which he had the authority of Him who alone is good and of whose compassion toward Israel he was no less assured than of His righteous displeasure at their sins. "If by any means I may provoke to jealousy [those who are] my flesh and may save some of them." (Ver. 14.) "For if their rejection [be the] world's reconciliation, what their reception but life from among [the] dead?" Such we have seen is the uniform impression left by the Psalms and the Prophets, as every candid and intelligent Jew must feel. Then only will be "the regeneration" when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory with His glorified assessors, and all the nations as well as the twelve tribes of Israel shall know what it is to have a king reigning in righteousness and princes ruling in judgment. It is the mistake of Origen, Chrysostom, and Theodoret, of Meyer, Fritzsche, Tholuck, etc., to bring in the resurrection literally as meant here, though I doubt not that the first

resurrection will have then taken place as proved by the most positive evidence of scripture. Nor is there just ground for Dean Alford's singular indecision who objects both to the true and to the erroneous view. Whatever the divine mercy in the "world's reconciling" which we now know while the gospel goes forth to every creature, a wholly different blessedness awaits the whole earth as "life from the dead," when all Israel received back and saved, far from their old envy and churlish scorn, shall bid all the lands to sing joyfully to Jehovah and come before His presence with triumphal song. If His house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations, in that day also is His name to be great among the nations, and in every place incense is to be burnt and a pure offering offered to His name. How far beyond the present, and how different, though the present may be an earnest and pledge! Will it not be for all on earth "life from the dead?"

It seems to my mind that Calvin is far from having a simple, clear, or strong view of the argument, though I do in no wise deny his generally grave and pious sentiments. But he says that you will be greatly hampered in understanding this discussion, except you take notice that the apostle speaks, sometimes of the whole nation of the Jews, sometimes of single individuals. The truth is that the question is exclusively about the nation as God's witness on earth and inheriting the line of promise from Abraham. There was no doubt about individuals. But Paul, we have seen, beautifully uses the faith of himself and others as a proof that even during the judicial hardening there is a remnant according to the election of grace, and that the call of Gentiles meanwhile is but a provocation to

jealousy, instead of implying that God cast away His people, and that they have fallen never more to be received as Israel. And here I cannot but deplore the presumption, as well as ignorance, with which even so godly a person as the Genevese chief speaks, especially on verse 12.55 The apostle should have been humbly listened to, not corrected. Need I add that the rudeness of speech belongs exclusively to the critic, and that the inspiration is thoroughly exact, not the too confident commentator? A human antithesis, which Calvin ventured to say would have been more proper, is in force, beauty, and truth far short of that which the Spirit has given. A rising or raising up of Israel conveys no such import of necessary blessedness as their "reception" after their stumble, loss, and rejection. Even if we did not see and could not prove this, every believer is bound to resent such want of respect to scripture.

Here the apostle adds some observations which not only confirm but explain much: these the reader should the more sedulously weigh because they are in general ill understood. "But if the first-fruit56 [be] holy, the lump also; and if the root [be] holy, the branches also. But if some of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive, wast graft in among them and wast made fellow-partaker of the root and57 of the fatness of the olive tree, boast not against the branches: but if thou boastest, not thou bearest the root but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, Branches58 were broken off in order that I might be graft in. Well; through unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, it may be he will not spare even thee." (Ver. 16-21.) From principles familiar to the Jew in the Old

Testament the reasoning is drawn, and the ways of God in government are vindicated with singular force. The Jew, springing from Abraham, the one first chosen and called out to have promises in his line (though for all others in their effects), had been the natural trunk or branches of the olive tree. The Gentile grew wild outside. But God must have branches in keeping with the root, and, because the Jews were not, judgment proceeded against them. It was evident then, first, that boasting least became the Gentiles, who had no necessary or natural connection with the root, the father of the faithful, like the Jews; secondly, that they had most reason to fear, for if God had dealt with the failure of the seed of Abraham, it was not to be conceived that He would tolerate Gentile iniquity. It belonged to the plan of God to graft the Gentile into the line of promise on earth, in place of Jewish branches broken off through their unbelief. By faith the Gentile stands: let him not be highminded but fear. Otherwise God will not spare.

“Behold then God’s goodness and severity: upon them that fell severity, but upon thee God’s goodness if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they too, if they abide not in unbelief, shall be graft in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wast cut off from the olive tree wild by nature, and contrary to nature wast graft into a good olive tree, how much more shall these who are according to nature be graft into their own olive tree?” (Ver. 22-24.)

*

Θεοῦ is attested by A B C D* beside many ancient versions.

It is of the greatest moment to avoid confounding the continuous line of the inheritance of the promise on earth, the olive tree, with the mystery of Christ and the church where all is new and above nature. There is no breaking off members from the body, nor is the Jew a natural limb any more than the Gentile. All is heavenly grace and entirely distinct from the system of administered promises which began with Abraham, the first-fruit. No doubt those who compose the church, Christ's body, come in as branches standing through faith in the room of the broken off Jewish ones; but others do also who are mere professors of Christ, and do not appreciate God's goodness but forsake it for forms or scepticism or open evil, and will thus fall under His just severity when the moment arrives to cut off the faithless Gentile graft, as before the unbelieving natural boughs of Israel. It is no question of saving grace here but of earthly responsibility according to the respective testimony, first of Israel, next of Christendom. A man of exercised conscience, or even of ordinary knowledge of the New Testament, cannot look on the Gentile profession of Christ east, west, north, south, and affirm seriously that they have continued in God's goodness; if not, the sentence is excision for the Gentile, as of old for the Jew. Will the tree then be cut down? In nowise more in the future than in the past. Contrariwise the judgment of the Gentile branches makes way for the grafting in of the Jews, for they will then no longer abide in unbelief, and God is able to graft them in again. It is indeed "their own olive tree," which God never forgets, nor should the Gentile.

Thus we all may and should clearly see the distinctness of the responsibility of the creature, whether in Israel or

in Christendom, from the security of the elect who are saved by grace. Salvation is of Him who is rich in mercy, possible only, though given fully and freely, to the believer in virtue of redemption. But this does not hinder the trial of now, as of Israel in the past. The revealed result is the apostasy; but grace will translate the saints risen or changed to meet the Lord at His coming, as His day will fall with unsparing judgments on His enemies and most severely on those who abuse in the worst way the best and brightest privileges. The cutting off of the apostate Gentile profession will make way for the reception of Israel.

The apostle had reasoned against the notion that God had cast away His people; first, from the remnant according to the election of grace, of whom he was himself a sample; and next, from God's revealed object in calling Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy, which brought in the beautiful and instructive episode of their own olive tree, still pointing in a similar direction; but now we come to a ground more definite and conclusive. The word of God has given express testimony to His purpose of recalling Israel in sovereign mercy after and spite of all their sins, giving them in the latter thorough repentance and turning their heart toward their Messiah so long rejected.

"For I do not wish you, brethren, to be ignorant of this mystery, in order that ye be not wise in your own conceits, that hardness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in; and so all Israel shall be saved, even as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. And this is the covenant on my part to them when I shall have taken away their

sins." (Ver. 25-27.) If the apostle used the Septuagint Version of two passages in Isaiah (Isa. 59:20, Isa. 27:9; compare also Jer. 31), in the Greek text as it now stands the phrase is neither "to" Zion, as in the Hebrew, nor "out of" Zion as in the epistle, but ἕνεκεν ("for the sake of"), save in two copies referred to by Holmes and Parsons in their great edition of the LXX, one of which is certainly a correction, the other probably so. That Origen, Chrysostom, and Theodoret cite according to the New Testament decides nothing against the common text of the Seventy. And this is confirmed by the plain fact that Origen, who had quoted the prophet when interpreting Psalm 14 according to the apostle's form of citation, gives in his Hexapla the text of the LXX. just as it now stands, while we see Aquila and Symmachus adhering precisely to the Hebrew. It is evident to me that the last verses of Psalm 16 and Psalm 52 fully and literally justify the apostle, who was directed by the Holy Spirit to use the Old Testament in such a way as looks lax to the hasty, careless, or unbelieving, too disposed to regard an inspired man as like themselves, but really with the most comprehensive wisdom and the nicest exactitude, so as to convey the mind of God as contained in His word, not in one text only but out of many interwoven into one. The Deliverer will come to Zion, out of which He will subsequently send the rod of His power for the full deliverance of His people, in the day that He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob and place him for ever under the new covenant.

Thus if the hardening of Israel (though, we may bless God, only in part) was then true and still goes on, long before announced, the same prophet and, we may add, the rest of the prophets anticipate the bright day for the

earth when all Israel, as such, shall be saved. The πλήρωμα, fulness or full complement of the Gentiles, who now believe, will have come in; and so the long guilty, long chastened, people of Jehovah will turn to the Lord and own Him in the crucified Nazarene, their Lord and their God; even as Thomas who in this represents them, seeing Him and believing.

There is no comment in the New Testament more important for determining the just meaning of Old Testament prophecy. The allegorical school of ancients from Origen down to the moderns of our own day are in this far from the truth of God. Indeed it is as a system mere trifling and its root unbelief, as its dogmatic effect is to shake confidence in the plain written word, and its practical result is not only to deprive the ancient people of God of their hope, but to lower and obscure our own by substituting the earthly position of Israel (confused and spoiled by a so-called spiritualism) for separation to and union with Christ in heaven, the true place of the Christian and of the church. It will astonish some of my readers to learn that Origen, undoubtedly one of the ablest and most learned of the early Greek fathers, speaks of Zion as representing the Father in this very connection! Others may be more sober; but they understood the truth no better than he, if they did not commit themselves to such wild flights of fancy. If some might have hoped better things of Theodoret, like Chrysostom, I am forced to prove how precarious is the teaching which, after saying truly that the Jews will believe, on the conclusion of the work spoken of among the Gentiles, tells us that “all Israel” means those who believe whether of Jews or of Gentiles. Even this meagre expectation of blessing at the end for Israel is boldly

denied by Jerome (Comm. Esai. xi.), who will have all to be understood of the first advent!

Nor did the reformers clear themselves from the ignorance and prejudice of the fathers, partly through their dread of Anabaptist violence and fanaticism in their dreams of a fifth kingdom, dreams which after all are far more akin to the theories of Rome and the fathers than to the holy and heavenly hopes given in the written word. For it will be observed that such visionaries look for a Zion of their own on earth, just as in a modified sense their adversaries interpret the prophets of the church. All were at fault, though in different directions; so must all be who do not see the church's portion to be a heavenly one with Christ at His coming, who will restore His people to the enjoyment of every promised blessing and glory on the earth, the nations being then only blessed as a whole though subordinately. But the risen saints will reign with Christ over the earth. We are blessed in heavenly places in Him.

Hence we can understand the vacillation of Luther. But Calvin was always wrong, as an instance of which may suffice his interpretation of this place where he makes "all Israel" to mean the whole of those saved, the Jews having only the superior place as the firstborn.59 Much more correctly have Beza on the Protestant side, and Estius on the Catholic expounded the verse and shown the opposition of πᾶς Ἰσραήλ in the future hardening ἀπὸ μέρους, which strictly means "in part," not a mere qualifying of a severe declaration, "until" also specifying the point of time at which the great change takes place. To say with Calvin that "until" (ἄχρις οὗ) does not mark this but only equivalent to "that" shows the strong

prejudice of a good man whose knowledge of the language was imperfect and who missed to a great extent the point of the chapter before him, through that wisdom in one's own conceit against which the apostle is warning the Gentiles. That "the fulness of the Gentiles" cannot mean the general conversion of the world to Christ, is perfectly certain if it were only from the previous reasoning of the apostle in the central portion of the chapter, where he asks if the slips of the Jews were the world's riches, how much more their fulness? and shows how he was provoking them to jealousy to save some; for if their rejection be the world's reconciling, what their reception but life from among the dead? And this, as already shown, harmonizes with the constant testimony of the Law, and the Psalms, and the Prophets, which invariably make the blessing of Israel as a creation the condition and under God the means of the blessing of all the earth — a new state of things, not the gospel or the church as now known, both of which are inconsistent with it, but the kingdom in its manifestation of glory when in the broadest sense all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Here the commentators are, I must say, painfully defective. The effort of some ancients, and of moderns like Grotius and Hammond, to find the accomplishment in the apostolic times is of all schemes the grossest absurdity, and the most directly opposed to the text commented on.

