

THE MEANING OF "RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD"  
IN THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

IN the Exposition of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, contributed A.D. 1890 to the *Pulpit Commentary*, the present writer propounded and supported a view of the essential meaning of *δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ*, as used in the Epistle, differing from the current one adopted by previous commentators. The view was subsequently taken up with some reservation by the Rev. Dr. Robertson, principal of Bishop Hatfield's Hall Durham, in a paper contributed by him to *The Thinker* in November, 1893. More recently, Professor Sanday and Mr. Arthur Headlam, in their volume on the Epistle to the Romans for the *International Critical Commentary*, allude to these "two protests, quite recently raised" against what had "seemed for some time past to be almost an accepted exegetical tradition," saying, further, that "there can be little doubt that the protest is justified; not so much that the current view is wrong as that it is partial and incomplete" (p. 24). And in their valuable commentary on the Epistle they show evident signs of being influenced throughout by this recently propounded view. The phrase being a sort of key-note to the doctrine of the Epistle, and a right conception of it being of such importance for understanding duly St. Paul's teaching on justification, a little further consideration of it will not, it is hoped, be out of place at the present stage of thought on the subject.

The view in question was stated generally thus in the *Pulpit Commentary* (Introduction, p. x.). On *δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ*, with especial reference to its first occurrence (Rom. i. 17), it was said, "It is usual to interpret this as meaning man's imputed or *forensic* righteousness, which is from God—*Θεοῦ* being understood as the genitive of origin. . . . The phrase, in itself, suggests rather the sense in

which it is continually used in the Old Testament, as denoting God's own eternal righteousness." Further (p. xi.), "It is maintained in this Commentary (with all due deference to the distinguished ancients and moderns who have held otherwise) that not only in this opening passage, but throughout the Epistle, *δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ* does mean God's own eternal righteousness, and that, even in passages where a righteousness that is of faith is spoken of as communicated to man, the essential idea beyond is still that of God's own righteousness including believers in itself."

What is proposed in the present article is, (1) To examine the initial passage, i. 17, in which the theme of *δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ* is first announced, as well as the subsequent passage, iii. 21, 22, where, after preparatory argument, the theme is again announced with a view to its exposition. (2) To consider other passages which may seem to conflict with the most obvious interpretation (as we contend) of the expression in the announcement of the theme, in order to see whether they do really imply or suggest a different one. (3) To attempt, with whatever diffidence, a view of the teaching of the great Apostle on the general subject, based on an unprejudiced consideration of the language he employed.

1. St. Paul, after declaring his readiness to preach the Gospel, of which he is not ashamed, at Rome as well as elsewhere, as being the power of God unto salvation to every believer, Greek as well as Jew, thus announces its contents: *δικαιοσύνη γὰρ Θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, καθὼς γέγραπται, Ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται.* Now, surely in these words taken by themselves, and but for other passages in the Epistle, or perhaps still more for generally received ideas having been read into St. Paul by theologians, *δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ* could be taken to mean nothing else but God's own righteousness. Before offering proof of this it may be premised that the

translation, a righteousness of God, given in the R.V., cannot be right, being evidently due only to a preconceived idea of the meaning of the phrase. A sufficient reason for rejecting it is the occurrence in the next verse, and in close connexion, of the similar phrase ὀργὴ Θεοῦ, also without the article. Here the R.V., with glaring inconsistency, has rightly translated "the wrath of God," though still giving the meaningless alternative of "a wrath" in the margin. In fact, neither expression requires the article for denoting "God's righteousness," and "God's wrath," both being recognised names of well-known things. Somewhat similarly, Κύριος in the sense of the LORD (cf. e.g. Rom. ix. 29) does not require the article; and in the Epistle to the Hebrews υἱός without the article is uniformly used to denote the well-known Son of psalm and prophecy, though to translate it, when it thus occurs, as "a son" would obviously be quite misleading. This then being admitted, what is the obvious meaning of "God's righteousness" in the passage before us—introduced, be it observed, before any exposition of the doctrine of the justification of man, which might have suggested a different meaning? Surely that which all the first readers of the Epistle, familiar (as they were evidently supposed to be) with the ideas of the Old Testament, would at once attach to it, viz., God's own eternal righteousness. There can be no need here to quote at large from the Old Testament in order to show how the Hebrew phrase rendered in the LXX. by δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ in this sense, and this only, pervades the Psalms and the Prophets. "God's Wrath" is also a constant topic, denoting that reprobation of sin (expressed of necessity under the human ideas of indignation and anger) which is inseparable from our conception of the Divine holiness. But no less prominent is the idea of God's own inherent and eternal righteousness, notwithstanding all the apparent contradictions to it in the world

