

*THE THEOLOGY OF THE EPISTLE TO THE
ROMANS.*

IV.

THE GOSPEL A DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS.

THE study of St. Paul's doctrine of sin, with its correlated ideas of law, wrath, the flesh and death, enables us to understand the situation which the gospel has to meet. It is not man without qualification to whom it is addressed, but sinful men, and men whose sin has the constitutional, desperate and fatal character which we have seen. It is such men who are confronted with the problem: How shall we be righteous with God? They can find no answer for it. The answer, when it is found, is *a revelation* (ch. i. 17); it comes from heaven, and bears the name not of men but of God. "I am not ashamed of the gospel . . . a righteousness of God is revealed in it."

Whatever the righteousness of God may be in itself, it is surely clear that it is something of which we must eventually be the subjects. In whatever sense it is God's, there must be some sense in which it also becomes ours. It is we sinners who have to be justified by it, and if it were not available for our justification there would be no gospel in it for us. The Apostle expresses this in various ways. The connexion of *vv.* 22 and 24 in chap. iii. implies that it is in virtue of this *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* revealed in the gospel that we are justified. In chap. v. 17 he speaks of "the abundance of *the gift* of righteousness." In 2 Corinthians v. 21 he argues that the end of all God's reconciling work—the very meaning of the death of His Son—is that *we* should become the righteousness of God in Him. It is a fixed point therefore to begin with, that whatever *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* may be, abstractly considered, the *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* which is the content of the gospel revelation is something which is

destined to become man's. But what does this phrase mean, into which Paul condensed the whole of Christianity?

One set of attempts to explain it proceeds, it may be said, philologically. It assumes that *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* must mean what it bears on its face: the righteousness which belongs to God, which is His essential attribute, an integral element in His nature or His character. In this sense, however, a revelation of the righteousness of God would only mean a revelation that God was righteous; and it may well be doubted whether such a revelation would constitute a gospel for men in the condition described by Paul. Hence it is usually assumed that the revelation of God's righteousness in the gospel includes in particular a revelation of the fact that this righteousness is not self-contained, so to speak, but self-communicating; it is God's, but it issues forth from God and imparts itself to men. Sometimes, as for instance in Sanday and Headlam's *Commentary* (p. 35), this is connected with passages in Isaiah which speak of God's righteousness as "going forth"; or, to use the language of these scholars, "as projected from the Divine essence and realizing itself among men." Without raising the question whether the Old Testament writer meant anything of this kind when he spoke of God's righteousness as "going forth," the religious truth of the conception which is thus associated with St. Paul's phrase need not be disputed. It conveys the same lesson as our Lord's word to the young ruler: "There is none good but one, that is, God." All goodness comes from Him; in men it is a stream fed from that central fountain. St. Paul would have been the last man in the world to deny this, but it may fairly be questioned whether the conception stands in a sufficiently close relation to the necessities of sinful men to constitute a gospel; and so far as the writer is aware, no one has even attempted to connect it in any specific way

with St. Paul's conception of the cross. It is by no means equal to the requirements of the case to say with Sanday and Headlam that to St. Paul "it seems a necessity that the righteousness of God should be not only inherent but energizing, that it should impress and diffuse itself as an active force in the world"; and then to add to this, as by way of supplement, that there is "one signal manifestation" of it, "the nature of which it is difficult for us wholly to grasp, in the death of Christ." This is not merely "one signal manifestation" of it; on the contrary, so far as the righteousness of God in St. Paul constitutes his gospel, it has no meaning whatever but that which it has as manifested at the cross. We may be getting to know God, perhaps, but we are certainly not getting to understand the Apostle, when we provide an indefinite background like this for the glad tidings of "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." St. Paul's gospel—for *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* is his gospel in brief—is something far more specific than the idea that God's righteousness overflows upon man, or that God makes us partakers in His own character, and does so the more eagerly and urgently because otherwise we have no character at all. The ultimate objection to such an interpretation of the righteousness of God is that it does not appreciate the ethical character of the situation. To St. Paul, the problem presented to God by the sin of the world is a moral problem of tremendous difficulty, and it is hardly too much to say that this is an attempt to solve it by ignoring the moral difficulties altogether. The righteousness of God is here conceived as acting after the analogy of a physical force. It "goes out," "energizes," "diffuses itself," as the light and heat of the sun, irrespective of moral conditions. It is its nature to do so and it can never do anything else. But in spite of the Biblical comparison of God to the sun, moral problems can never be solved by the categories of physics, and the gospel of St. Paul grapples far more closely with

the moral necessities of the case. His *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* as concentrated in Christ crucified has essential relations to sin and law and death which are here left out of sight.