It may be added that, though Dean Alford took the term Israel in its proper sense, he like the rest spoils much of the force of the truth by winding up with the assertion that the matter here treated is their reception into the church of God. Not so. The question of the olive tree stands wholly distinct from the church, though no doubt

there are branches now in the olive tree since Pentecost which are also members of Christ's body, the assembly of God. But the olive tree is another idea altogether and embraces the dealings of God on the footing of promise since Abraham through Israel of old, the Gentile profession now, and Israel again in the millennial age, not believers only but responsibility according to the privileges given, with judgment executed on the faithless Jewish branches of the tree to let in the Gentiles, as it will be executed on the disobedient Gentiles when God will give repentance to Israel and remission of sins at the appearing of Christ and His kingdom.

Hence the apostle goes on to affirm what is wholly different from the gospel and church state. "According to the gospel, [they are] enemies on your account; but according to the election, beloved on account of the fathers.60 For the gifts and the calling of God [are] irrevocable." (Ver. 28, 29.) The meaning is that, after the Jews proved their hostility to the gospel instead of being saved by it, which God turns, as we have seen, to His gracious call of the Gentiles meanwhile, election love will still prove faithful in the latter day to the sons for the sake of the fathers. This is not the principle on which souls are blessed now whether from Gentiles or from Jews. There is no difference. All are alike guilty and lost through their sins; all alike forgiven and saved through faith. But after the actual unbelief of the Jews, sovereign mercy will interpose at the end of the age. For the gifts and the calling of God admit of no regret on His part. He may repent of creation (Gen. 6), never of what grace gave in promise to Abraham and to his seed, never of His call which was first illustrated publicly in the father

of the faithful. According to that “election” He will yet break their stony heart and put a new spirit within them.

“For as ye were once disobedient to God but now have become objects of mercy through their disobedience, so have they also now become disobedient to the mercy shown to you, in order that they also may become objects of mercy. For God shut up together all in disobedience in order that he might show mercy to all.” (Verses 30-32.)

Wiclif, Tyndale, and Cranmer, with the Vulgate, the Peshito and the Philoxenian Syriac, the Arabic, are here more correct than the Geneva Version, Beza, and the Authorized. Calvin seems nearer to the truth, but has not quite hit the mark. “That they became unbelievers through the mercy shown to the Gentiles” is indeed somewhat harsh; nor is there any need of his explanation for clearing up a difficulty created by his own mistake. The Jews rebelled against the mercy shown to the Gentiles as we learn from the Acts, 1 Thess. 2, etc., and as experience shows in fact to this day.

There appears to my mind not only an absence of any just sense in the modern view but positive error at issue with the chapter, the context, and scripture in general. With the chapter it clashes, because the previous argument treats the restoration of the Jews as life from the dead to the world, not the fulness of the Gentiles the means of their restoration; with the context, because the express point is to crush all conceit from both Jew and Gentile, and especially from the Gentile as now enjoying light whilst the Jew knows a dark and cold eclipse; with scripture at large, because nowhere is the mercy shown

to the Gentiles hinted at as the (or a) means of Israel's recovery. No doctrine can be conceived more foreign to the Bible than that it is by the instrumentality of believing Gentiles that Israel as a nation shall at length look to Christ and so obtain mercy. As the Gentiles were warned that they must be cut off if they continued not in God's goodness (and none but the most unspiritual, not to say hardened, can affirm that they have so continued), the sentence is excision, not the honour of bringing Israel into the faith. No doubt the believing Gentiles will be translated to higher blessedness, as the believing Jews were when the faithless Jews were cut off. Thus the prime object is to extinguish all self-confidence and boasting. As mercy alone accounted for bringing in the Gentiles on Israel's rebellion against God, so the Jews when grafted into their own olive tree will feel that nothing but mercy could have done it or explain it, somewhat in unison of spirit with the apostle of the circumcision when at the council of Jerusalem he uttered the memorable words, so worthy of the occasion, "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they" (the Gentiles), not they, even as we (the Jews).

Thus they were all sinners; and the dealings of God in holiness and love and truth only brought out the stubborn insubjection of both Jew and Gentile, on the one hand, and the incomparable mercy of God, on the other: man's claims, righteousness, privileges, all ending in unbelief and rebellion, but God never more truly shining as God than in His mercy enduring for ever.

Can one wonder that the large and fervent heart of the apostle, animated and filled yet guarded by the inspiring Spirit, breaks forth in an outburst of praise as he looks

back on the grace and ways of God in Christ? “O depth of God’s riches61 and wisdom and knowledge: how unsearchable his judgments and untraceable his ways! For who hath known Jehovah’s mind? or who became his counsellor? or who first gave to him and it shall be repaid to him? Because of him and through him and to him [are] all things: to him the glory unto the ages. Amen.” (Ver. 33-36.) He is the source, means, and end of all He has counselled, accomplished, or purposes still to effect for His own glory.

The appropriateness of the doxology to the epistle is not only remarkable in itself but exactly in place where it stands. Indeed it is not alone; for, as we have a very brief one in the first chapter, we have another very notable in the last. Here it is the admiration of his soul as he looks back on the triumphs of divine mercy — the last thing of which man would think in discussing the dispensations of God. Yet to the spiritual mind subject to the written word and confiding in the known characters of God as He has revealed Himself in Christ, such is the bright and blessed and adoring conclusion. The depth of His wealth, wisdom, and knowledge is to be seen, felt, proved, but unfathomable; His decisions beyond scrutiny, His ways not to be traced out, yet all open to our learning of Him with ever swelling praise. For who knew Jehovah’s mind? or who became His counsellor? Yet has not the apostle touched on other and heavenly purposes for the glory of Christ in the church, of which he speaks to the Ephesian saints in due season. Here he had only been given to develop the righteousness of God in the face of man’s unrighteousness, known from the beginning and revealed all along, and the methods by which God humbles the pride of each and gives the

fullest scope to His mercy, causing evil itself to set forth good with the utmost lustre. Who then has given to God and made Him debtor to repay? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things: to Him be the glory for ever. The gospel is His, the righteousness His, the grace His, and so is the glory. To Him then with the apostle our hearts join in ascribing the display of perfect excellency without end.

50 In the LXX, as the text at present stands, the masculine article is prefixed, not as here the feminine; but it may originally have been otherwise as elsewhere. (Judges 2:13; Hosea 2:8; Zeph. 1:4.) The quotation is the sense, not the precise transcript of either the Heb. or the LXX. Abarbanel speaks of a male image for men, a female for women; but this scarcely accounts for the case before us. Others (as Authorized Version) suppose an ellipse of εἰκόνι.

51 The Vatican, which is the best support of this doubtful clause, reads χάρις, grace.

52 It is a mistake to call this an election before the world’s foundation which is only said of Christians, of the church. Israel were chosen in time.

53 “The quotations which he adduces, collected from various parts of scripture, and not taken from one passage, do seem, all of them, to be foreign to his purpose, when you closely examine them according to their contexts; for you will find that in every passage, blindness and hardening are mentioned as scourges, by which God punished crimes already committed by the ungodly; but Paul labours to prove here, that not those were blinded who so deserved by their wickedness, but

who were rejected by God before the foundation of the world." [Paul really does nothing less.]

54 δέ "but," "now," is the reading of A B and other good authorities, instead of the more common and easy γάρ, "for." The difference in sense seems slight.

55 "Magis autem proprie locutus fuisset, si lapsui opposuisset suscitationem. Quod ideo admoneo, nequis dicendi ornatum hic requirat, aut offendatur ista dicendi ruditate. Pectus enim, non linguam, ut formarent, haec scripta sunt." In loc. p. 151.

56 There is not the least ground for the strange notion of Chalmers after Mede that by the first-fruit the apostle meant the earliest Jewish converts to Christianity, though no one denies that James 1:18 applies the term to the Christian believers out of Israel, as Jeremiah 2:3 had already done to Israel originally as such. It is demonstrable from the context that by the figures of the first-fruit with the lump (compare Num. 15:19-21) and the root with the branches the apostle is setting forth the relation and responsibility of those who followed him to whom the promises were given, as the stock of divine testimony on earth after men at large had fallen into idolatry. Theodoret, like Origen, indulges in the odd conceit that Christ is "the first-fruit," while rightly regarding Abraham as "the root." Both illustrations really point to the same.

The rendering here is as certain as the sense resulting from it is clear and good. With plurals or collectives ἐν regularly means "among," as in the Authorized Version, or "inter illos" as Grotius correctly translates The Vulgate ("in illis") is obscure; Calvin and Beza, not without predecessors among the fathers and followers in

modern Germany, including even Olshausen and Meyer, give “pro illis” which is unequivocally without warrant. Erasmus is far more right in his comment than Beza who cavils at it and adopts the sense which the former justly censures. But there is no need of resorting to the influence of the Hebrew preposition in however largely true elsewhere in the New Testament. What we find here is as common in classical as in Hellenistic Greek; but ἐν = in loco (or locum) is the usage nowhere that I know, and in my judgment impossible to reconcile with the genius of the language.

57 The

καί “and” is doubtful; B C, with the Coptic, and Damasus, reject it, probably others also; and we can readily see why some might bring it in to soften a phrase seemingly rugged without it.

58 A B C Dc F G L P and many cursives and fathers omit

οἵ, which may readily have crept in from the context.

59 “Multi accipiunt de populo Judaico, acsi Paulus diceret instaurandum adhuc in eo religionem ut prius; sed ego Israelis nomen ad totum Dei populum extendo, hoc sensu: Quum Gentes ingressae fuerint, simul et Judaei ex defectione se ad fidei obedientiam recipient: atque ita complebitur salus totius Israelis Dei, quem ex utrisque colligi oportet: sic tamen ut priorem locum Judaei obtineant, ceu in familia Dei primogeniti.” (Comm. in loc.) Nor is his reason sounder than his conclusion; for he considers the mystic sense to suit better because Paul wished to point out here the consummation of Christ’s kingdom, “quae in Judaeis minime terminatur sed totum orbem comprehendit.” The argument really goes to confirm what is denied; for the

church is essentially an election out of Jews and Gentiles, and never can embrace the whole world; whereas the salvation of Israel at Christ's coming to reign inaugurates and characterizes His kingdom over all the earth. Compare Zechariah 12, 14.

60 "Incredulos fuisse redditos misericordia Gentibus exhibita, paulo asperius est; nihil tamen continet absurdi, quia Paulus excaecationis causam non assignat, sed tantum significat, quod ad Gentes transtulit Deus Judaeis fuisse ademptum." Comm. in loc. ed. Tholuck, p. 158.