of His creation. It is to their unshaken conviction of this, assured to them by faith, that the inspired writers continually recur for comfort and support in the midst of present evil. After trouble in view of the transgression of the wicked, the psalmist finds his consolation in the thought, "Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep. . . . Therefore the children of men take refuge under the shadow of Thy wings" (Ps. xxvi.). And, further, the whole prophetic conception of the Messianic kingdom is based on the idea of the eternal Divine righteousness vindicating itself at last under the King of righteousness to come, and, as it were, taking possession of the world. As, for instance, where Isaiah says; "My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the peoples; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust. . . . 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" (Isa. li. 5-8). The fulfilment of all such prophetic anticipations must have been in St. Paul's mind, and must have been suggested to his first readers, when, in the passage before us, he spoke of God's righteousness having been revealed in the gospel, his faith having shown him in Christ the inauguration at last of the Messianic kingdom. Besides, the occurrence of the expression in close connexion of *ὀργὴ Θεοῦ*, which cannot possibly mean anything but God's own wrath, in itself seems to necessitate its being similarly understood. Further, we observe not only the correspondence of St. Paul's language with that of ancient prophecy generally, including (as in the passage from Isaiah above quoted) the connexion of salvation (*σωτηρία*) with the display of the Divine righteousness; we

also note the direct derivation of his words here from one particular Old Testament passage, viz., Psalm xcvi. 2, which in the LXX. is Ἐγνώρισε Κύριος τὸ σωτήριον αὐτοῦ, ἐναντίον τῶν ἐθνῶν ἀπεκάλυψε τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ. Here we have all the ideas of the passage before us—*righteousness, salvation, revelation*, and that to the *Gentiles*—with use of the same Greek words as in the LXX. And there can be no doubt of what “His righteousness” means in the Psalm. But it has been said that ἐκ πίστεως, added by St. Paul, modifies the otherwise apparent sense of δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ, intimating in this case a righteousness of faith, which is from God, and imputed to man. If it had been ἢ ἐκ πίστεως, there would have been something in the contention; but it is not so: and further, the ἐκ πίστεως which follows ἀποκαλύπτεται is evidently to be taken with it, and not with δικαιοσύνη, forming part of the predicate, and not of the subject of the sentence. It simply denotes how God’s righteousness is revealed to the soul of man. It is faith which apprehends it. Of this the Apostle had a vivid sense from his own experience. The manifestation of Christ in the flesh had been no revelation to him till on the journey to Damascus the flash of faith opened his inward vision, and he recognised the Messiah in Jesus. And so always. The manifestation of God’s righteousness in Christ is not obvious to the unbelieving world: it is of faith that the revelation comes. And not only ἐκ πίστεως, but also εἰς πίστιν. The spark of faith first opens the revelation, but the result is to be a habit of faith, as the principle of our lives.

It has, however, been further argued that the quotation from Habakkuk, in which the word δίκαιος occurs with reference to man, at any rate suggests the idea of a righteousness of man himself being intended. By no means. The quotation is introduced in connexion with ἐκ πίστεως, in support of the position that the revelation—

not the righteousness—is of faith. It was so in the case of the ancient prophet. He lived at a troublous time, waiting for God’s vindication of His own everlasting righteousness (cf. ii. 12, 13): “and so he stood upon his watch-tower, watching to see what the Lord would say unto him.” And it was revealed to him that “the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry.” Meanwhile faith revealed it to him, with an assurance that by faith the righteous should live. It is to be particularly observed that in Habakkuk ἐκ πίστεως is not connected with ὁ δίκαιος, but with ζήσεται: it is not “the just one by faith shall live,” but “by faith the just one shall live.” And if it be said that, notwithstanding this, the very occurrence of the word δίκαιος, after the previous δικαιοσύνη, suggests the idea of a righteousness of man himself being in St. Paul’s view, it may be enough to reply that Habakkuk certainly used the equivalent Hebrew word in its ordinary Old Testament sense, when applied to men, of *upright*; and hence that its occurrence in the quotation from him proves nothing to the point. Microscopic examination of single words that happen to be used in sentences may be carried so far as to draw attention from their obvious general meaning.