Another attempt or series of attempts to get at the meaning of the expression may be distinguished from the last as historical. It aims at establishing a connexion in import as well as in form between St. Paul's language and that of the Old Testament. Its most distinguished representative was Ritschl, and it has been elaborately set out again by the lexicographer Cremer in his *Paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre*. Not that Cremer is entirely at one with Ritschl: indeed he pursues him all along with a sort of protesting criticism, the relevance or justice of which it is often not easy to discern. But they agree in trying to attach Paul's sense as well as his words to the Old Testament in something like the following fashion. They point out that God's righteousness is manifested when He acts as judge, and that when He does so it is always to see right done, to vindicate those who are in the right, to establish righteousness in the earth. Ritschl illustrates this conception principally from the Psalms: a notable instance is Psalm xxxv. 23-28: "Judge me, O Lord my God, according to thy righteousness: and let them not rejoice over me. . . . Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause" (literally, my righteousness). . . . And my tongue shall talk of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long." Here the righteousness of God is that principle in the Divine nature in virtue of which God cannot suffer wrong to triumph over right; when His people are wronged, it is in virtue of His righteousness that He vindicates or, as it may be expressed, justifies them. He pleads their cause and puts them in the right before all. Hence the appeals which we have in the Old Testament to the righteousness of God, not as something to be dreaded by His people, but as their one sure hope.

“In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust . . . deliver me in thy righteousness” (Ps. xxxi. 1). “Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name’s sake: in thy righteousness bring my soul out of trouble” (Ps. cxliii. 11). Hence also the use of the word “righteousnesses” to describe the great acts in which God interposed in His people’s cause and maintained their right in the world: “There shall they rehearse the righteousnesses of the Lord”—the various manifestations of His righteousness—“the righteousnesses of his rule in Israel” (Judg. v. 11; cf. 1 Sam. xii. 7). And hence also the combination, so frequent in the latter half of the Book of Isaiah, of righteousness and salvation. “My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed” (Isa. lvi. 1). “My salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished” (Isa. li. 6).

In the line of passages like these it is argued, especially by Ritschl, that God’s righteousness is no abstract, and especially no legal retributive justice, but essentially gracious. It is not something to which justice must be done in order that grace may be free to act; it is itself grace in action for the vindication or justification of the people of God. It is in this sense that *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* is to be interpreted in St. Paul.

Here again, as in the former instance, we may admit the religious truth of the representation. Granted that it is God’s people with whom we have to deal, and especially God’s people wronged by the world, we can understand that God’s righteousness is that to which they would appeal for salvation. Like Christ, reviled and insulted, they would commit themselves to Him who judges righteously (1 Pet. ii. 23) and trust in Him to plead their cause. Paul perhaps has this connexion of ideas in mind when he refers to the persecutions and afflictions endured by the Thessalonians as “a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God” (2 Thess. i. 5): they speak plainly of the way in which the

Righteous Judge must interpose to do the injured believers justice and to punish their foes. Even when there is no conception of a hostile world against which the cause of God's people has to be made good, we find the righteousness of God spoken of in a way to which Ritschl can appeal in support of his interpretation. Wherever there is a people of God at all, there is a relation between them and God which involves obligations on both sides, and God's fidelity to these obligations is called His righteousness. It may have its most signal manifestation when His people have been false to the obligations on their side, and in this case it is closely related to the forgiveness of sins. God does not renounce His people when they err or sin in human frailty and then come to Him in penitence; He fulfils the covenant obligations as far as they are binding on Him, and He shows His righteousness in doing so. This is the explanation of those combinations which at first surprise a modern reader: "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness," i.e. of Thy fidelity to all that is involved in the promise to be the God of Israel (Ps. li. 14); or the precisely similar passage in the New Testament: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins"; i.e. true to the obligations involved in His relation to us as Christians (1 John i. 9). In passages like these a righteousness of God is undoubtedly spoken of which is a gracious thing and which is exhibited in the forgiveness of sins: the only question to be answered is whether it can be identified off-hand with that *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* which is Paul's gospel to a world lost in sin.