61 Or "both of God's wisdom" etc. as in the Authorized Version.

Romans 12

The apostle had set forth the doctrine of grace in atonement and salvation; he had shown in the resurrection of Christ the living link that binds together the justification of the believer with life, and hence with holiness of walk and heart — a link too often forgotten in the teaching, if not in the practice, of the children of God. He had reconciled the indiscriminate grace of God in the gospel with the ways of God and the special promises to Israel, and shown by the past, present, and future course of dispensations on earth that, as man's part has been unfaithfulness through unbelief, and all its train of miserable consequences, so God's has been and will he the triumph of His goodness for the Gentiles now, for the Jew shortly, all concluded in unbelief that He might have mercy on all. Now he begins formally to exhort the saints by the compassions of God thus displayed in redemption, and even in His dispensations.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, your reasonable service." (Ver. l.) It is the detailed application of the principle laid down in Romans 6, where we first hear of the Christian reckoning himself dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus, under grace, not under law. From this there is no receding to law now, as the tone of the exhortation itself testifies. But the compassions of God are morally to form the believer within and without. Just as in Romans 10 the apostle had taught the value of confession with the mouth as well as of believing with the heart, so here the brethren are entreated to yield their bodies as a

sacrifice to God. Many then as now would have been disposed to have professed an inward devotedness with license for the outward man. The possibility of this self-deception is here precluded, the more strikingly as the exhortation is made not to Jews with their system of external observances, but to Christians who know that without faith it is impossible to please God. Thus is secured the service of the man as a whole; just as the apostle says elsewhere in his desires for the Thessalonian saints, “The God of peace himself sanctify you wholly, and your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Again, the word “to present,” or yield, is so put as to convey the idea of a completed act summed up in its conclusion. It is not mere effort as under law, but a thing done once for all, though of course stamped on the entire christian walk up to the last according to that beginning. The Spirit of God contemplates nothing less for every soul called of God out of this world, reconciled by the death of His Son and to be saved by His life. How could He lower the standard of Christ?

But the mention of “bodies” in God’s wisdom associates itself with the thought of a sacrifice so familiar then to every mind even among the Gentiles. Only in Christianity it is an incomparably more intimate and personal question than in Judaism. Animals devoted to death and sacrifice do not suffice or suit, but our own “bodies,” and this of course as a living sacrifice contrasted with those of dead beasts, which of themselves left self unjudged and untouched. With the Christian’s self-sacrifice God is well pleased. It only is holy now, what was once legally so being in truth proved profane, now that the true light shines; it is acceptable

to Him as the expression of giving God His true place, and of man, the believer, taking his. Without this the show of doing good and communicating is vain; with it such sacrifices are indeed well pleasing to God. Further, this is “our intelligent service.” Worldly elements are condemned, carnal ordinances passed away, formal worship at an end. God will only be served now intelligently. It is no question of reason judging for itself without the word, but of the Spirit guiding the mind by divine revelation understood growingly.

“And be not conformed to this age but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that ye may prove what [is] the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Ver. 2.)

Here it is not the man personally devoted to God but a negative guard from external influence, and the direct contrary positively carried on by the renewing of the mind, the end being the thorough discernment of God’s will. Thus, in order to prove practically that good and acceptable and perfect will, there is need on the one hand of being continually on the watch against the course of this age, the spirits and habits of men where opinion rules, and on the other hand of being transformed; yet this not after a mere outward sort but by the renewing of the mind. It is by practical exercise that one grows in learning His will, and proves that it and it only is good and well pleasing and perfect. Here again we see contrast with the Gentiles on the one hand who knew not God and therefore not His will, on the other with the Jewish people subjected to known definite requirements independent of spirituality. The whole course of men outside Christianity, even if it profess to recognize God in outward acts, is wholly ignorant of relationship with Him, and, having no faith, regards it as

the presumptuous assumption of believers. Now the Spirit, in calling us to a path of separation from the ways of men, lays down no lines of outward difference but what follows the mind renewed, and this in steps of enlarging obedience. So Jesus learnt obedience (for as the eternal Son He had only known to command) — learnt it in a path of suffering unequalled. “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God;” and God’s will He did and suffered at all cost, as we know now to everlasting joy.

In the age to come there will be no such discordance enjoined nor right nor even possible; for the world will be under the direct and displayed government of God in Christ the Son of David and the Son of man, the power of evil being publicly put down and expelled. But now it is otherwise in this present evil age, when divine life has to swim against the stream. Proportionate is the blessing of fidelity to the name of the Lord when His throne is unknown save to faith and disregarded by men as such. It is therefore a way of obedience hard to nature but pleasant to the new man directed of the Spirit that glorifies Christ, who is the way, and the only way, through the wilderness of the earth to the Father. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” Self-will is detected and detested; the good and acceptable and perfect will of God is more and more discerned. This cannot be where the spirit of this age governs.

“For by the grace given me I tell every one that is among you, not to have high thoughts above what he ought to think, but to think so as to have sober thoughts, as God hath dealt to each a measure of faith. For just as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same function, so we, the many, are one body in

Christ, and individually members of each other. And having gifts differing according to the grace given us, whether prophecy, [let us prophesy] according to the proportion of faith; or service, [let us occupy ourselves] in service; or he that teacheth, in teaching; or he that exhorteth, in exhortation; he that bestoweth, in simplicity; he that taketh the lead, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." (Ver. 3-8.)

From the more general principles of Christ's devotedness and obedience we descend to the reason the apostle gives. High-mindedness is incompatible with either; it is the very reverse both of the love which animated Him in giving Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling savour, and of the obedience which He closed in the death of the cross. High-mindedness hinders both the doing our own duty and others in theirs. So Paul speaks to every one among the saints at Rome. This was no pretentiousness on his part but the lowly discharge of the task assigned him by the Lord Jesus, and not the less decided because it was in lowly obedience. And as each did his own proper work according to the measure of faith dealt out by God, each would act with humility but with firmness, knowing it was God's will and his own service. Unbelief seeks great things and overlooks the one thing of moment — our own duty assigned of God without going beyond its measure or outside its nature. Let us remember however that there is a false modesty that fails to act, as well as the want of modesty that goes too far.

For it is in this after the pattern of the body with its many members, the doctrine so fully unfolded in 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians. Here the apostle but touches on it in a practical point of view, to

illustrate the importance of various members in one body mutually helpful; many as they may be, one body in Christ and severally members one of another.

Besides let us never forget that, whatever the differences, all are gifts; and the grace which has given has made one to differ from another but also each necessary to the others, as all in the one body. Whatever we have from the Lord, let us use all in subjection to Him, and for the object He had in view: if prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith. Such an exhortation is the more weighty, because we see that even the highest of the gifts of edification comes within the scope of such a caution. He that prophesied had to beware of overstepping what God had given. The reality of gift did and does not supersede the need of regulation by the word. None put the hearer's soul more directly in contact with God than prophesying; yet must it be conformable to the faith. And if a man's gift lay in ministering to the saints, not in the way of speaking but serving them otherwise in love, his wisdom would be to occupy himself in this, as also the teacher and the exhorter in their own work, not in a service for which they had no divinely given fitness. It is plain that each of these gifts is distinct, though of course God might give more than one sometimes to the same man. but commonly each would have his proper gift.

Another remark it will be well to make, that God guards us here from so sharp a distinction as would favour the ruinous distinction, into which the early church too soon slipped, of clergy and laity. Even the more moderate of those who would apologize for it seek to extract the transition from public to private gifts out of the omission of εἴτε ("whether" or "or"). But this is wholly fanciful;

for the Holy Spirit has taken care to render such a scheme untenable by placing the most public gift possible, the ruler or leader (ὁ προι>

στάμενος) between “him that bestoweth” and” him that sheweth mercy,” all three being found after the omission supposed to mark the private gifts, The desire to avoid the force of this has led men into arbitrary meanings of ὁ πρ. as merely presiding over one’s own household, which really demands that sphere to be defined as in 1 Timothy 3:4, 5, 12; or a patron of strangers as in Romans 16:2, which however is a different word. But 1 Thessalonians 5:12 (not to speak of 1 Timothy 5:17) clearly shows the true meaning where it occurs absolutely.

Again, we may notice that, as he that bestows has to take heed that he yield to no evasive pretexts, but to cultivate liberality (which with money is “simplicity”), so the leader or ruler is exhorted to diligence, and he that shows mercy to show it with cheerfulness, not as if he grudged the consolation. Some take ὁ μεταδιδούς as the official distributor of the public charities of the assembly, rather than as dispensing from his own property; but διαδιδούς in that case would probably have been the word chosen.

The apostle now goes out into broader ground and enjoins on the saints every sort of christian duty, not in outward conduct only, but perhaps even more as to the tone, temper, and spirit in which the Lord would have all done by them. “Showing mercy” or compassion naturally serves as a link of transition, and prepares the way for the more general exhortation to love, lowliness, and patient grace.

“[Let] love [be] unfeigned.” (Ver. 9.) Love is of God. Therefore it is of the deepest moment that it should ever be genuine and incorrupt: for the higher its source, nature, and character, the more dangerous where that which is spurious usurps its place and name, misleading others and oneself under a fair but false pretension. It is not the same as the brotherly kindness of verse 10; and the reality of the distinction reappears in 2 Peter 1:7. On the other hand it is far from being that kindness to all men, the perfection of which we know in the Saviour God as witnessed in Christ the Lord. Love is the activity of the divine nature in goodness, and hence is inseparable from that nature as reproduced in the children of God. Nevertheless this does not absolve them from the need of self-judgment that it be sincere and undefiled, seeking others’ good according to God’s will unselfishly. The letting in of hopes, fears, or objects of our own falsifies it.

Hence in the same verse the connected injunction, “abhorring evil; cleaving to good.” It is a word the more needful in our own day especially, because we live in Laodicean times of sickly sentiment where latitudinarian charity abounds, the essence of which is a spirit of indifferentism toward evil, in particular evil against Christ And the danger as well as the sin is the more extreme, because it is and has long been that “last hour” of which John warns so solemnly, the hour not of Christianity prevailing but of many antichrists, though not yet of the Antichrist. But where love is real, there is and must be the detestation of evil, no less decidedly than the close attachment to good. If the latter attracts, the former offends and is often ill received in the world as it is. But the Christian must cherish the instincts of

the new nature and be subject to God's word who has called him out to be a witness of Christ here below where evil meets him at every step and turn. The amiability which would shirk difficulties and apologize for sin is thus proved to lack the salt of the covenant of God, and will soon be seen to be honey and to end in leaven, instead of being the flour and oil which God looks for in such offerings.

"In brotherly kindness affectionately kind one toward another; in honour anticipating each other; in diligence not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;62 in hope rejoicing; in tribulation enduring; in prayer persevering; distributing to the necessities of the saints, studious of hospitality." (Ver. 10-13.) Here we begin with the call to tender interest among brethren mutually; and so also not exactly to prefer or esteem others better than ourselves, as in Philippians 2:3, important as such lowliness of mind is, the mind that was in Christ Jesus. It is here a question of not merely repaying the courtesy of others, but of taking the lead in treating them with honour and thus by example leading them on in these comely ways. Then, instead of allowing slothfulness, the apostle insists on zealous diligence. Lest this however should be only outside work, he immediately adds "in spirit fervent," and these with a blessed motive to both, "serving the Lord." It is well known that Griesbach, following a few MSS, versions, and fathers, joined with Erasmus in reading καιρῳ for Κυρίῳ, contrary to the mass of authorities and almost all other editors. It was, we may boldly say, infirmity in judgment; especially as the internal evidence is at least no less adverse than the external. Serving the time (rather "season" or "opportunity") seems at least somewhat unworthy, is

little suited to the context in itself, and easily susceptible of the worst abuse. It is no fair instance of a more difficult and therefore preferable reading. The two words may have been confounded by an ignorant scribe, who took the abbreviated form of κῶ meaning καιρῳ instead of Κυρίῳ. Possibly it may have been wilfully altered, but we should be slow to suspect this when we can otherwise account for a change.