Let us pass now to the renewed announcement of the theme in iii. 21, which should evidently be read in connexion with the initial one, each, if there is any difficulty in either, throwing light upon the other. The reason why this second announcement has been so long deferred was the need of proving first the revelation of the *wrath* of God including all, evidenced by the present condition of mankind and by the human conscience, and thus showing the futility of the Jewish plea of δικαιοσύνη ἐκ νόμου, that is, of man’s own righteousness availing for justification on the

ground of his actual obedience to Divine law. The ground being thus prepared, the Apostle announces once more, and now proceeds to set forth, the only possible remedy for the existing state of things, namely, the revelation of the righteousness of God. The intervening argument suggests, indeed, additional phrases in the new announcement, but the essential meaning of the announcement is unchanged. It is as follows: *Νυνὶ δὲ χωρὶς νόμου δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ πεφανέρωται, μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν, δικαιοσύνη δὲ Θεοῦ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς πάντας καὶ ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας, οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶ διαστολή.* To avoid possible misunderstanding it should be observed in the first place that the introduction of the expression *χωρὶς νόμου* by no means affects the meaning, whatever it may be, of *δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ*. It only asserts, with reference to the preceding argument, that the revelation now made is on a principle quite different and separate from that relied on by the Jew; it is *apart from* (*χωρὶς*) any theory of *δικαιοσύνη ἐκ νόμου*. Further, the interposed *μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν* comes in, after St. Paul's manner, in anticipation of what, having the thought already in his mind, he is about to prove. For in the argument that follows he is at pains to show that the principle he maintains, though *χωρὶς νόμου*, is not in contradiction to the "law and prophets," but really anticipated and supported by them. We may therefore, for getting at the essential drift of this renewed announcement, omit these parenthetical clauses, and render thus: "But now God's righteousness has been manifested — yea, *God's* righteousness — through faith in Jesus Christ unto and upon all that believe, for there is no distinction" (*i.e.* between Jew and Gentile). Thus this new announcement of the main theme is found to correspond exactly with the other, the only difference being that here we have *πεφανέρωται* instead of *ἀποκαλύπτεται*, and the more inclusive *διὰ πίστεως* instead of *ἐκ πίστεως εἰς*

*πίστιν*, while the addition of *εἰς καὶ ἐπὶ πάντας* etc., has its counterpart in the *παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι* etc., which preceded i. 17. There is obviously no justification for the introduction, as in A. V., of *which is* before *διὰ πίστεως*, this phrase being connected with *πεφανερωται*, as was *ἐκ πίστεως* in the former passage with *ἀποκαλύπτεται*. Whatever sense, then, i. 17 had, the same has iii. 21, 22. There is nothing in the latter to change or modify the first apparent meaning of "the righteousness of God."

2. But it may be said that the case is different in subsequent passages, where man's participation in the Divine righteousness comes to be spoken of. No doubt new ideas and modes of expression of necessity come in; but not one, we maintain, in which the primary phrase, *δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ*, is ever used in any new sense, or in which the idea of it in the same sense is not virtually present. Let us analyse first, sufficiently for our present purpose, the somewhat difficult but important passage which comes after the second announcement of iii. 21, 22,—*Πάντες γὰρ ἡμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ Θεοῦ*—(This is introduced in support of the previous *εἰς πάντας*, and *οὐ γὰρ ἐστι διαστολή*: yes, it is for all, without distinction, Jew as well as Gentile, for all equally require it; the plea of *δικαιοσύνη ἐκ νόμου* has been shown to fail alike for all)—*δικαιούμενοι δωρεὰν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι*—(Here *δικαιούμενοι*, though connected grammatically with *πάντες γὰρ ἡμαρτον*, seems to be rather connected logically with the previous *πάντες τοὺς πιστεύοντας*, the intervening clause having been virtually parenthetical. Understanding it thus presents no great difficulty to one familiar with St. Paul's style)—*διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρόσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ἃν προέθετο ὁ Θεὸς ἰλαστήριον διὰ πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι*. Here we must pause awhile, before proceeding with the passage, to consider the new expressions that have now been used in course of setting forth the application to man, "unto sal-