To the present writer it does not seem doubtful that the answer must be in the negative. In every case to which this line of interpretation can appeal, the righteousness of God is manifested in relation to a people of God. God

does right by them, it may be in achieving their deliverance from oppressors—this is “salvation” in the sense of the Old Testament; it may be in forgiving the sins of which they repent, and which are not in themselves a renunciation of their covenant with Him. No doubt the righteousness of God in this sense is sometimes spoken of as manifested to the world. “The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the nations” (Ps. xcvi. 2). But this does not mean what Paul means when he speaks of the gospel of a divine righteousness being made known to all nations for the obedience of faith; it means that God has delivered His people from their enemies, and given an unmistakable demonstration on the stage of universal history of His fidelity to His covenant. “All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God” (Ps. xcvi. 3) means “have seen the salvation he has wrought *for us*”; “the mercy and the faithfulness” which He has “remembered toward the house of Israel.” There is nothing here of the nature of gospel to those who are not the people of God. In spite of parallelism of language, there is not in such passages any real correspondence of thought with St. Paul. He does not preach his gospel to people who can make appeal to God to do right by them: he preaches to those who are hopelessly in the wrong before God. He does not preach to those who can think of themselves as somehow God’s people, and who can count on God’s fidelity to all that this means; he preaches to those who are not God’s people, who can count on nothing, and to whom his gospel is the one unqualified miracle of the world. And the righteousness of God which he preaches is neither the vindication of the good when they are wronged, nor the faithfulness of God to His people even when they have failed in their duty to Him. It is something far more wonderful and profound. It is a righteousness infinitely

more gracious and more compelling than either — a righteousness *which puts the ungodly in the right* (chap. iv. 5), and constitutes into a people of God those who lay under His judgement (chap. iii. 19). A righteousness like this, if such a thing can be, is unmistakably glad tidings for a sinful world; it is a genuine gospel for those who need a gospel; and this, one may venture to say, is not yielded by either of the other interpretations. This too, it is not too much to add, is decisive: the evangelist is in the last resort the judge of evangelical theology. If it does not serve his purpose it is not true.

To grasp the Apostle's meaning, it is necessary to follow the exposition which he himself gives of it in chap. iii. 21 ff. and to remember at the same time that when Old Testament words are used in the New Testament they cease *ipso facto* to be Old Testament words and carry in them a New Testament meaning. We take for granted only what has already been made clear: that this righteousness, which is at least named after God has God, as its source, that it eventually becomes man's, and that when this is accomplished man is justified—right with God and right in God's judgement; and with these assumptions we proceed to an examination of the classical passage (ch. iii. 21-26).

We notice first that the Divine righteousness of the gospel is manifested *χωρὶς νόμου*, apart from law. This does not mean that it has no relation to the universal moral elements in the relations of God and man; on the contrary, it is part of the Apostle's object to prove that in the way in which this righteousness comes justice is done to all these elements, so that God in revealing it not only "justifies" the believer in Jesus but is Himself "just." The new religion may be *χωρὶς νόμου*, but it does not annul law; it sets law on its feet (iii. 31). It is *χωρὶς νόμου* in the sense in which a Jew laid stress on his fulfilment of

the law, or a Gentile on his life according to the law of nature, as constituting a claim upon God, in response to which He must acknowledge them to be in the right or righteous before Him: for the Divine righteousness which the gospel proclaims all men have to become God's debtors: it is a Divine gift, not a human achievement. It is *χωρὶς νόμου* only in the sense that to its presence in the world man's fulfilment of law contributes nothing.

Although it is *χωρὶς νόμου* it is "witnessed to by the law and the prophets," that is, by the Old Testament. Although the gospel is a new revelation belonging to the present age (*νυνὶ δὲ* v. 21, *ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ* v. 26), Paul is aware that revelation from first to last is a unity, and therefore consistent with itself. It is one God who is revealing Himself in it all along. In an age when criticism is illustrating the differences of a formal kind which exist in the record of revelation, this is a truth to be emphasized. The Old Testament and the New Testament are at bottom one, and will stand or fall together. It is their oneness which is the ultimate proof of their divinity. The unity of Scripture and its inspiration are correlative terms, and its unity consists in this, that it all attests the gospel. It is a complete mistake to try to solve difficulties about inspiration by striking out here and there what is not inspired, or by distinguishing a human element from the Divine (as if there were anything in Scripture which was not thoroughly human even while Divine), or by attempting to grade the various Scriptures according to the degree of inspiration they exhibit: we believe Scripture to be inspired because when we approach it with the one question on the answer to which the possibility of religion depends—How shall a sinful man be just with God?—from first to last it has one and the same answer. And because Scripture is the only authority in the world which has a consistent and convincing answer to give, we believe that inspiration

belongs to it alone. We ought to notice in passing that the particular Scriptures to which Paul refers in support of this assertion are not those of which such copious use has been made by writers like Ritschl, Häring, Cremer, Sunday and Headlam, and others, to explain the antecedents and associations of his phrase *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*. He does not quote any of the numerous passages from the Psalms or II. Isaiah in which God's righteousness is spoken of as "going forth," and has been represented as "energizing," or "enclosing and gathering into itself human wills." Probably he did not read the Psalms and Isaiah in this sense; at all events it is by appeal to passages of quite a different kind that he demonstrates the consistency of the Christian gospel with the ancient revelation of God.