Further, the mention of the Lord and of His service appears to me the link in the mind of the Spirit with the bright future ("in hope rejoicing"), as this again very simply connects itself with present suffering ("in tribulation enduring"), and with the grand support of the soul, come what may meanwhile, "in prayer persevering." This portion concludes with the remembrance of the poor saints, which stands in a similar relation here, as the third clause to the two former in the preceding, verse, in which (we know from his own touching account in Galatians 2) the apostle was ever diligent, as well as the pursuit of hospitality, which the conventionalities of modern life should not enfeeble if we would be wise in the Lord.

In verse 14 practical grace to enemies in power (or at least having the means of harassing the saints) is urged with emphasis. "Bless those that persecute you; bless and curse not." So did Jesus.

Sympathy in joy and sorrow next finds its place (ver. 15). "Rejoice with [any] rejoicing, and weep with [any] weeping; having the same mind one towards another, not minding high things, but going along63 with the lowly." (Ver. 15, 16.) Spite of the antithesis tempting one to take the last word in the same gender as in the clause

before, which is grammatically easy, I think that the differing form is both more in keeping with the fulness of the apostle's style and better in this passage, though "lowly things" may yield a sense not to be despised.64 What a contrast with the self-exalting and disdainful spirit of the world! How blessed to see it exemplified in the human path of the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, and enjoined by a servant of His whose qualities of mind and heart have found few if any equals among men! Nowhere perhaps, where they let out their thoughts and feelings, can one find the very opposite so painfully as among the Rabbis. Their scorn for the unlettered poor is unbounded. But indeed it is too natural to man as such. Here we have exhortations to Christians. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself so to walk even as He walked Following up this the apostle says, "Be not wise in your own eyes; recompensing to none evil for evil; providing things good before all men. If possible, as far as concerneth you, being at peace with all men: not avenging yourselves, beloved, but give place to wrath, for it is written, To me [belongeth] vengeance: I will recompense, saith [the] Lord. If therefore thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for, doing this, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Ver. 16-21.)

Self-confidence is another and kindred danger, which in such a world as this would soon ensnare the saint in retaliation. In every way contrariwise we are called to be witnesses, not of the first man, nor of the law, but of Christ, and hence to be above suspicion before all men in providing things good or comely (for such is the true

sense here, rather than benevolent); and this too in a spirit of peace with all as far as depends on us. It is a solemn thought that wrath and vengeance belong to God. It becomes us, instead of avenging ourselves, to bend before the blast, looking to God; nay, to render service to an enemy in need and distress. This will bring him to a point with God or with you: if he melt, so much the better for all; if he harden himself, so much the worse for him. For the Christian it is exercise in the divine nature, that is in faith and patience and love. For the christian rule is Christ, not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome it with good. So God, in our own case as with all who love Him, overcame our evil with His good in Christ our Lord; and now also He gives us to be imitators of Him in grace, which wins the victory in His sight and to our own consciousness, even when we may seem most downtrodden before the world. For this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith — of course faith working through love.

62 I see no good reason here for taking the dative as a mere case of relation like so many others in the context, and for rendering it with M. Stuart, “as to the Lord, obedient or engaged in His service.” The common construction as the complement of the participle seems to me more exact and simple.

63 It may seem more literal to take this as “led away,” i.e. to the judgment seat of rulers, with the despised Christians when thus oppressed, as Schleusner, etc., or by them in the sense of conforming to them, as Grotius, etc. But the meaning given in the text seems far better.

64 So far it seems to me that the text of the Authorized Version is preferable to the marginal alternative. But the

phrase as a whole is otherwise given very unhappily. In no way does it mean “condescend to men of low estate,” but rather to associate with them. Condescension is quite contrary to the spirit the apostle would have us cultivate: for it supposes the maintenance of worldly superiority in our own hearts, because it means showing kindness to the lowly in a patronizing tone. The Lord guards the disciples against similar feelings and ways in Luke 22:25-27.

Romans 13

The apostle next enters on the relation to worldly authority of the saints, after treating of their attitude toward all men as the witnesses of the good they had learnt in Christ, where God overcame all evil with His good, and privileges us as partakers of it both to be active in it and to suffer for it.

“Let every soul be subject to authorities in power. For there is no authority save from God, and those that exist are ordered by God: so that he that setteth himself against the authority resisteth the ordinance of God, and those that resist shall receive judgment for themselves. For rulers are not a fear for the good work but for the evil.65 Dost thou wish then not to be afraid of the authority? Do good, and thou shalt have praise from it; for it is God’s servant to thee for good; but if thou do evil, fear; for not in vain doth it wear the sword; for it is God’s servant, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. Wherefore [it is] needful to be subject not only on account of wrath but also on account of conscience. For on this account ye pay tribute also; for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing.” (Ver. 1-6.)

The holy wisdom of the exhortation is as worthy of God, as the suitability of all that is taught is apparent for those who, though not of the world, yet have relative duties in it, as they wait for the Lord and are called to do the will of God meanwhile. By a gradual transition we are brought from not avenging ourselves, and overcoming evil with good, as becomes the children of God, to our relation to the authorities in the world

whose office it is to avenge evil, punishing evil-doers, and praising those that do well. It was pre-eminently in place from the apostle writing to the saints in the great metropolis of the Gentile world, imperial Rome. No otherwise had the apostle of the circumcision exhorted the christian Jews scattered over the East. The falsehood, the folly, the impurity, the abominations of the Gentiles would naturally expose those who mingled their idolatries with the civil power to find the latter jeoparded when souls discerned and rejected the former in the light of Christ. Hence the exceeding moment of pressing the place which worldly authority should have in the conscience of the saints from among either Jews or Gentiles as of God, spite of the heathenism of those who were in possession of it. “Let every soul” is more comprehensive (and I cannot doubt so intended of the Spirit) than every saint. No position exempts. The household too ought to feel it, children or other dependent relations and servants, as well as believers. It is laid down purposely in the broadest terms: compare Romans 2:9. If the verb be regarded as in the middle voice, it would express the willingness of the subjection so much the more strongly: just as the other side, “he that sets himself against,” is seen in verse 3.

Again, “authorities in power” (

ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις) is an expression that embraces every form of governing power, monarchical, aristocratic, or republican. All cavil on this score is therefore foreclosed. The Spirit insists not merely on the divine right of kings but that “there is no authority except from God.” Nor is there an excuse on this plea for change; yet if a revolution should overthrow one form and set up another, the Christian’s duty is plain:

“those that exist are ordained by God.” His interests are elsewhere, are heavenly, are in Christ; his responsibility is to acknowledge what is in power as a fact, trusting God as to the consequences and in no case behaving as a partisan. Never is he warranted in setting himself up against the authority as such; for this were to resist the ordinances of God, and those that resist shall receive judgment for themselves. For it is by no means “damnation,” but “sentence,” or the charge for which he is condemned. Scripture is ever sober, as the apostle said he was, for our sakes: if he were ecstatic, it was for God, as it might well be. Other scriptures show that, where the authority demands that which is offensive to Him, as for instance that an apostle should speak no more of Jesus or that a Christian should sacrifice to an idol or an emperor, we must obey God rather than man, but suffering, not resisting, if we cannot quietly leave the scene of persecution. For it is evident that it is impossible to plead God’s authority for obeying a command which dishonours and denies Him. Every relation has its limits in conduct which virtually nullifies it; and that is a requirement which undermines its own authority by antagonism to Him who set it up. But Calvin seems to speak unwarrantably when he goes so far as to say that tyrannies are not an ordained government;66 and those who listened to him or shared his thoughts have proved that they did not count it beneath Christians to take an active part in overthrowing what they considered tyrannical.

It is a wholly inadequate apprehension to regard the magistrate on the side of man only. Not that he may not be chosen in ever so various a form by man, but that he is God’s servant, as here repeatedly said. He is His

servant for good, not for evil. but if you practise evil, what then? Fear; for not in vain does he wear the sword; for he is God's servant, an avenger for wrath to him that does evil. To see God in the magistrate brings in conscience. Wherefore one must need be subject not only on account of wrath (this would be merely a question of consequences from man), but also on account of conscience. "For on this account also ye pay tribute." This is connected with the foregoing exhortation as to magistrates, and prepares the way for more general relationships in the world. "For they are God's ministers [or officers], attending diligently unto this very thing,." Thus they are designated God's διάκονοι and also His λειτουργοί, the one as doing the work prescribed to them in keeping the order of the world in obedience to the laws, the other as public functionaries or officially appointed to it. The payment of φόρος was for the administation of government, a tribute or tax on persons or property or both, as τέλος was on merchandize and therefore fairly translated "custom." Hence the apostle (ver. 7) exhorts, "Render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour." The greater and the lesser are thus taken in, each in its just measure; which the Christian can heartily say, inasmuch as he is entitled to acknowledge God in all without seeking anything for himself. For we are here occupied with what is of God in the repression of evil, and hence external to the proper sphere of christian life, save as honouring God in every respect, But next we enlarge yet more. "Owe no one anything except to love one another; for he that loveth the brother [i.e. his neighbour] hath fulfilled law. For Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou

shalt not covet, and if [there be] any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to the neighbour: love therefore [is] law's fulfilment." (Ver. 8-10.) Thus the debt of love is the only one which is legitimate and in honour, good among men and acceptable to the Lord; the debt we should ever be paying, but never can pay off. Grace alone gives the power, but law is fulfilled thereby and indeed only thus. Law had continually claimed but never found it. Those under the law were under obligation but were wholly unable to make it good. Grace revealing Christ not only shows us His perfection and fulness but forms the heart accordingly. The commandments manwards are comprehended in loving one's neighbour; so are those Godward in loving God. Thus, what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of flesh of sin and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; in order that the righteous demand of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. (Rom. 8:3, 4.)

There is another powerful motive for the believer, the nearness of that day when all that is not of Christ must be detected and pass away. "And this, knowing the meet time, that already [it is] time for you to be aroused out of sleep; for now [is] our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, and the day is drawn nigh.67 Let us cast away therefore the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. As in daylight let us walk becomingly, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in chambering and lasciviousness, not in strife and envy; but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and take no forethought for the flesh for lusts." (Ver. 11-14.)

For the earth the Sun of righteousness is not yet risen; for it the believer, though he has Christ the true light for himself, knows that it is night still. Yet daylight has dawned and the morning star arisen in his heart. Hence he sleeps not as do others; or, if he should, judges it as sin, for he is in the secret of the Lord and is charged with the gravest mission of love and holiness in the witnessing of His name as he passes through the world. Man slumbers heedless of danger, spite of solemn and reiterated warning. His evil conscience forbids his crediting the grace which is in God; his self-complacency blinds him to the moral beauty of the dependent and obedient Man, as well as to his own need of such a Saviour and such a salvation as God urges on him; and so he sleeps on till he perishes, waking up too late to the truth he has rejected and the grace he has slighted irreparably then. The believer with his soul saved already looks for a salvation worthy of Christ and of His redemption at His coming; and, though the interval may seem long sometimes, he knows that it is ever growing nearer. The works of darkness are therefore wholly incongruous and must be cast away. In such alas! the Gentiles used to walk when they lived in them; even as the Jews under the law occupied themselves with dead works. But now, dead to them, Christians would put on the armour of light; and though the day be not yet, they as children of it would walk comelily as in its light. What have such to do with revels and drinking bouts, with ways of lewdness and lasciviousness, with strife and envy? Are they not the blessed saints of God in full view of the speedy coming and day of the Lord? How suitable the call to put on the Lord Jesus Christ! As we have Him inwardly our life, may we wear Him outwardly, cherishing Him as our all, and make no provision for the

flesh with a view to lusts. This were to revive the old man already crucified, to have believed and to hope in vain.