vation," of the righteousness of God. First, we have *δικαιούμενοι*. Now there can be no doubt that the verb *δικαίωω* means, not to *make* actually righteous, but to *count* righteous, or to *accept* as righteous—to *acquit*, to *justify*. And here believers are declared to be so accepted "freely"; not on their own merits as having fulfilled the law, but of God's free grace. But this conception does not introduce any different view of the meaning of God's righteousness, or involve its being at all lost sight of. The idea seems rather to be that, they being powerless to rise to *His* righteousness, it comes down to them, because they believe in it, love it, and aspire to it; that it embraces them, as it were, and takes them into itself. But still this could not be but for the "redemption"—the "propitiation"—of Christ. These two words also now come in, *ἀπολυτρώσις* and *ἰλαστήριον*, the latter with the addition (which must be joined to it, and not to *πίστεως*) of *ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι*. It is not necessary to show here (what is certain) that *ἀπολυτρώσις* in this passage, as elsewhere, means, not *deliverance* only, but *redemption* as usually understood, or that *ἰλαστήριον ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι* denotes Christ as having actually effected, by the offering of Himself, all that had been signified in the way of propitiation by the bloody sacrifices of the ancient law. There can be no doubt that St. Paul viewed this as having been, in the first place, necessary, in order for men, through faith, to be taken up (as it were) into the righteousness of God, or that he regarded the manifestation of that righteousness in the gospel as including a revelation of the atoning sacrifice. His doctrine distinctly is that the sacrificial rites of old were not meaningless, but expressed a real human need, and that in Christ's offering of Himself (however incompetent we may be to explain how it availed in the supramundane sphere) we are to perceive the full satisfaction of that need, and thereby the old barrier removed against the manifesta-

tion at last of God's eternal righteousness for the salvation of man. Well, but so far we have still found no variation from the first meaning of God's righteousness, but rather (if our interpretation has been right) confirmation of it. In the remainder of the passage now before us we shall find it still more confirmed. The Apostle, in continuation, thus expresses the *purpose* of God in preordaining (or setting forth to view—the meaning of *προέθετο* is uncertain) the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ;—*εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον, καὶ δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ.* Observe here first that “His righteousness,” in no possible sense but that of God's own, twice comes in as the dominant idea. It was for the showing of *that* in two ways, one leading to the other, that the propitiation of the Redeemer was set forth or preordained. It was first “unto (or with a view to) a showing of His (*i.e.* God's) righteousness on account of the passing over, in God's forbearance, of the sins done aforetime.” The allowed wickedness of the world had in former times been a difficulty in the way of faith in God's eternal righteousness, in that He passed it over, and forebore from visiting it. But the sacrifice of Christ, the effect of which was retrospective as well as future, has shown that He was not indifferent to sin—that He had all along been Himself righteous; and this showing was for the further showing (it may be best to take *πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν* in the second clause as denoting the sequel of the first *ἔνδειξιν*, while the *τὴν*, now prefixed according to the far best supported readings, points to *the* showing which has been already in view) “of His righteousness at the present time,” *i.e.*, in that He could now justify (or accept as righteous) him that is of faith in Jesus. In the concluding clause of the sentence the word *δίκαιον* may be taken to have especial (though not

exclusive) reference to the *πάρεσις* in past time, and *δικαιοῦντα* to the justification of the present time, the expressions in the two parts of the sentence being intended to correspond with each other. Here again, then, *δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ* emphatically retains its former meaning, nor is there anything to suggest another.

In subsequent passages, where the main subject is the office of faith for appropriating to ourselves the benefit of the revelation of God's righteousness, it cannot be denied that the word *δικαιοσύνη* is used in a secondary sense to express, not absolute righteousness such as God's, but the state of acceptance or acquittal into which, through his faith, the believer enters. But we contend that it never has this sense when, without a preposition intervening, it is followed by *Θεοῦ*; and also that God's own righteousness is never lost sight of as the source from which such acceptance or acquittal flows. The Apostle must have some word to express the believer's condition before God, which is the same, with regard to acceptance, as if he had been himself righteous; and he still appropriately uses the word *δικαιοσύνη*, though in a secondary sense. And there might be, further, this special reason for his doing so. The Jew, against whose theory he all along contends, claimed the possibility of attaining himself to a state of acceptance before God, which he called a state of righteousness; and this correctly from his own point of view, since he conceived of it as actual human righteousness. The Apostle virtually replied: We, too, claim to be able to attain to a state of acceptance before God, which may be called a state of righteousness; but it is on an entirely different principle from yours, *our* righteousness not being our own, but a free gift, flowing to us from the righteousness of God.

