

particularism of race is exchanged for the new and more dangerous particularism of creed.'

But the same moment that we remember that the New Commandment is found in the Fourth Gospel we remember that this verse is found there also: 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life.'

We may have been mistaken hitherto in thinking that that verse is characteristic of St. John's Gospel, but at least we are not mistaken in thinking it is there. And surely Mr. Montefiore, who finds St. Paul so much more to his liking than St. John, has forgotten that it is the Apostle to the Gentiles who writes: 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged.'

The Theology of the Epistle to the Romans.

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II. THE GOSPEL.

THE first seven verses of the Epistle to the Romans contain the salutation of St. Paul to the Christians whom he is addressing. But they contain much more. St. Paul does not content himself with sending a message of grace and peace in the name of God, he inserts in it certain clauses containing statements of doctrine, in words which imply a great deal.

In the first place, they tell us of the mission of St. Paul. Twice he reminds us of his apostolic office. He tells us that from Christ he received his mission. To Christ he is responsible. And the aim and duty of his apostleship is to preach the gospel of God.

And secondly, he tells us that the subject of the gospel is Jesus Christ and His divine mission, and he tells us what Jesus Christ is in a very clear and definite way. He was the Messiah of the Jews, the Christ and Anointed of God, Him whom the prophets and the Scriptures foretold. He who had fulfilled in His person all these hopes and expectations which had been raised in the Jewish nation. And then he tells us that this Jesus was a man and a Jew, born according to the flesh the son of David, but that He had been declared by His resurrection to have been more than this. He was Son of Man, He was also Son of God. And then St. Paul sums up the whole description by ascribing to Him the name of Lord, that name which in the Old Testament has implied all the majesty and power of the

Jehovah of the Jews, and had become recognised as the official title of the Messiah.

And then, thirdly, St. Paul in these words declares the universal character of the gospel. It has to be preached amongst all nations.

And now let us consider the importance of these doctrinal statements. St. Paul does not in the body of the Epistle treat of the whole of Christian doctrine; he does not discuss the whole of the gospel message. He assumes that his hearers have had Christianity preached to them, that it is only in certain parts that explanation is required.

What, then, was this teaching which he assumes? It was the belief that Jesus who had lived among men was the Son of God, and was proved to be such by His resurrection. This was in St. Paul's mind the beginning and the starting-point of Christianity. He says (Rom. x. 9), 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' And this we hold now as the central teaching of Christianity.

It is sometimes said it is a little difficult to find St. Paul's belief about Jesus; he does not treat it definitely or prominently in his earliest Epistles—those which it is universally admitted that he wrote. Now that is quite true if we mean he does not devote much time to proving it; but the reason is, he assumes that it is proved. Is not, then, the evidence stronger if we will take the trouble to

understand it. So certain is the fact that there is no need for him to prove it; so certain was it, and so much did it influence and inspire all his thoughts, that there are very few passages in his very earliest Epistles that we can understand, unless we assume that he believed it. If we have any doubt in our minds of the opinions of the early Christians, if we have any doubt as to whether it was part of primitive teaching to believe in the resurrection, if we have any doubt as to the exact meaning of Christianity and the exact truth of its creeds, we should read and re-read these Epistles,—the two Epistles to the Thessalonians, the Epistles to the Corinthians, the Epistle to the Galatians, and the Epistle to the Romans—remembering that they are the earliest Christian literature extant, that they were written within thirty years of our Lord's death,—and then notice how instinct they are with the belief in the divinity of our Lord. That belief permeates every part of them, it is the element which gives them life and reality and power, it flashes out from time to time in single texts like the one which we are considering, which expresses the truth with all the emphasis of brevity. Is it not a striking fact that already this truth should be the recognised commonplace of Christianity? Is it not so startling as to be incredible if the belief were not true?

But our argument can go further than this. In this Epistle St. Paul deals with a wide and far-reaching controversy; in other Epistles, notably that to the Galatians, he has written against persons who had erred on the most fundamental questions of Christianity. There was a definite set of Judaisers within the Church whom he has to refute in many points; but one fact he always assumes in dealing with any one within the Christian body—the divinity of Jesus. It would not be true to say that no one doubted it; there were Jews who refused to be converted, there were Gentiles who scoffed. What can be asserted is, that within the Christian Church as it existed in those days, although there were bitter divisions and great controversies, there was no division and no controversy at this time on the person of Christ. In acceptance of His Messiahship, in belief on Him as the Son of God, all Christians united. At this early period all Christians alike recognised Jesus as the Son of God, and belief in His resurrection was the proof to them of that fact.