65 So it is in A B D F G P, and other authorities, instead of the common τῶν ἁγ. ἔπ. ἀ. τ. κ.

66 Nam etsi tyrannides ac dominationes inustae, quum plenae sint ἀταξίας, non sunt ex ordinata gubernatione: ipsum tamen ius imperii in humani generis salutem a Deo ordinatum est. Itaque quum et bella arcere et caeteris noxiis remedia quaerere liceat, Apostolus magistratuum ius et imperium tanquam humano generi utile, sponte et libenter a nobis suspici et coli iubet. Quas enim Deus infligit poenas hominum peccatis, non proprie ordinationes vocabimus, sed quae consulto media statuit ad legitimum ordinem servandum." (Comment. in loco, i. 173.)

67 Calvin (in loco) understands by "night" ignorance of God, in which lie the unbelieving, insensible to His truth and will; by "light" the revelation of divine truth by which Christ rises like the sun on us "Porro quoniam hic allegorica est, notare operae pretium est quid singulae partes significent. Noctem vocat ignorationem Dei, qua quicunque detinentur, veluti in nocte errant ac dormiunt. Duobus enim istis malis laborant infideles, quia caeci sunt ac stupidi stuporem vero istum paulo post per somnum designat qui est (ut ille dicit) imago mortis. Lucem nominat divinas veritatis revelationem, per quam sol iustitiae Christus nobis exoritur:" but the context proves that "night" here means the dark condition of the world while Christ is absent, "day" when He shall appear the second time for salvation. For the believer it is no longer night in the sense of

ignorance of God, for him the light of day already shines: so it is seen in the sense of realizing the heavenly hope. 2 Peter 1:19.

Romans 14

The apostle now proceeds to treat of a question exceedingly delicate and critical, especially in days and places where the saints consisted of any considerable mixture of converts, brought out of systems so opposed as those of Jews and Gentiles. What to the strong in faith is an indifferent matter may trouble the conscience of those who are weak, as the apostle here distinguishes them. The weak were such Christians as were still shackled in conscience by their old Jewish observances, as to days, meats, etc., by distinctions not moral but ceremonial; the strong were those who saw in their death with Christ the end to all such bondage and enjoyed liberty in the Spirit. Carefully must we guard against the offensive misinterpretation that the weak mean those who tampered with evil. Contrariwise so fearful were they of sin that they were needlessly burdened and thus cherished a conscience not tender only, which is of the utmost moment for all, but scrupulous. But they were in no way lax, which is an evil of the greatest magnitude and only exaggerated, not diminished, by increase of knowledge. The weak were really ignorant of the liberty wherewith Christ has set us free, and hence apt to burden themselves continually where they might have found rest for their souls. They knew not that His yoke is easy and His burden light.

The practice to which brethren are called in such matters is mutual forbearance (Rom. 14, Rom. 15:7), all agreeing in doing what they do to the Lord, spite of difference in judgment of what should be done. Room is thus left for growth in knowledge as the word of God

opens to our faith, while conscience meanwhile is respected. “Now him that is weak in faith receive, not to decisions of reasonings. One believeth that he may eat all things,68 while he that is weak eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another’s servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth; but he shall stand, for God is able to make him stand. One esteemeth69 day above day, while another esteemeth70 every day. Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day to [the] Lord regardeth [it], [and he that regardeth not the day to the Lord regardeth [it] not.]71 And he that eateth to [the] Lord eateth, for he thanketh God; and he that eateth not to [the] Lord eateth not and thanketh God. For none of us liveth to himself, and none to himself dieth; for both if we live, to the Lord we live, and if we die, to the Lord we die. Therefore, both whether we live and whether we die, we are the Lord’s. For to this [end] Christ died and lived,72 that he should rule over both dead and living. And why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou too despise thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God. For it is written, [As] I live, saith [the] Lord, to me shall bend every knee, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each of us shall give account about himself to God.” (Ver. 1-12.)

It is obvious that the Gentiles, as having been outside the law, world be least affected by such scruples. But the apostle puts the difference on a ground far deeper and holier than any such accidental and circumstantial distinction after the flesh. A believer whether a Jew or a Greek might freely realize his deliverance from

questions of meats or days. Not a few Gentiles in those days knew the law and could not but feel the immeasurable superiority of its institutions as compared with the abominations of the heathen. So we might have difficulty in understanding that those regulations given by the true God through Moses to His people could vanish away, null and void for the Christian. Hence therefore we hear of him that is weak in the faith, as the next chapter opens with the conduct which becomes us who are strong in bearing the infirmities of the weak, the apostle identifying himself of course with such as see earthly restrictions at an end. But while grace alone produces strength in the faith, there is far more behind in the grace which produces it, and what savours more characteristically of Christ. The knowledge of faith is good; the love that is of God, of which Christ was the perfect expression, is still better; and he who has that knowledge is above all called to walk in this love, as indeed every one who is born of God must be. The question of eating and days may concern the least things, but it can only be rightly solved by the deepest truth and the richest grace. Both come through Jesus Christ, and are the portion really of the Christian. But how little Christians appreciated Christianity then, how much less now!

Undoubtedly then he who believed that he may eat all things is far more right in thought than he who makes a point of eating herbs. Still there was no ground in such prejudices or in their absence for making little of the weak and for judging the strong; for there was a double danger of fault — to him who knew his liberty, of despising the scrupulous; to him who was scrupulous, of judging censoriously the free. But such weakness is no

more folly than such strength is laxity; even as divine love is always holy while always free. God has received the believer; and this is said emphatically of him who was judged licentious by the weak; as the brethren on the other hand are called to accept, but not to the determination of controversial questions, him that is weak in the faith. How much ignorance the Lord bears with in the most intelligent! “Who art thou that judgest another’s servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.” He beautifully adds (in answer doubtless to many a bitter anticipation of what would be the end of their liberty) “and he shall be made to stand; for the Lord is able to make him stand.” For the strong have no strength of their own, but grace will hold them up. Would we wish it otherwise, if it could be? Do we not delight that all is of Him?

In speaking next of a day regarded above a day the apostle enlarges. Giving up idols the Gentiles saw nothing in one day more than another. The Jew was naturally disposed to cling to old religions associations. But in this the Lord’s day is in no way included; for it rests on the highest sanction of the risen Lord (John 20:19, 20), confirmed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (Acts 20:7; Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10), and is no open matter as to which each is to be fully assured in his own mind. For a Christian not to regard the Lord’s day would be a direct dishonour put on His own special meeting with His disciples on that day, an open slight to that witness of grace and of the new creation (as the sabbath was of the old creation and of law). Only we must bear in mind that, while some lower the ground on which the Lord’s day is observed by reducing it to the mere practice or authority of the church, others unwittingly

foist into Christianity what properly belongs to man and Israel. But the Christian is not a mere son of Adam or Israel. He is called out from both into an incomparably higher relationship. He is dead and risen with Christ; and to this change the Lord's day is not the least striking testimony. On it the Lord proclaimed His brethren set in the same place with His God and Father as Himself risen from the dead. To confound the Lord's day with the sabbath is to confound the gospel with the law, the Christian with the Jew, Christ with Adam. The very absence of a formal enactment in its case is admirably consistent with its nature as contrasted with that day which sanctified from the beginning, entered so prominently into God's dealings with Israel as to be a sign between Him and them.

Were the Lord in view then, it would be seen that the eater eats to Him, for he gives God thanks, and the abstainer abstains to Him and gives God thanks. The truth is that we belong to Him, not to ourselves, either in life or in death. Living or dying, it is to Him: whether one or the other therefore, we are His and this grounded on His dying and living (i.e. in resurrection), the grand doctrine of this epistle and the basis of Christianity. Thus is He Lord of all, dead and living. Hence one must be aware of meddling with His rights. "Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou too despise thy brother?" We are forgetting our place and His, in thus turning either to the right or to the left.

"For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God." To this end is cited Isaiah 45:24: every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us concerning himself shall give account to God." How incongruous for one to judge, for another to

despise! We shall each give an account, and this about ourselves and none else. To bring in Christ truly is the due settlement of every question. To Him all bow that believe, as all unbelievers must bow in that day when He shall judge the quick and dead. The believer comes not into judgment, but shall be manifested there and give account. When those who believe not give account, it is judgment for them, and hence necessarily condemnation; for as they confess no Saviour, so they can no longer hide their sins. What David deprecated by the Spirit (Psalm 143:2), we are assured by our Lord Jesus, will not be our lot. (John 5:24.) Nor does the believer need judgment to vindicate Jesus; the unbeliever does because he refuses His grace. Thus admirably perfect are the ways of God with both, in everyone and in everything glorifying Himself by Jesus Christ our Lord.

From the account we shall render to God each concerning himself, the apostle draws the conclusion, “Let us not then judge one another any more, but judge this rather, not to put a stumbling-block or an occasion of fall before one’s brother” (ver. 13): a principle as true for the strong as for the weak; for though the weak were the more prone to judge, the strong to despise, both are called to make this their determination, if they would not be an occasion of stumbling or offence, whether in act or thought.

Not but that the apostle had a judgment as to these questions. He was clear as to the Lord’s mind, but be would not insist upon this at first, being more careful that the affections should be right, than merely to lay down an accurate judgment; and in truth it is thus only that soundness in determining all questions can be

arrived at. Wrong feelings falsify the judgment, as on the other hand, if the eye be single, the whole body shall be full of light. When Christ is the object, the path will be unmistakably clear. Hence we need One to guard our hearts, and One only can, and He has called us to liberty, but we need to watch that this liberty be never perverted to license for ourselves any more than to slight others. Love is the bond of perfectness. Here the apostle says, “I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing [is] unclean of itself; except to him that reckoneth anything to be unclean, to him [it is] unclean.” It is no question now of meats, in which they who walked were not profited. It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. The Lord Jesus is also the truth, and has put everything in the light of God. But conscience must be heeded, and the strong must be careful not to weaken or wound another’s conscience, whatever be his own conviction. “For if because of meat thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer according to love.” But love is the energy of the divine nature in which the Spirit guides, not in self-will. “Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died.” The Holy Spirit speaks according to the tendency of our conduct. Anything that would stumble another tends to destroy. What a misjudgment to insist upon liberty as to meat so as to nullify the value of Christ’s death as far as we can! Grace may, and no doubt does, deliver, but our misuse of liberty remains no less guilty in the sight of God. “Let not then your good be evil spoken of, for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” This is a weighty practical truth, and we need, especially if we have knowledge, to guard against pressing anything beyond those who are but ill-instructed. It was not so that Christ

walked and that God dealt with our own souls. And now that Christ has revealed God, it is of the deepest consequence that we insist only on what is grace and what makes for edification.

