

STUDIES IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

I.

THE ADVOCATE AND THE PROPITIATION.

My little children,

I write these things to you in order that you may not sin.

And if any one should sin,

We have an Advocate with ¹ the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous

And He is, Himself, the propitiation for our sins,

Not however for ours only, but also for the whole world!—1 *John*

ii. 1, 2.

THE opening paragraph of this letter (i. 1-4) introduced the author as one who had seen, and known by the most certain signs, the light of the eternal life in Jesus Christ, who writes out of the wealth of his knowledge and his joy to make his friends full participators with him. In the second paragraph (vv. 5-10) it was shown how and with what effect the light of God, as He stands revealed in Christ, falls upon the darkness of human life. It discloses the deep chasm, the antagonism and recoil by which the Divine nature separates itself from all sin, and the sacrifice which it has made, crossing that gulf, to remove sin from human nature (vv. 6-7). In the debate thus occasioned between God

¹ Πρὸς τὸν πατέρα = almost "addressing the Father." There are four prepositions in constant use in Greek covered by the English *with* of personal intercourse: σύν signifies *conjunction*, μετὰ *accompaniment*, παρά *presence with* (as in John xvii. 5), πρὸς *converse with* (as in John i. 1, and here). "πρὸς is *adversus* rather than *apud* (Vulgate), and with the accusative signifies either the direction of motion, or the relation between two objects" [or *attitude* of one person to another]. "We may fittingly call the preposition here *πρὸς pictorial*" (Alexander, in *Expositor's Bible*). The expression is ethical, and not in any way local.

and men concerning sin, in the struggle between the world's darkness and the new light rising upon mankind with the advent of Christ, some yield by a sincere confession and find forgiveness and a thorough cleansing, which puts them in communion with God and with their fellows (*vv.* 7-9); in others the darkness resists condemnation and even pretends to be light, entangling and entrenching itself in the desperate falsehood of giving the lie to God (*vv.* 6, 8-10).

We are brought, then, at the beginning of the 2nd chapter to the very decided position that what the Gospel aims at is *the abolition of sin*. Every word that St. John writes here, all that he has heard and learned from his Master and that he has to teach to others, tends and bends to this one point. Not the "forgiving of sins" alone, but the "cleansing" of man's life "from all unrighteousness"—to this the fidelity and the righteousness of God are pledged in the new covenant founded upon the death of Christ. St. John as well as St. Paul had to combat the Antinomianism which fastens itself in so many insidious forms upon the doctrine of Justifying Grace, upon the proffer of a full and free remission of sins. With tender urgency and a true fatherly solicitude the Apostle states the object of his Epistle: "My little children,¹ I am writing these things to you, to the end that you may not sin." There was a real danger, as verse 7 in the next chapter intimates, of St. John's disciples falling into the Antinomian snare: "Little children," he says, "let no one deceive you. The man that *does righteousness* is righteous (*ὁ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην δίκαιός ἐστιν*), even as He (i.e. Christ) is righteous." Imputed righteousness that does not translate

¹ It is the first time that this characteristic compellation (*τεκνία*), recurring six times later on, appears in the Epistle. In this single instance (as the genuine text stands) is *τεκνία* qualified by the appropriate and appealing *μου*.

itself unto actual righteousness, justification which bears no "fruit into sanctification," a forgiveness that fails to make a man thereafter clean from sin, is a wretched delusion; it is pictured in rough fashion by the proverb of (2 Peter ii. 22) "the sow" that "washed herself, to roll in the mire." The message that the holy Apostle has brought from the light of God will miss its mark utterly if it does not make its receivers "light in the Lord," and reproduce in them individually the image of Jesus Christ amongst men (cf. *vv.* 4, 28, 29; *iii.* 3, 10, 16, 24; *iv.* 7, 11-14, 20; *v.* 18).

At the outset St. John had stated his purpose in quite a different way. "These things we write to you, that our joy may be made full"; he was writing, it seemed, from sheer gladness of heart, out of his irrepressible delight in the truths he has learned, and with the longing that his fellow-men may share them. But this first, instinctive aim implies the second, which is deliberate and reflective. He is not the man to take pen in hand simply to relieve his personal feelings and for the sake of self-expression; the knowledge that has filled the universe with radiance for himself, shines for all men; so far as may be, it shall radiate through him. But it must shine unto salvation. Where men remain impenitent, or unsanctified, under the light of the Gospel, when they deny their sins outright or cloak and shelter them behind a profession of faith, they are worse men and not better for their knowledge; in such cases the preacher's delight in his message becomes sorrow and shame. "Greater joy," he writes elsewhere, "I have not than this, that I hear of my children walking in truth" (3 John 4). The joy that wells up in his soul as he puts pen to paper and calls up the image of his children with whom he is holding converse on the things truest and most precious to him and to them, will be "made complete" and the old man's cup of salvation filled to the brim with the

wine of gladness, if the purpose of his letter be answered in those who read—a purpose identical with that of God's eternal will in Christ—if they realize the Christian character, if sin in them be wiped out and done with for ever.