This, then, is the first part of the gospel of God,

it is 'concerning His Son who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.'

We pass on now to the next action, vers. 8-15. These words have much that is full of interest in them, but they need not, I think, keep us very long; for that interest is primarily personal. They tell us about St. Paul and his character. Notice the tact with which he conciliates his readers: 'Your faith is made known in the world.' Notice the depths of his devotion for them, and for all Christians: 'I make mention of you always in my prayers.' Notice the power he ascribes to mutual sympathy and intercourse: 'That I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.' Notice his eagerness to come to them: 'If by any means I may be prospered by the will of God to come unto you'—'Often-times I purposed to come unto you.' Notice the compulsion which he feels to further the gospel: 'I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians.' 'Woe is me,' he had said, 'if I preach not the gospel.' But above all, Rome attracted him. Rome with its infinite opportunities and capacities, Rome in all its greatness and pride, a greatness which did not overwhelm him, or make him afraid, but which made him more conscious of the power of the gospel and the greatness of his errand. And now, from the historical height of eighteen centuries, let us look back at this eagerness of St. Paul. When we think of the eighteen centuries of the history of the Roman Church, with all its greatness and all which (in spite of many defects) it has done for Christianity, do we not feel the eloquence and the prophetic power of this the first utterance about Rome on the part of that apostle who might rightly and truly be called the founder of the Roman Church? His eagerness to press on to Rome implies the instinct of a general in seizing the vantage ground for his attack on the world.

But these words are important also, because they let us know why it was that St. Paul wrote his Epistle. He had often wished to visit Rome; he had always been hindered. He might never be able to go there. At anyrate, he must write to show them the reality of his sympathy and feeling, and to expound to them the gospel message. Not as a whole, for there is much he has assumed that

they heard, but just in that aspect in which controversy made it necessary he should write its appeal to the individual.

And so this paragraph gradually leads up to the statement in vers. 16 and 17 of the gospel, which is the subject of the Epistle. These words we must now consider.

St. Paul states that he wishes to preach the gospel in Rome, for he is not ashamed of the gospel, and that because of its character and purpose. These he describes as follows:—

1. Its final end is to bring salvation.
2. The condition of salvation is faith.
3. It is universal in its scope.
4. Faith is the condition of salvation, because in the gospel the righteousness of God which starts in faith and ends in faith is revealed.
5. This is in accordance with the Old Testament, which had declared that the righteous man should live, *i.e.* should gain the true life through faith.

Now the whole of this Epistle is directly or indirectly a comment on these verses, so we need not attempt to exhaust them. At present it will be convenient to consider two phrases, one of them 'the gospel,' a word round which so many modern associations have clustered; the other 'righteousness,' which is, as we know, the keynote of the Epistle.

And first, as to the phrase the 'gospel.' The word, whether in the meaning of the record of our Lord's life or of a particular form of Christian theology, is so habitual to us that we forget that it had hardly become a technical term when St. Paul wrote; certainly it had not lost its old associations of 'good news.' We need not, I think, study the various shades of meaning it has, as, for example, when St. Paul talks of the 'gospel of the circumcision,' or of 'my gospel.' Broadly to the Christian of the day it was a term, probably derived primarily from certain prophecies in the latter portion of Isaiah, which implied all the good news about Christ, whether a description of His life or His work. What He had done for us and we gain through Him. It was not, as ver. 3 of this chapter shows, confined to the special communication of the doctrine of righteousness by faith, although this was part of it. It might mean the extension of the gospel to the Gentiles; it might mean, as in ii. 16, the special doctrine that through Christ God will judge the world; more

generally it is described as being 'about the Son,' and defined as meaning His human and divine life. We must never limit a phrase which is not specialised in the New Testament to any favourite doctrine of our own. The gospel of Christ is the whole revelation of God in Christ, a revelation which, in opposition to what had preceded it, might well be called 'glad tidings of great joy,' and which is represented under different aspects by different writers of the New Testament.