The reader will observe how “the kingdom of God” is used here, not so much dispensationally as morally. Indeed it is so where the phrase occurs in Matthew, who alone also uses the well-known formula “the kingdom of heaven.” Only the latter phrase invariably occurs in a dispensational sense, and means that state of things where the heavens rule now that Jesus is cast out from the earth; first, while He is hid in God; secondly, when He comes again in the clouds of heaven with power and glory. But the kingdom of God might be said to be already there, already come upon them, when He, by the Spirit of God, cast out demons. The kingdom of heaven, contrariwise, could not be said to have come till He went on high. Thus the kingdom of God might be used where the kingdom of heaven occurs but also as here where it could not be. The apostle insists that the kingdom of God cannot be lowered to that which perishes with the using; it is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, the inward spirit and practical power of the Christian. “For he that in this serves Christ [is] acceptable to God and approved of men.” It is walking in the Spirit, in short, the true guard against fulfilling any lust of the flesh. “Against righteousness and peace and joy there is no law.” “Let us therefore pursue the things of peace and the things of mutual edification.” God Himself is the God of peace, and the Lord is Himself the Lord of peace who gives us peace continually in every way. Knowledge puffs up, love alone builds up. And as He builds His church infallibly upon the rock, the

confession of His own name, so we, by the godly use of His name, are called to build up one another. We can understand therefore how impressively the apostle again urges, “Do not for the sake of meat undo the work of God.” “All things indeed [are] clean.” This is freely allowed to the strong, but “it is evil to the man that eateth with stumbling.” This is the danger for the weak, and love would lead the strong to consider the weak, assuredly not to help the enemy against them. “[It is] right not to eat meat nor to drink wine [nor anything] in which thy brother stumbleth or is offended or is weak.” (Ver. 21.) There might be various degrees of danger; but the only thing that becomes the saint in this is to seek his brother’s good. “Hast thou faith? have [it] to thyself before God: blessed he that judgeth not himself in what he alloweth.” To be strong in faith then is right: only it should be conjoined with the energy of love for those who are weak, guarding against all boast also in that which is received by grace from God. “But he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because [it is] not of faith; but whatever [is] not of faith is sin:” a maxim often strained in ancient and modern times to pronounce upon unbelievers and the worthlessness of every act in their lives. But this is clearly not in question here; rather is it a matter between Christians, some of whom saw their liberty, others being still in bondage. It is a great favour to enjoy the liberty of Christ in the smallest matters of every-day life; but he who has entered into this is so much the more bound to consider the believer who is still hampered with doubts as to this or that. To imitate liberty without believing its ground would be to endanger the work of God. Grace respects the conscience of him that doubts, and instead of trifling with scruples would rather seek to lead into the due

application of Christ to the case by faith: without it all is vain or worse. “Whatever is not of faith is sin.”

68 Calvin’s criticism on the clause clearly demonstrates his own incompetence for questions of this sort. “In diversa lectione quid sequitus fuerit Erasmus, non video. Mutilam enim sententiam reddidit, quum plena sit in verbis Pauli; et pro articulo relativo improprie posuit: Alius quidem credit. Nec illud asperum aut coactum videri debet, quod infinitivum pro imperativo accipio; quoniam ista loquendi formula Paulo usitatissima est.” There is no difference of reading here; and Erasmus is as right as Calvin is wrong. “Qui credit vescatur quibusvis” is a version so unfaithful that even Beza must needs agree substantially with Erasmus against his leader. The Vulgate (“credit se manducare”) is an instance that what seems most literal may be erroneous and absurd.

69 Literally, “judgeth.” The word means originally to pick or choose, hence to decide, sentence, prefer, or even condemn.

70 Ibid.

71 The bracketed clause does not appear in A B C D E F G, besides cursives, Vulg., Cop., Aeth., with various Greek and Latin fathers, 72 The common reading has no serious support of manuscripts. There is much discrepancy in the copies; but the best text is what I have here translated.

Romans 15

Romans 1573

The apostle identifies himself with the strong, as indeed might have been gathered from the latter part of Romans 14:14-23. He had no difficulty himself as to any creature of God; nevertheless be maintains the claims of conscience inviolable in the weakest of the saints, and, as we have seen, is anxious to settle, not so much questions, as souls. He puts them all in direct responsibility to Christ as Lord and in view of the judgment-seat. Nevertheless the judgment he had received by grace he does not withhold. Having stated it however, he returns to the exercise of love. It would be wretched and a mere triumph for the enemy to make things in themselves indifferent an occasion of stumbling and of sin. “But we the strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves.” (Ver. l.) To press our own convictions is neither the divine nor the human way to convince: not the human, because will only provokes will, and defers the end we most desire; not the divine, because it is not the way of faith either on our part or on theirs whom we hurry. How much better to walk in faith and leave God room to act! He can and will give efficacy to His own grace and truth. “Let each of us please his neighbour for good unto edification.” (Ver. 2.) Love is better than knowledge, seeking not its own things but those of others. “For the Christ also pleased not himself, but even as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon me.” (Ver. 3.) Such was the perfection of devoted love in Christ. He identified

Himself with God even as He was God. The zeal of His Father's house ate Him up, and as the image of the invisible God He bore the brunt of all that touched God. How wondrous that we should now stand in a similar place! Yet it is most consistent with the grace which has made Him our life and given us the family interests in all respects.

Thus, if we are called to be imitators of God as dear children and walk in love even as Christ loved us, so also to bear the world's enmity against God, as feeling for Him and with Him in the midst of a gainsaying generation. By grace we are one with Christ In practice too we are to cherish His portion here below; and thus, what the Old Testament says of Christ, the New says of the Christian. Hence all scripture is not confounded but interwoven, and every scripture becomes of the deepest interest and profit, to us above all who are brought into such an identity of place with Christ. "For as many things as were written before were written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope." (Ver. 4.) How gracious is God and how rich His provision! We might have been unprepared and disheartened otherwise. We are here shown that the path of love is the path of Christ, and that patience as well as comfort are meant to be the pathway in which we have our hope. Christ was the perfect pattern of all patience. Near but how far off, yet comparatively nearest to Him, come the apostles, notably Paul himself. May we seek this. It is the proof of power, and in the most excellent way. In the world as it is, it is ever called for, in heaven no longer needed. "May the God of endurance and comfort," says he, "give you to be of the

same mind one toward another according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one accord, with one mouth, glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ver. 5, 6.) If Christ Jesus engages the thoughts and mind of each, there will be the same mind, and the God who made Him the channel, as He was the only full expression of endurance and comfort in a world full of misery, can give us to glorify Him thus. Oneness of mind or feeling is an illusion otherwise. Such unanimity glorifies the creature, the first man, not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We want no other motive, no object but Christ. This alone glorifies God. "Wherefore receive one another, even as the Christ also received you unto [the] glory of God." Certainly Christ did not receive souls for settling points of difference. He who died and rose for us is above the controversies and the scruples and the self-importance of men. Our best wisdom is to worship and serve Him, who glorified God here below and is now glorified by Him on high. But His glory is a safeguard no less than a motive: for, if it blot out by its brightness the questions which are apt to vex Christians in the inverse ratio of their intrinsic importance, it displays the true significance of what is involved in that which otherwise might seem of no moment. Who without it could have conceived that the truth of the gospel was compromised by Peter's no longer eating with Gentile believers, after certain came to Antioch from James? Who would have written so peremptorily to the elect lady and her children if one sought to visit them who brought not the doctrine of Christ? To receive such would have been to God's dishonour as distinctly as saints are to be received to His glory. Christ, not this question or that, abides the only unerring test. To receive one in His name is to

God’s glory, as surely as to reject those who plead that they are Christians so as to deny the Christ of God.

“For74 I say that Christ became a minister of circumcision for [the] truth of God to confirm the promises of the fathers, and that the Gentiles should glorify God for mercy, according as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among [the] Gentiles, and will sing praises to thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, Gentiles, with His people; and again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and land him, all ye peoples. And again Esaias saith, There shall be the root of Jesse, and one that ariseth to rule over the Gentiles: on him shall [the] Gentiles hope.” (Ver. 8-12.) It is plain here that we approach the same twofold line as we have seen from the beginning, where Jesus is viewed is Son of David according to flesh, Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection of the dead. He had been made a minister of circumcision for God’s truth in order to confirm the promises made to the fathers; but also that the Gentiles should glorify God for mercy. For the one there were definite covenant grounds on which God entered with Israel: not so with the others, who were dealt with in pure grace. To some the latter may seem vague and insecure as compared with the former; but this only because God is feebly known. In fact His grace flows without limit when the people who had the promises rejected Him in whom alone they can be made good; and as there is no limit to the mercy of God, so there is no question of claim, competency, or desert in our own. Thus, while it did not become the Gentile believers to slight the Lord’s connection in flesh with Israel, it was of great moment for the Jewish believers to note that the ancient oracles testified of that further

outgoing in mercy when the truth was overlooked by, and unbearable to, self-complacent unbelief. The Psalms, the Law, and the Prophets bore concurrent witness to that mercy toward Gentiles which the Jew found it so hard to allow, save on conditions exalting to the first man instead of to the praise of the Second. None goes so far as to teach the one body of Christ in which all distinctions should disappear. This was the mystery kept hid from the ages and ages. But prophecy did declare mercy to Gentiles, and joy with Israel, and Messiah their object of hope as well as Governor. The first citation is general; the second joins them in gladness with Israel; the third asserts the universality of the nations' praise; the fourth speaks distinctly of Messiah's ruling Gentiles and of their hope founded on Him. The apostle makes no comment: the suggestion was plain, the bearing on the actual state at Rome full of instruction to such as had ears to hear, clenching his previous exhortation. He was led only to add the prayer, "And may the God of peace fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope by [the] power of [the] Holy Spirit." (Ver. 13.) Thus He who saves the believers already justified to have peace with Himself through our Lord Jesus Christ is entreated as "the God of peace" to fill them with all joy and peace in believing. Settling points of conscience however wisely could effect no such result; whereas, when hearts are thus filled with divinely-given happiness, not only do questions disappear without controversy, but the power of the Holy Spirit vouchsafes abounding hope, instead of a fleshly contest between the past prestige of the Jew and the present privileges of Gentile saints. He who goes forward with the revealed future in view will desire that whatever he does now, even in such matters as eating or drinking, may be to

God’s glory, not occupying those who are to share it with debates, but diffusing the joy and peace which fill himself in believing.

The application we have seen of the Old Testament to the actual call of Gentiles as well as Jews is the transition to a delicate, dignified, and withal affectionate apology, if such it may be called, which the apostle gives next. He explains why he had thus written to the Christians in Rome, and why he had not yet visited them, intimates what was in his heart as regards his work in relation to them, and asks their prayers, adding his own.

“But I am persuaded, my brethren, even I myself, concerning you, that yourselves also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. But I have written more boldly to you [brethren] in part, as putting you in mind because of the grace given to me by God that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles, carrying on sacrificially the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by [the] Holy Spirit. I have then my glorying in Christ Jesus in the things that pertain to God.” (Ver. 14-17.)

Thus the apostle lets these saints know, though a stranger to them as a company, his own personal assurance, spite of his strong expostulation and earnest caution throughout the epistle, of that which grace had already wrought among them in goodness and knowledge as well as in ability to admonish one another. As the apostle John tells the babes in his first epistle, he had written, not because they did not know the truth, but because they did. Yet he wrote the more boldly in

part as reminding them, because grace had given him to be an official servant of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. They therefore came within his domain; but what tender consideration of others, what confidence in the precious fruits of grace and truth, and what a contrast with that haughty assumption which was most of all to go forth from that very city when at a later day she should sit as a harlot queen and make men drunk with the wine of her fornication!

It will be observed that there are energetic figures employed here, as where the apostle describes himself as λειτουργὸν Χ. Ἰ., and yet more, ἱερουργοῦντα τὸ εὐ. τ. Θ., and again, ἵνα γ. ἡ προσφορὰ τ. ἐθ. We can easily understand how ritualism catches at such phrases to eke out the semblance of a sacerdotal character for a servant of the Lord Jesus. But it is vain. Far more distinctly and with less ambiguity does the Spirit assert a priestly place for every Christian as such, as we may see not only in words but in the standing and functions to which all are called expressly; as in Hebrews 10:19-22, 1 Peter 2:5-9, Revelation 1:6. The apostle once more magnifies his office; and if the Roman saints felt his weighty words, they must think of him as a public servant of Christ Jesus, occupied with presenting the Gentiles, that it might be an offering acceptable to God; as Aaron of old offered the Levites before Jehovah for an offering of the sons of Israel, the Christians being sanctified by the Holy Spirit as the Levites were by birth and ceremonial rites. The truth is that in this context the apostle uses λειτουργῆσαι of the Gentile believers serving the Jewish saints in carnal things, as he has λειτουργία in speaking of the service of the Corinthian and Philippian saints. (2 Cor. 9:12, Phil. 2:17, 25, 30.)