The Divine righteousness of the gospel thus asserted becomes available for men—becomes men's in short, so that they stand right with God in virtue of it—through faith. It is a righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ coming to or extending over all who have faith. What faith means as the appropriation of the Divine righteousness will be considered in next paper; here it is only referred to for the light it casts on the nature of that righteousness itself. It emphasizes the fact that it is a gift, something which men may receive but which they cannot produce. If "the gift of righteousness" is the true way to describe it (*v.* 17), then the only way to have it as our own must be to "take" it. It cannot be ours if we leave it, and we are not able to earn it. This is what is implied in the emphasis here laid on faith.

At *v.* 24, as is well known, there is a certain irregularity in the Apostle's grammar, but the connexion of his ideas is not obscured. The sentence beginning *δικαιούμενοι δωρεὰν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι* is virtually an exegesis of the 22nd verse. When sinful men believe in Jesus Christ, and the Divine righteousness manifested in Him becomes theirs, this is

what happens: they are justified freely by God's grace. They become right with Him, righteous in His sight, and they owe it to His pure unearned goodness. He has brought into being and put within the sinner's reach the very thing the sinner needs, and which, though he cannot produce, he can still appropriate—a "righteousness," namely, which because it is of God is properly described by His name, *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*, and not by the name of those for whom it is destined.

Paul cannot speak of the grace which underlies the gift of righteousness without going on to magnify it. That is what he does when he says that we are justified freely by His grace "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." It is possible to argue that what *ἀπολύτρωσις* (redemption) suggests is not the cost of liberation or emancipation, but the fact. Certainly the fact suggested by the word is not to be overlooked; to overlook it is to miss the meaning of justification. To be justified freely by God's grace is to be emancipated from a former state and its liabilities; it is to have our relation to God and our standing with Him changed, no longer determined by such powers and expressed in such words as Sin, Condemnation, Curse, Law, Death, but determined by Christ alone. But whenever we say "by Christ alone,"—whenever we think of the *ἀπολύτρωσις* as being *ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*—the cost of it comes into view. Paul preached no vague and unembodied redemption to sinful men; the Divine righteousness which he offered, and which meant this great emancipation from law, sin and death, he could only offer in Christ, and, as the next words show, in Christ crucified. There are modern theologians who hold that the Son has no place in the gospel, which is simply the revelation of the Father; but their gospel is certainly not that of the greatest of Apostles. He did not preach his "Divine righteousness," referring casually, as he might think it necessary or becoming, to Christ's authority; he

preached a redemption *in Christ Jesus*, he preached Christ as Himself made righteousness to us.

Nor is he content with a merely impressionist view of Christ, as it has been called; he thinks out the problems involved in the sinner's emancipation and justification in Him; he unfolds that interpretation of Christ which explains His power and sovereignty in his own heart and gives him His gospel of justification to preach; Christ Jesus he says, *whom God set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood*. Alike by those who accept and by those who reject it this is felt to be the heart of St. Paul's theology and of his gospel. Happily for him the two things did not fall apart. The profoundest truth he knew was the most joyful message he could proclaim. Happily too he did not feel it necessary to apologize for the love of God; it did not seem incredible to him that that love should do things for men, in Christ, that fill the soul with fear and wonder. "By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation." We can admit that when St. Paul wrote, "Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation in his blood," he touched on one of the ultimate truths which, as Dr. Hort says, become apparent not by the light we can shed on them, but by the light which they shed upon everything else; but even so he does not leave us unable to grasp his meaning. No doubt it has points of attachment in the Old Testament. Stress need not be laid on the fact that the LXX uses *ἰλαστήριον* to translate *חַסְדִּים*, the "mercy seat" of our English version; if St. Paul had meant this he must have indicated it more definitely. But when he combined the two expressions *ἰλαστήριον* and *ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι*, he certainly conceived of Christ's death as sacrificial; none but sacrificial blood had propitiatory power. The question remains however: Does it carry us any way into his mind to say so? Do we know what he meant or felt when he assimilated the death of Christ to a sacrifice?