Such considerations may suffice for showing why, and in what sense, St. Paul goes on to speak of a righteousness of faith, as imparted to man. His language, when he does so,

will not (we still maintain and we assert again) be found to interfere with the one only sense of the phrase itself, *δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ*, wherever it occurs, or with its being, though not expressed, a dominant idea, lying behind the whole argument.

The subsequent passages to which the test may be applied include the following: (1) Chap. iv., in which Abraham's justification by faith and not by works is treated, with such constant expressions as *Ἐπίστευσε δὲ Ἀβραάμ τῷ Θεῷ καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην—ἐλογίσθη τῷ Ἀβραάμ ἡ πίστις εἰς δικαιοσύνην—σημεῖον ἔλαβε περιτομῆς, σφραγίδα τῆς δικαιοσύνης τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐν τῇ ἀκροβυστίᾳ διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως.* (2) ver. 17: *οἱ τὴν περισσεῖαν τῆς χάριτος καὶ τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης λαμβάνοντες;* and, in the same chapter, *εἰς δικαίωσιν ζωῆς*, and *ἡ χάρις βασιλεύση διὰ δικαιοσύνης εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν.* (3) ix. 30: *ὅτι ἔθνη τὰ μὴ διώκοντα δικαιοσύνην κατέλαβε δικαιοσύνην, δικαιοσύνην δὲ τὴν ἐκ πίστεως, Ἰσραὴλ δὲ διώκων νόμον δικαιοσύνης εἰς νόμον δικαιοσύνης οὐκ ἔφθασε. Διατί; ὅτι οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐξ ἔργων νόμου.* (4) x. 6: *Ἡ δὲ ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη οὕτω λέγει, and (v. 10) καρδιά γὰρ πιστεύεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην.* To these may be added, so as to complete the Pauline list, Phil. iii. 9: *καὶ εὐρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου, ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ Θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει.* We observe in the passage last quoted, in which *δικαιοσύνη* is used in its secondary sense, that *ἐκ* is carefully interposed before *Θεοῦ*.

3. A few remarks may be offered in conclusion as to the general purport of the great Apostle's view and teaching on the mysterious subject treated in his Epistle to the Romans.

He had, we may suppose, as all deep thinkers must have, a deep sense of the old mystery of sin and its apparent inconsistency with the idea of One Righteous and Omnipotent

Creator. His belief in God was too deeply rooted to be for a moment shaken. It is always an axiom with him that God is, and that He is Almighty, Omniscient, above all, and righteous eternally. The origin of evil in His creation at all is a mystery he does not attempt to fathom, only accepting the picture in Genesis of its introduction into the world of man. The subject in its depth is to him among the deep things of God, whose counsels are unsearchable, and His ways past finding out; and the thought of it, as said above, had not at all disturbed his conviction that God Himself is righteous. But he has had deep in his mind a feeling also that the present state of things could only be a temporary subjection of the creature to vanity, for some wise purpose allowed, and that God's righteousness must triumph in the end over sin and evil. His very sense that God Himself was righteous inspired this "earnest expectation"—this undying hope; and the prophetic anticipations, in which he was deeply versed, of the Messianic kingdom had confirmed it. And so, when the sudden flash of faith revealed to him Jesus as the Redeemer who was to come, he perceived with joy the realization of all his long-cherished hopes. God's eternal righteousness was at length manifested in the Christ, for the present salvation of believers of every race, and for the "restitution of all things" in the end. That he looked forward in distant visions to the "restitution of all things" (to use St. Peter's expression) at the final consummation of the manifestation of the Christ, is apparent from many passages in his epistles, though in none of those which we have had under review has there been occasion to express the thought. Cf., *e.g.*, Rom. v. 18, *seq.*; xi. 26, *seq.*; 1 Cor. xv. 24-28; Eph. i. 9, 10, 22, 23; Col. i. 15-21. He does not, any more than we can in any definite way, reconcile this grand hope with the idea of the *κόλασις αἰώνιος* due to unrepentant sinners in the eternal sphere which is beyond us now: but it is