The second word is 'righteousness.' This is one of those words about which we are able to be easily mistaken, partly because the ideas conveyed by it have come to us through mediæval channels, coloured with mediæval conceptions, and partly because we are likely to incorporate into it some of the Greek conceptions which the study of Aristotle has given us. Let us remember St. Paul was a Pharisee, and, speaking generally, the main point in which he differs from the other writers of the New Testament is that he expresses the ideas of Christianity in the phraseology of, and form of Pharisaism. Every word that he uses has a long history behind it, and that history is mainly pharisaic. And so in the case of 'righteousness.' The word represents the Jewish ideal of life, and that is 'the conscious feeling of right relationship to God.' *δικαιοσύνη* and *δικαίος* are used to translate and represent the Jewish words 'Tsedheq' and 'Tsaddiq,' and as such always seem to have underlying them the idea of the man who is upright in the sight of God. They represent the difference between the Jewish and the Greek ideal. The Greek based his morality on a standard of honour or beauty or self-respect—the opinion of mankind and the fitness of things were his guiding principle. The pious Jew walked always in God's sight, and his aim was to learn how he could commend himself to God, and to count himself upright before Him. How man was to gain this righteousness there might be differences of opinion, but it was the aim and object of every Jew who strove to fulfil his path in life. He might like an Essene strive to attain it by an ascetic life; he might like a Pharisee have considered himself able to demand the approbation of God by a vigorous performance of the law and the traditions; there might be many Jews who still lived in the light of the high and pure morality of the prophets; but all alike strove after 'righteousness.' Their morality was based on the belief

in a personal God, and a desire to live as He willed.

This phrase, then, St. Paul takes up and uses for his own purpose. Righteousness you have sought all your life, he says to the Jews, but you have sought it in the wrong way. Now the gospel has come, and it has revealed to you God's righteousness. It has revealed to you both the justice of God in dealing with man, and the way by which man shall be held just by God; that is the subject-matter of the gospel which I have to preach to you, and the manner revealed is faith.

In the four papers that follow, I propose to consider this message of the gospel.

We have (1) to ask why it is necessary. And we learn because of sin. We study sin and its results.

(2) We have then to approach the question, What do you mean by righteousness of faith?

(3) Next we ask, What is the life of those who have attained it—the life of the justified?

(4) And lastly, we ask, What has been the history

of this gospel of Christ to the world; how do we reconcile it with the facts of history?

The phrase 'the gospel of Christ' has been, like all names which are capable of implying much, often misused. It has become distasteful to some because its use often seems unreal and unnatural, and because it has been degraded by controversy and become a party badge. I ask you to go behind the conventionalities, and behind the unrealities and behind the controversy, back to the original meaning of the word. Whenever, or if ever, our Christianity becomes unreal or conventional, what we have to do is to go back to the earliest teaching, and back to human nature. We have to re-examine the teaching of the early Church, whether it be the teaching of tradition or the teaching of Scripture, and we have to ask, What is true? And then we have to turn to human nature and ask, What is real? Is the gospel as we have learnt it true to our nature and aspirations? That is the work before us in studying the Epistle to the Romans.

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The parts of Scripture selected for the Session 1894-95 are the Book of Zechariah and the first twelve chapters of the Book of Acts. And the Commentaries recommended for use are—

I. On Zechariah—Dr. Dods' *Haggai, Zechariah,*

¹ Members are requested to write their names distinctly; to say whether Rev., etc.; and to mention their degrees.

and *Malachi* (2s. 6d.), or Orelli's *Minor Prophets* (10s. 6d.).

On Acts i.-xii.—Professor Lindsay's *Acts of the Apostles* (vol. i. 1s. 6d.), or Dr. Rawson Lumby's *The Acts* (4s. 6d.). And for the reader of Greek—Mr. Page's *Acts of the Apostles* (2s. 6d.), or Meyer's two volumes on the Acts (21s.).

The publishers of Orelli and of Meyer (Messrs. T. & T. Clark, 38 George Street, Edinburgh) will send a copy of the former for 6s., and of the latter for 12s., to any *Member of the Expository Times Guild* who directly applies to them for it.

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