Does he read the meaning out of the sacrificial system into the death of Christ, or, having discovered the profound import of Christ's death, does he suddenly become aware that here is the one sacrifice by which propitiation is made for ever, and adopt the language of the ancient ritual to find access for his thought to his hearers' minds?

In so far as these questions invite us to follow the psychological genesis of Paul's thoughts we probably do not require to answer them. One point is clear: he saw himself, and taught his contemporaries to see, an essential correspondence between the death of Jesus and the propitiatory sacrifices of the Old Testament. But in what did that correspondence consist? It consisted in this, that in both cases a connexion was assumed between the sacrificial death and sin. The victim's death was in the last resort due to sin: to put it in the simplest possible form, it was a death for sin. It is not unusual to hear this peremptorily denied, and the legitimacy of putting Christ's death in any relation to the ancient sacrificial system summarily ruled out of court. Wellhausen's *obiter dictum* that the cultus is the pagan element in the religion of Israel has met with a wonderfully wide and uncritical acceptance even among evangelical theologians. But it has the falsehood of all epigrams written on its face. The cultus in the religion of Israel is like the cultus in any other; it is pagan or something else than pagan, just as the religion does not or does possess the power to interpret, to spiritualize, to transfigure it. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." That is the language inspired by the cultus, and interpreting it; is there anything pagan in that? No doubt an institution like sacrifice would mean many different things in the course of its long history. It would mean one thing in the primitive ages explored by Robertson Smith, another in those to which the later strata

of the Pentateuch belonged; one thing to the man who killed his victim with his knife, but how much more to the man who, to use the words of a great preacher, killed it with his soul! It is not necessary to go into these distinctions, nor when we consider the extent to which the ritual and sacrificial elements in the Old Testament have served to mould alike the religious thinking and the adoring worship of the New—recall only the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Book of Revelation—can we take seriously the proposal to set them aside as pagan and irrelevant to Christianity. The simple truth is that here, at the very heart of his gospel, in interpreting the one truth on which the hope of sinful men depends, Paul finds no language to express himself in but language prompted by the sacrificial system. And when the other New Testament writers come to the same place they do the same thing. In John, it is “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” In Peter, “He bore our sins in his own body to the tree”—“a lamb without blemish and without spot.” In Hebrews, “He put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” And the Apocalypse is full of “a lamb as it had been slain.” The idea in all this is not ambiguous: it is that the death of Christ is essentially related to sin—has to be defined by relation to it, as the death of the propitiatory sacrifice had to be. When Paul says here that “God set forth Christ a propitiation in His blood,” he only allows for a moment what for his readers at least is the illuminating idea of atoning sacrifice to fall upon the death of Christ. But what he means is precisely what he means when he says in other places, without the sacrificial figure, “Christ died for our sins; God made him to be sin for us; he became a curse for us; he was delivered up for our offences.” All that sin meant for us—all that in sin and through it had become ours—God made His, and He made His own, in death. He *died* for us. This death, *defined as it must be*

by relation to our sins, is that in virtue of which Jesus Christ is a propitiation for sin. Without it and without this interpretation of it St. Paul would have no gospel to preach. The word has been abused, and false inferences have been drawn from it, but is there a word in the world which covers the essential truth of this gospel better than the word *substitution*? *αὐτὸς ἡμῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἀνένεγκεν*, HE bore OUR sins.

Further light is thrown on the idea of propitiation when we notice the double purpose it secures. It is its aim and its result that God should be at once just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. This second result is the one which we should regard as being immediately in view—the securing of a Divine righteousness for the sinful. But it is the peculiarity of a propitiation that it does this in a way which at the same time secures the righteousness of God Himself. What does this mean? What is the righteousness of God Himself which has to be secured in this connexion? Is it His righteousness regarded as a self-imparting quality to which justice is not done as long as there is sin in the world which it has not overcome? We have already seen the limits of this conception, and there is no way of deducing from it the specific propitiation which Paul preaches, or indeed any propitiation whatever. A Divine righteousness is the gift which God offers to man in Christ for his salvation, but salvation—and especially the salvation of the New Testament—is never traced to the righteousness of God as its source. Is then the righteousness of God Himself, as one of the ends to be secured by the propitiation, that fidelity of God to His covenant obligations, which we have seen is sometimes the meaning of the word? The answer must again be in the negative: if this were the case, the distinction between *δίκαιον* and *δικαιοῦντα* would disappear; for according to this view it is precisely in justifying that God shows Himself faithful, in vindicating the