important to observe that he does in some way entertain a view, not only of the triumph of the gospel throughout the world at last, but also of the eventual reconciliation of *all things* to God in Christ. And, indeed, it would otherwise be difficult to conceive of the Divine righteousness being fully vindicated. But what more immediately concerns us now is his conception of how faith in Christ avails ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ for salvation. First, we may say, he sees in Him a true *atonement* for human sin. His unwavering belief that the Mosaic law had been from God, as well as his own internal consciousness, had impressed upon him the necessity of some atonement. There must be some true counterpart of those divinely appointed sacrifices; there must be some satisfaction at last of the felt needs of the human soul. He had long felt it impossible that the blood of goats and calves could of themselves avail for the purpose in the spiritual sphere of things. But there was to him no such difficulty with regard to the sacrifice of Christ. Though he often alludes to His blood-shedding as answering to that of the ancient sacrifices, it is not the mere physical blood-shedding, or indeed the mere physical sufferings of the Saviour, that to his mind constitute the essence of the atonement. It was rather that the holy and sinless One, in our nature and representing us, had of His own will offered Himself through the eternal Spirit without spot to God, and had so become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And then, after the death, had come the resurrection from the dead, as the crowning and convincing evidence of the reality of this great Atonement. He could not, indeed, any more than we, explain in definite human language (as some theologians since his time have unhappily attempted to do) *how* such sacrifice avails on high for pardon. Enough for him that it answered to his ideal of what a true atonement, of which he felt the need, should be; and he rested on it in full faith as fulfilling all the meaning of the ancient sacrifices, and satisfying for ever all human needs.

This, then, in the first place, was a manifestation to him of the righteousness of God for salvation, in that, though He had allowed sin, He had provided an atonement for it, and had not left His creatures without remedy or hope. He did not condemn man eternally for what man could no longer help. And thus too he was at once relieved from the long misery of his ineffectual strivings to attain by his own righteousness to the righteousness of God. He had been trained to think that this was possible. But the more he had striven the more he had felt in his heart that the attempt was vain. While he would do good, he had found, by painful experience, that evil was present with him. But now, his old view having been found impossible, a new view was opened to him, full of hope. Though unable himself to rise to the Divine righteousness, he felt that the Divine righteousness had come down to him, taking him into itself in the Redeemer, so that now faith and loyalty and earnest endeavour could be accepted for perfect performance. The sense of this must indeed have been to his individual soul a revelation of the righteousness of God. And, further, with the sense of acceptance came the sense also of a new power—a power beyond what he had felt before—of avoiding sin, in virtue of his hearty loyalty to Christ and the inspiration of His Spirit. This part of his conception should never be lost sight of. He never teaches that faith in deliverance from “the wrath” through Christ will save unless it carry with it the willing obedience of loyalty. If Christ has freed us from the curse of the law, it is not that we might be indifferent to law, but that we may observe it better; and he felt that faith, working with regenerating grace, enabled us to do so. It is needless to point out how, in many an earnest passage, the Apostle presses home this thought.

Nor, lastly, should it be forgotten how the “Revelation” had thrown a new and consoling light on all “the suffer-

ings of the present time," which he now regarded as but the complement of the sufferings of Christ—connected with the mystery of the great atonement—serving to unite all the more the Body to the redeeming Head, and to prepare it, in union with His, for the grand consummation to come. All careful readers know how full his mind was of this idea.

The above survey, though of necessity inadequate, may help to show what we may call the rationality, as compared with many current theories, as well as the depth, of the great Apostle's view. It does not, like some, run counter to our moral sense, or conflict with our ideas of human justice. In its first broad lines it comes to this, that sin and evil having evidently and palpably, for whatever final purpose, been allowed to enter into the creation of the God of righteousness, He, in virtue of His very righteousness, has supplied a remedy—a mysterious remedy for a mysterious state of things,—but one which, when apprehended by faith, satisfies human needs. Nor does it really involve the fiction of the righteousness of one person being imputed to another; for the idea of the personal righteousness of Christ being imputed to the unrighteous is nowhere found: it is always that the righteousness of God, manifested in Christ, saves believers; their faith in Christ, with the obedience of loyalty, being reckoned unto them for righteousness. And if, finally, it be objected that there is injustice in the idea of the innocent suffering for the guilty, it may be at once replied that such is the law of things in our present human world. The most heroic deeds with the praise of which the world rings have been deeds of self-sacrifice for others; and the just, of their own accord, suffer for the unjust still. Christ's offering of Himself now stands out for ever to the eye of faith as the grand exemplar of such self-sacrifice; and it has been more potent to inspire a like spirit than anything else since the world was made.

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