

ROMANS III. 25, 26.

AMONG the debts which we owe to the Revised Version of the New Testament, I know of none greater than its translation of these two verses, bringing out, as the Authorised Version does not, to almost any reader the profoundest truths of the ancient economy as they have been translated into fact under the Gospel.

The Authorised Version of these verses is this :—

“Whom God hath set forth for a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, *I say*, at this time His righteousness, that He might be just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.”

On this translation I remark: (1) that sin is not remitted through the *forbearance* of God, but solely through His *mercy*. The word *πάρεσις* here employed does not mean “remission,” but “*passing by*,” a very different thing from remission. (3) The translation, “sins that are past,” is unfortunate, tending to make timid Christians think that only the past sins of believers, or sins committed by them before their conversion, are forgiven at first, whereas, when sin is forgiven to those who believe, it is forgiven once for all (Col. i. 13; 1 John i. 7).

The Revised Version of these verses is this :—

“Whom God set forth for a propitiation through faith, by His blood,¹ to shew His righteousness, because of the passing by of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; to shew, *I say*, His righteousness at this present season; that He might be just.”

¹ I regret the change here made by our English Revisers, and I was glad the American Revisers retained the A.V. here. (See the *Notes* at the end of our copies of the Revised Version.)

The "sins done aforetime" (*προγεγονήματα ἁμαρτήματα*) mean the sins committed by believing Jews before Christ came to "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"; for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin.

"Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain."

These sins, therefore, were only "passed by."

But *on the credit* of the atonement to be in due time made, all Jewish believers went to heaven. And that they *are* there, we are left in no doubt; for at the Transfiguration "*there talked with Him two men, which were Moses* (representing the saints under the Law) *and Elijah* (representing the saints under the Prophets)." It was a dialogue, it seems, for they talked (not to Him, but) *with Him*. What *their* part of the talk was, we are expressly told. It was not about the glory in which they appeared on the mount; no, it was "about *the decease which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem.*" They knew, it seems, what was passing here below. They knew, it seems, that upon that "decease" hung all their right to be where they were. They were watching its progress. They knew at what stage it had then come, and that it was near. He was "*about to accomplish*" it. With what rapt interest they watch its nearness, and I venture to think they would humbly cheer Him on; nor can I doubt that in their own way they would cheer Him on. Would not this be to Him a "song in the night"? What His part of the dialogue would be, I must leave the reader to conjecture for himself.

I have said that the profound truths which the apostle

here teaches to the Roman Christians about the saints of the ancient economy—that their sins were *not* atoned for, but only “passed by” till Christ should come to put them away by the sacrifice of Himself—this same thing is expressly stated in the Epistle to the Hebrews. For, at the close of the 11th chapter, after a long list of Old Testament saints who lived by faith, and by faith triumphed over every former persecution, “of whom the world was not worthy”—these (it is said) all died in faith, *not having received the promise* (the promised salvation); *God* having reserved some better *thing for us, that they, apart from us, might not be made perfect*, and both they and we might share alike in one salvation and one glory (Heb. xi. 39, 40).

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