right of His people that He is exhibited as a righteous God. Setting aside then both of these interpretations, nothing remains but to look to the context. There we see that the righteousness of God Himself is conceived as something affected by "the passing over of the sins done aforetime in the forbearance of God." There has been in the moral administration of the world a temporary suspension of God's ultimate judgement on sin, and so far His righteousness has been obscured and may be called in question. It is not apparent, men may say, that God does judge sin with an uncompromising judgement. But according to the argument of St. Paul in this passage, a propitiation not only enables God to put the gift of a Divine righteousness within the sinner's reach, but at the same time to silence this doubt; even in justifying the guilty God's uncompromising judgement upon sin is set in the clearest light. Now what is the immediate inference from this when we consider that God has set forth Christ as a propitiation in His blood? It is that the death of Christ must be defined in relation to sin, and to God's ultimate judgement on sin, in such a way that no one looking at it and knowing what it means can say any longer God is not righteous; He is more or less indifferent to evil. It would not be a propitiation to St. Paul—it would lack one of the essential constituents of propitiatory virtue—if it did not embody unequivocally God's condemnation of sin. Hence such a condemnation is part of the essential significance of the Cross.

The Apostle does not expand his thoughts here, but the connexion of ideas cannot be mistaken. All that sin means for man—all the doom that it involves—is summed up in death, the awful experience in which God's condemnation of sin becomes finally real to conscience; and *He died* for us. He made our doom His own. He took our condemnation upon Himself. He did it in obedience to the will of the Father, and in doing so. He acknowledged the justice

of the Divine order which binds together death and sin. No one who knows what He did can think again that God is indifferent to this order. On the contrary, its inviolability is maintained even in bringing sinful men salvation. There is no such idea in Christianity as that of God condoning sin. God condones nothing: His mercy itself is of an absolute integrity. He is a righteous God, even in justifying the ungodly; and the propitiation which He sets forth in Christ Jesus, dying in His sinlessness the death of the sinful, is the key to the mystery.

Once more, is not the word which spontaneously rises to our lips to express this the word substitution? The aversion to it which prevails so widely has many causes. Partly it is due to its abuse, and if the abuse can be guarded against should not weigh in our minds. Partly it is one form of the aversion to the very idea of mediation in religion. Substitution is mediation in the most acute and defiant form and provokes the most vehement opposition from those who reject mediation *ab initio* and prefer religion without the sense of personal debt to Christ. Partly again it rests on what are regarded as distinctively moral grounds. Substitution is quite frankly pronounced immoral. It is not possible, without anticipating what has to be said in a later discussion of faith, to give the whole answer to the moral protest, but it is not too much to deprecate the summary and angry rejection of an idea which has played the part which substitution has in evangelical preaching, and which has, to say the least, such specious points of attachment in apostolic doctrine. What we usually mean by the sphere of morality is the sphere of mutual obligation; you are morally bound to do something for me and I for you, and we have a moral right to require the fulfilment of these bonds. Manifestly in the sphere of such relations there is no room for such an action as the death of Christ if it means what Paul takes it to mean.

But even human life gives scope for acts in which the limits of such moral obligation are transcended—acts which are not moral, but far higher than moral; acts immediately inspired of God, the understanding of which is to morality as the discovery of a fourth dimension would be to geometry. It is only in this sense that the substitution of Christ is not moral. It transcends the moral world because it has to recreate it. Substitution, in short, is mediation raised to its highest power, exalted and glorified by love to its most compelling intensity. No one who accepts the idea of mediation in religion at all is in the right to reject it *a priori* here. To do so is to declare that he can measure the love of God beforehand and tell all that it can or will do. But it is not beforehand that we know anything about redemption. "*Hereby perceive we love.*" Who could have told beforehand that a Divine righteousness would come to sinful men in Christ Jesus set forth by God as a propitiation in His blood?

JAMES DENNEY.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

VI.

PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES. THE ETERNAL PUNISHMENT OF SIN.

IN former papers I have traced the popular and traditional doctrine of the endless permanence of all human souls to the teaching of Plato and to the school of Greek philosophers of which he is the most illustrious representative; and have endeavoured to prove that it was altogether alien from the phrase and thought of Christ and His Apostles so far as His teaching and theirs are embodied in the New Testament, and that it entered into, and subsequently became prevalent in, the Church mainly through the influence of Plato apparently in the latter part of the second century. We have also considered the teaching of several