Hence there is not the smallest ground for confounding ministry with priesthood, or for the notion that scripture admits of a sacerdotal caste between the Christian and God. On the other hand no intelligent believer will weaken either the perpetuity of christian ministry, or the extraordinary place of apostles, above all of him who was apostle not from men, nor through man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead. Paul then had his ground of boasting in Christ Jesus in the things regarding God.

“For I will not dare to speak of any of these things which Christ did not effect by me for obedience of Gentiles by word and deed, in [the] power of signs and wonders, in [the] power of [the] Holy Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about Illyricum I have fully set forth the gospel of Christ; and so zealously aiming to preach the gospel, not where Christ hath been named that I might not build upon another’s foundation, but according as it is written, To whom it hath not been told concerning him, they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand.” (Ver. 18-21.)

Here he comes to matters of fact and how far the mighty offering of the Gentiles had been waved before the Lord. In a few pithy words and with the most genuine modesty he sums up his life of labour in the gospel. Truly it was Christ who effected it by Paul in the power of the Spirit. His principle was to preach Christ where His name was unknown, according to the word of Jehovah in Isaiah 52:15. The Roman saints then could understand why he had been labouring elsewhere rather than in the great city where from the beginning of the gospel some seeds of the risen corn of the land had taken root and borne fruit. Labouring in the vast field where none had been

borne he adds, “wherefore also I have been often hindered from coming unto you; but now having no longer place in these regions and having a longing to come unto you for many years whenever I go unto Spain; for I hope when I go through to see you and by you to be sent forward thither if first I be in part filled with you [i.e., your company]. But now I go unto Jerusalem ministering to the saints; for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a certain contribution for the poor of the saints that [are] in Jerusalem. For they have been pleased, and they are their debtors; for if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they ought also in fleshly things to minister to them. Having finished this then and sealed to them this fruit, I will go away by you unto Spain; and I know that on coming unto you I shall come in fulness of Christ’s blessing.”

There is a time for all and a place for each, of which the Lord only is absolute judge; but He does not fail to give the sense of it to His servants: according to the measure of their spirituality they will gather it. The object which the Master had in view through the apostle being now achieved, he had no longer place in the East; and the old longing to visit the saints at Rome, often hindered, came up again when he proposed to go onward to Spain. For, it will be observed, Spain, not Rome, was the point sought, doubtless according to the measure of the rule which God apportioned him. His eye was on the regions beyond, but he hoped by the way to see the Roman saints and by them to be sent forward thither “if first I be in part filled with your company,” for he will not allow that any time could exhaust his love for them or enjoyment of converse with them: hence he says, if I be in part “filled with you.” Meanwhile he was engaged in

an errand of compassion for the poor of the saints at Jerusalem. The saints of Macedonia and Achaia (at that time the two provinces into which the Romans long before separated Greece politically) had raised means to help their brethren; and this the apostle treats rather as a debt of love than its simple outflow. If the Gentiles were partakers in the spiritual privileges of the Jews, ought they not to remember their poor saints in fleshly things? They were pleased, he repeats, but they are their debtors. Grace pleads powerfully, for it sees with single eye and desires the reciprocation of love which exercises and unites the heart in all that are of God. The least things as well as the greatest afford the materials; and he who does not think a deacon's service beneath an apostle was inspired to write of all for our edification, assured of a fulness of Christ's blessing for saints at Rome when he came. Whether he attained his desire to visit Spain may be a question, as many have doubted it, though one may not be prepared to affirm it. Much depends on the point so much contested of a second imprisonment in Rome and that which filled up the interval of the apostle's free labours after the first. Certain it is that he came to Rome, when he did, differently from his expectations, a prisoner of Jesus Christ; but was it with less blessing?

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed." (Ver. 30-32.)

It is sweet to find the earnest desire of the great apostle for the prayers of the saints, even of those he had never visited. But the knowledge of Christ, whilst it fills the soul with happiness, knits us up with all that are His, and enhances in our eyes the value of their prayers, always effectual on the part of godly men of all ages. Again, the Spirit, as He comes the witness and power of divine love in its perfection, so produces unselfish working of affection Godward as well as toward man. He sought their striving together with him in prayers to God for him: first, that he might be saved from those that believe not in Judea, ever implacable toward him who was once a leader of their unbelief, now a champion of the grace they hated; secondly, that his ministry for Jerusalem might be acceptable to the saints, for alas! the unbelief of believers, especially the Jewish ones, wrought deeply against the apostle, and none the less because he loved them so well and laboured for the relief of their need, in which this ministry of his consisted (Gal. 2); and both these, in order that he might come in joy to the saints at Rome by the will of God, "that I may be refreshed with you" (not merely you by me) added and most truly felt. How forcibly he closes this with "May the God of peace [be] with you all. Amen." (Ver. 33.) To seek the peaceful blessing of others is the happy pathway where the God of peace is with us. May we and all saints have Him thus!

73 It is well known that between Romans 14 and 15 certain old editors inserted (according to the testimony of many copies, versions, and fathers) the doxology of Romans. 16:25-27. It was not surprising that Matthaei, etc., keeping close to Constantinopolitan manuscripts, adhered to them in this. But there is no sufficient reason

to disregard the weightiest witnesses of the ancient text, confirmed as it is by the internal evidence. The Sinai, the Vatican (1209), the Parisian palimpsest, the Clermont, and the St. Germain Greco-Latin Uncials, with several good cursives (16. 80. 137. 176.), the Vulgate, Peschito Svriac, Coptic, etc., give the passage at the close of the epistle. The Alexandrian and the Porphyrian with some other authorities have it in both positions, a corrector of the Clermont MS in neither; while Boerner's Uncial, now in Dresden, leaves a vacant space at the end of Romans 14 — the Augian of Cambridge has a similar vacancy at the end of Romans 16; as opposed to Passionei's Cod. Angel. (L, now belonging to the Augustinian monks at Rome), backed up by about two hundred cursives, etc. The insertion here is resisted by the connection of the chapters; it is perfectly suitable at the end. The first seven verses of our chapter conclude the subject under discussion, with five transitional verses following which prepare the way for the notices of his ministry among the Gentiles to the end of the chapter.

74 Much the weightiest authorities give

γάρ, not

δέ like the received text, which breaks or alters the connection.

Romans 16

Apostolic salutations follow. Not that the apostle had been to Rome, still less had he wrought there, but this the more illustrates the principle. There are such links of labour, and a special tie with the saints to which one is blessed of God. But the divine bond of love is both deeper and larger than that which is ordinarily recognized by christian men. Love is of God and goes out to all who are of God, yea, beyond them, in the overflowing of divine grace that seeks to save the lost. Besides, the apostle fully realizes his relationship as to the letting out of his heart among Gentiles, and so, as writing to the Christians in this city, the metropolis of the world, the wisdom of God had taken care that, boastful as it was, and far more boastful as it was going to be when the church utterly sunk into the world's ways and desires and ignorance of God, they should not truly boast of an apostolic foundation. The message of grace in redemption was carried to Rome, but it would seem rather by indirect means than by the express visit of any among the more known labourers of the Lord, still less by an apostle. That it was founded or governed by Peter is a mere fable, resting on no evidence save of fathers, whose statement as to facts in those early days is egregiously unreliable, and openly at variance with the inspired record. Peter was apostle of the circumcision, whether in Palestine or out of it, and where we do hear of his work outside, it is with the believers from among the Jews, according to the arrangement agreed on (doubtless by the Spirit of God) with the apostle Paul who had the apostolate of the uncircumcision; and this very epistle gives unquestionable evidence that Paul had

not as yet visited Rome, though he fully recognizes the saints already there. It is possible those who first carried the gospel thither may have been the Romans sojourning in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:10.) Certainly there were then dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, pious men, from every nation of those under heaven, and one cannot doubt that their visits or return or even communications to their own lands would help to spread the gospel far and wide.

However this may be, the apostle goes into remarkable detail in his salutations to those at Rome. “Now I commend to you Phoebe our sister, being minister75 of the assembly that is in Cenchreae, that ye may receive her in [the] Lord, worthily of the saints, and assist her in whatever matter she hath need of you; for she also hath been a helper of many and of myself.” (Ver. 1, 2.) We know from elsewhere that elderly females, especially widows, held a position official or quasi-official in which they rendered service to the assembly where they lived. A deaconess such as Phoebe was distinct from these widows; but the one illustrates the other: the value of this would be specially felt of old before Christianity had vindicated the place of women, and this too, particularly in the east as well as in dissolute Greece. Indeed at all times and in all places there are functions to be discharged from time to time more fittingly by a godly female rather than by any man, however pure-minded or elderly. Phoebe was one of these in the assembly of the port of Corinth — Cenchreae. As she had thus been honoured of the Lord and recognized by His chief servants in the ordinary circle of her christian duty, so the apostle now introduces her thus to the saints at Rome that they might receive her in a becoming sort,

and this, not merely in spiritual things but in whatever business she might need their help, for she too, as be affectionately adds, had been a helper of many and of himself.

“Salute Prisca76 and Aquila my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus (which [οἵτινες77] for my life staked their own neck, to whom [οἷς78] not, I only give thanks, but also all the assemblies of the Gentiles), and the assembly at their house.” (Ver. 3-5.) Here the apostle stamps them as his fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, the more carefully because Aquila and he had wrought in the same trade of tent-makers; but the natural occupation disappears, however rightly noticed in its own place. Grace acknowledges this converted godly Jew and his wife, not only as workers in Christ Jesus, but as fellow-workers with the apostle. Nor this alone: they had for his life risked their own neck, and thus earned the thankfulness not of himself only, but of all the assemblies of the Gentiles too. Further, he salutes the assembly also in their house. The trade of tent-maker, if pursued at Rome, would naturally furnish him with a large room, where not a few might assemble. We know that for a considerable time after this Christians were in the habit of so meeting, as is shown for example in the answer of Justin M. to the prefect Rusticus.

“Salute Epaenetus, my beloved, who is [the] firstfruits of Asia for Christ.” Achaia in the received text is wrong. The household of Stephanus were the first-fruits there, as we know from 1 Corinthians 16:16. The apostle could not say that Epaenetus devoted himself in an orderly way to the service of the saints like the Achaian household; but at any rate he is not without honour in the Lord nor without the apostle’s special affection.

“Salute Maria” (or Mary; the reading differs), “who laboured much for you.” (Ver. 6.) It seems a question whether it be not us. Much as the apostle might value this, his loving heart delighted in her abundant labour for them.

“Salute Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and fellow captives which [οἵτινες] are of note among the apostles, who [

οἵ] also were before me in Christ.” (Ver. 7.) We see how the apostle delights in noticing every distinctive form of service, relation, or fellowship.

“Salute Amplias,79 my beloved in [the] Lord. Salute Urban, our fellow-workman in Christ; and Stachys, my beloved.” (Ver. 8, 9.) The reader will notice the shades of difference which love marks; for being unselfish it can see clearly, and promotes love and honour among the saints, being above the unworthy pettiness which disparages what we may not have ourselves or like not others to have.

“Salute Apelles,80 the approved in Christ. Salute those that belong to Aristobulus. Salute Herodion my kinsman. Salute those belonging to Narcissus that are in [the] Lord.” (Ver. 10, 11.) Still do we find love, but it is discriminating no less than unfeigned. He who had stood trial for Christ is mentioned with honour; but the kinsman of Paul is not forgotten. He would conciliate his brethren after the flesh by thus naming one who was a Christian. Nor are certain great names without witnesses for Christ, even if Narcissus be not the famous freedman of Claudius executed some few years before the epistle was written. (Suet. Claud. 28; Tac. Ann. xiii. l.)

“Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, that laboured in [the] Lord, Salute Persis the beloved, which (ἥτις) laboured much in [the] Lord. Salute Rufus, the elect in [the] Lord, and his mother and mine.” (Ver. 12, 13.) Those christian sisters are here graciously named, but with due meed, those as labouring, this as having laboured much in the Lord: the two former as at present in the work; the latter for her past and great service. Christ opens the heart and mouth in the fullest recognition of work for His name; but He purges our dim eyes also. Nor had He forgotten Simon the passing Cyrenian, who, as he came from the field, was compelled to carry the cross by the mob of soldiers and others as they led Jesus out to His crucifixion. The Lord repaid with interest the burden of that day. Compare Mark 15:21. Rufus is here before us “the elect in [the] Lord,” and his mother who had been as such to the apostle. Salvation came to that house.

“Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brethren with them. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints with them.” (Ver. 14, 15.) The names of these Christians follow without specific notice, and among them one to whom many have attributed the allegory of the “Shepherd,” read in the assemblies of the third and fourth centuries. But Origen and Eusebius err in their identification; for Hermas the author wrote about a century after the Epistle to the Romans was written, his brother Pius being then bishop of Rome.

“Salute one another with an holy kiss; all the assemblies of Christ greet you.” (Ver. 16.) The Roman saints were enjoined to manifest mutual love in the Lord; and the apostle sends greeting from all81 the assemblies of Christ. Who knew their minds and hearts better? He

who wrought and wrote by Paul; He would keep the saints in the interchange of true and warm but holy affection in His grace.

It is not all, however, the joy of love in these concluding messages of the apostle. The largeness of his heart had delighted to take note of whatsoever things were true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report; if there was any virtue, if there was any praise, he thought on these things in writing to the saints at Rome, and inscribed a memorial of Christ on each name which came before his spirit. But there were other things very different, men of a temper and state diverse from those and wholly opposed to Christ. It needed, however, the power of the Spirit to detect these in their beginnings, and to descry both the character and the end of all such ways. For I cannot accept the notion of Olshausen, that the persons, against whom the apostle warns the saints in Rome, had not yet made their appearance there. The circumstance that it is only at the end of the epistle that we find a short admonition against divisions couched in general language, so far from being decisive, is no evidence at all that the persons in question did not actually exist at Rome. Such is not the way of the Spirit of God. He may speak prophetically, but He starts from an actual ground-work of hostility to the Lord and of danger to the saints. Naturally the evil would develop itself worse and worse, but in the epistles especially, as in scripture generally, there was moral mischief before His eyes at that time, which awakened His care for the saints, as to which He gives them admonition.

“But I beseech you, brethren, to consider those that make the82 divisions and the83 stumbling-blocks contrary to the doctrine which ye have learnt, and turn

away from them; for such serve not our Lord Christ but their own belly, and by their plausibility and fair-speaking deceive the hearts of the guileless. For your obedience has reached unto all: as regards you therefore I rejoice, but I wish you to be wise unto the good and simple unto the evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with you." (Ver. 17-20.)

Insubjection of spirit is a dangerous thing among those who teach in public or in private, and quite as much in private only as in public. It is truth severed from Christ and that consciousness of divine authority and of dependence on grace which we all need to keep us right, most of all perhaps those who teach. Few men are in such danger of mental activity in divine things; and this not merely because of self-importance on their own part, but from the desire to satisfy the craving for what is new among the saints themselves. The excitement of novelty is apt to carry away the natural mind, especially among the weak, to the hurt of all, both teachers and taught. Divine revelation, not human thoughts about it, alone secures the glory of Christ and the well-being of souls. As the Holy Spirit wrote it to this end, so He alone can make it good in practice. Mental activity gathers round its own source and forms a school; truth wielded by the Spirit judges the flesh in its most specious form, nourishes the new man, and builds up the body of Christ to God's glory.

The brethren then are besought to beware of such as made these divisions and stumbling-blocks. What they had already learnt would serve as a test for these piquant statements which pampered nature under the show of utterly condemning it. Even asceticism is not

the denial of self, still less is it Christ. The seemingly opposite snare of doing good in the world on a grand scale by the truth is yet more evidently apart from the cross and contrary to it. Whatever be the shape of contrariety to the doctrine we have been taught, the duty of saints is to turn away; for they that are such are slaves not to our Lord Christ, but to their own belly: so contemptuously does the Holy Spirit characterize their work, let it be ever so refined in appearance, let it ever so loudly boast of its own superior spirituality. But not he who commendeth himself, but whom the Lord commendeth. Still the hearts of the guileless are in danger of being deceived by the plausibility and fair-speaking of these makers of parties, and are warned accordingly. For the spirit of obedience which those teachers lacked exposed them with the taught if not accompanied with vigilance; I say not suspiciousness, for this is an unmitigated evil and the fruit of a corrupt heart, not the holy action of faith, jealous for the glory of the Lord and the good of saints.

If therefore those at Rome were conspicuous for their obedience, it was only a reason for the apostle not to weaken that which was truly of God, but to guard it by what is equally so. “As regards (or, over) you I rejoice; but I wish you to be wise as to the good and simple as to the evil.” Such is the divine remedy, even as our Lord Himself put it figuratively in Matthew 10:16; combining the prudence of the serpent with the harmlessness (or simplicity, it is the same word) of the dove. Human wisdom seeks to guard itself by a thorough knowledge of the world and of all evil ways. This is not the wisdom that cometh down from above, but earthly, natural, devilish. The wisdom from above is first pure, then

peaceful, gentle, yielding, full of mercy and good fruits, uncontentious and unfeigned. It needs not to cultivate acquaintance with evil; it knows good in Christ, it is satisfied and adores. It hears and loves the shepherd's voice; a stranger's voice it knows not, and will not follow. And this, as it suits the simplest soul brought to the knowledge of God, it may be today, so it alone becomes the wisest, because it alone glorifies the Lord, as indeed it is the only path of safety for us, being such as we are and in such a world. For in it evil as yet has the upper hand, though the believer has the secret of victory over it, already vanquished in the cross of Christ. Still nothing as yet appears of that victory as a whole, whatever be the testimony of faith, at that time too not without external signs to unbelief; but in the midst of the conflict the heart is comforted and cheered, for the God of peace shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly. The first revelation of grace may to our impatience seem to linger, but faith can rest upon the word "shortly." Faithful is He who hath called us, and spoken it, who also will do it. This draws out afresh the prayer of the apostle, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you:" they needed it, and so do we.

The apostle then sends the salutations of others around him.

"There saluteth you Timothy my work-fellow, and Lucius and Jason and Sosipater my kinsmen." (Ver. 21.) Faith wrought at all times the first link with God for a soul outside of this fallen world, and this is brought into greater simplicity and strength than ever by the gospel. But the gospel produces a fellowship of heart, little if at all known before it. Hence the place and moment of these mutual salutations.

“I Tertius, who wrote the epistle, salute you in [the] Lord.” (Ver. 22.) The epistle to the Romans was not, like that to the Galatians, written by the apostle’s own hand, but dictated to an amanuensis, as indeed was the ordinary practice of Paul. (Cf. 2 Thess. 3:17.) Love however gave him who wrote it down a place for christian greeting.

“There saluteth you Gaius, the host of me and the whole church. There saluteth you Erastus the steward of the city, and Quartus the brother. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with you all. Amen.” In Gaius we see how Christ becomes the spring of large and holy hospitality. Erastus is the witness that conscience is not forced or hurried; not only was he the steward of the city, but he is expressly so described in scripture. Such a position in heathen times especially would expose him who held it to difficulties and dangers. But christian conduct should ever flow from the intelligent sense of our relationship to God and of the claims of His truth and grace. In order to this, room must be left for growth and the exercise of right and godly feeling. Quartus has his place in scripture as “the brother,” traditionally, of course, one of the seventy, as most of the unknown names here are fabled to have been, and afterwards bishop of Berytus. These salutations too the apostle seals with the same benediction and, if possible, more fervently, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

Even so he cannot close this most comprehensive epistle without a burst of adoration, which serves the important purpose of linking on this unfolding of the gospel in its simplest elements, its practical results, its connection with the dispensations of God, and the duties

consequent upon its reception, with the revelation of the mystery given in some of his later epistles, especially to the Ephesians and Colossians.

“Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to [the] revelation of [the] mystery kept in silence in times of the ages but now manifested and by prophetic scriptures according to commandment of the everlasting God made known for obedience of faith unto all the Gentiles, to God only wise, through Jesus Christ, to whom [be] the glory unto the ages of the ages (or, for ever), Amen.” (Ver. 25-27.)

To the Roman saints the apostle does not develop the mystery. The gospel of the glory of Christ he proclaims to others. (2 Cor. 4.) Each aspect has its appropriate application. The heavenly side is not for all the most wholesome. Here they had a more primary and fundamental need, and this he has here supplied by unfolding to their souls the bearing of Christ’s death and resurrection on their wants, first as sinners, then as saints. But the heavenly privileges of the Church are only alluded to, not set out. There is a season for everything, and the highest truth is not always the most important for the exigencies of souls. To the Ephesians he could disclose all the heavenly privileges of the body of Christ. To the Colossians, just because they were in danger of turning aside for philosophy and earthly ordinances of a religious character (for both snares were laid for their feet), he could and did bring out the glory of Christ as the head of the church, and indeed His divine fulness in all respects, but it was meat in due season to feed the Roman saints rather on Christ dead and risen. However, here at the close, he alludes to a

mystery as to which silence had been kept in the course of ages, but now manifested and by means of prophetic scriptures made known unto all the Gentiles in order to obedience of faith. Carefully remark that the true word and thought is “prophetic scriptures,” that is, not “the scriptures of the prophets” or Old Testament, but those of the New Testament, for we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Paul’s writings, for instance, are prophetic scriptures, and in some of these the mystery of Christ and the church is fully made known, not merely touched on as in Romans 12:5. This is according to commandment of the everlasting God; for the mystery, if the last in revelation, is first in purpose. Between them lay the times of the ages during which creature responsibility was fully tested and proved wanting; then, grounded upon the cross of Christ, exalted to heaven, is revealed the mystery, and this is during the days, not of the law given by Moses, but of gospel mission to all the Gentiles for obedience of faith, wherein God proves Himself alone wise, no less than good, through Christ Jesus, to whom be the glory for ever. Amen.

The temporal ways of God were bound up with Israel and the earth. The mystery attaches to heaven and eternity, though the message of it is sent out to all the nations.

75 It may be interesting to some to hear that Pliny, in his letter to the emperor Trajan, speaks of two maids who were ministers of the church, using the Latin term exactly corresponding to the Greek of the apostle.

76 Such seems the best reading here, 1 Corinthians 16:19, and in 2 Timothy 4:19. In Acts 18:2, 18, 26, it is rather Priscilla, the diminutive form, but the same name.

77 The reader will notice, as has been often done, the difference of character and fact in verse 4, and also 7.

78 Ibid.

79 The Sinaitic, Alexandrian, Vatican and others read

Ἀμπλιᾶτον. A similar remark applies to this probably as to Prisca and Priscilla.

80 Origen suggests, without the smallest reason save the similarity of the name and the distinction attached to it, that this may have been Apollos! I think it right to name such facts that the reader may know the guesswork of these ecclesiastical writers even as early as the third century.

81 Copyists seem to have regarded the apostle's word as overstrong; and have tried to soften by omitting πᾶσαι "all." But he could speak from a large sphere without hesitation.

82 The actuality of the mischief at work in Rome would seem to be confirmed by the article in this place. Had it been merely characteristic tendency or a possible contingency not yet arrived, I think that the construction would have been anarthrous.

83 Ibid.