The Apostle's little children cannot say "that they have not sinned," nor "that they have no sin" (i. 8, 10); but they understand that now, since they have been forgiven and cleansed by the blood of God's Son, they must not and need not sin. But "if," as experience had then proved and continues to prove, if this unmeet contingency should occur, "if any should sin"—any of those whom the Apostle is addressing, who have tasted forgiveness and come into God's light—if such a man after all this should commit sin, are we then to despair of him and count him as cut off from the brotherhood and for ever lost to God? No! the Apostle cries: "*We have an Advocate before the Father*—One whose intercession may avail in this emergency (cf. v. 16, 17). Let us put the case into His hands." Since the hypothesis, "if any one sin,"¹ is contrasted with the purpose of this Letter, viz. "that you may not sin," it is evident that the contingency in question concerns the readers; the possibility contemplated is that of some act of sin committed by a Christian man—an act contradictory of his calling and proper character—contra-natural in one "begotten of God"—a paradox in point of principle, but such as must practically be reckoned with. And when in passing from the protasis to the apodosis of the hypothetical sentence and showing how this sad eventuality

¹ Any other Greek writer but St. John would have used $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ instead of $\kappa\alpha\iota$ in the $\acute{\epsilon}\delta\upsilon$ clause. The prevalence of the conjunction $\kappa\alpha\iota$, and the preference of the simple copulative to the adversative and illative connexion of sentences, forms the most marked syntactical feature of his style and imparts its predominant Hebraistic cast. The occurrence of $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ in the last clause of verse 2 is the more remarkable because of the infrequency of this particle with St. John.

must be met, the writer replaces the indefinite "any one" (*τις*) by the communicative "we" (where we should expect "he has an Advocate"), he does not mean to identify the two pronouns by way of hinting that this "any one" might prove to be himself for example, and that each of the readers might in turn be in the offender's plight; he conceives the community as concerned in the personal case of transgression and seeking a remedy. "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it"; "if any man" amongst us "sins," all are distressed, and our comfort is that the Head of the Church feels our trouble—that "we have an Advocate with the Father," who will not fail in His part of Intercessor. It is not, abstractly, "There is an Advocate"; with a clear and joyful sense of our common possession in the heavenly Paraclete, the Apostle writes, "We have an Advocate," as when the writer to the Hebrews concludes, in his climactic style, "Such a High Priest we have."

This fine turn of expression illustrates in the most natural and unconscious way the oneness of believers in Christ, and implies that sympathetic involvement of the society in the moral failure of the individual which St. Paul enforces in writing to the Galatians: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in any trespass, you that are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (vi. 1). With an instance like that of St. Peter's fall and recovery in his memory and recalling the anticipatory prayer of Jesus for the offender's restoration, St. John might well express his hope in such terms as these. The consolation was needed. Amongst the infant Churches of the time, gathered out of heathenism and with its allurements and persecutions searching them at every point, while the passions and habits of Gentile life ran strongly in their blood, relapses were painfully frequent, and the utmost

tenderness and firmness were necessary in dealing with them.

The Apostle John admits that a genuine Christian, a truly cleansed and saved man, may lapse into sin; and yet he writes later on, in the 3rd chapter, *vv.* 6, 9: "Every one who abides in Him (in Christ) does not sin (*οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει*); every one that sinneth (*ὁ ἁμαρτάνων*) hath not seen Him, neither knoweth Him. . . . Every one who is begotten of God, does not commit sin (*ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ*), because His seed is in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been begotten of God." These contrary implications cannot be quite logically adjusted to each other. Sin in Christian believers is a paradox, and has always something intolerable and almost monstrous about it. The contradiction is relieved, however, by observing that the verbs relating to sin are in the latter passage in the *present* tense of the Greek, denoting a continued or even habitual action, whereas we have in our text (*ἐάν τις ἁμάρτη*), a subjunctive *aorist*, which imports a single occurrence, and may include no more than the barest act of sin once committed and followed by a deep repentance, such as was the memorable fall of Peter. Indeed, when Jesus Christ appears in the next clause as *Advocate*, this presupposes the confession of the culprit and his own petition for mercy. The Paraclete is invoked for one who is in admitted need and peril. Christ's intercession is no screen for sin. He is no Advocate for the wilful, persistent wrong-doer, but for the sinner who loathes and renounces his offence, for the backslider who bemoans his fall. On the sincere penitent's behalf He is ready to interpose; He makes haste to send the message, "Go, tell His disciples—and Peter—He is risen again!" The condition "If we confess" (i. 9) is indispensable for the advocacy of the righteous Intercessor, as it is for the forgiveness promised by the righteous Judge.

1. It is in this connexion that our Lord Jesus Christ comes to receive one of His great titles, given to Him *ipso nomine* only in this single passage of the New Testament. Virtually He assumed it when in His discourse of leave-taking at the Last Supper He introduced the Holy Spirit to the disciples as "*another Paraclete*" (John xiv. 16), "given that He might be with" them "for ever." The Spirit of truth was sent "from the Father" to be the pleader of Christ's cause against the world and amongst men, to conduct His case in time to come, and to be in this capacity the Guide and Inspirer of His people, not dwelling visibly with them as He had Himself done, but veritably *in* them.

The term *παράκλητος*—with its equivalent in the Latin *Advocatus*—belonged to the sphere of civil life, and was familiar in the usage of the ancient courts. It passed early as a loan-word into Jewish (Aramaic) use, and is found repeatedly in the Targums and the Talmud; it was, not improbably, current in the Palestinian dialect of our Lord's time. So in the Targum upon Job xxxiii. 23, פִּרְקֵי אֱלֹהִים (κατήγορος or κατήγορ, *accuser*; see Acts xxiii. 30, etc., Rev. xii. 10): "there appeareth one angel as *defender* amidst a thousand *accusers*." Philo employs the word as in common vogue in the Hellenistic Jewish vocabulary; he speaks in one passage (*De Vita Moysis*, 673c) of the Levitical high priest in language curiously parallel to this verse of St. John: "It was necessary for him who is dedicated to the Father of the world to employ as advocate one who is altogether perfect in virtue, to wit, a son [of God], in order to secure both amnesty of sins and a supply of most abundant blessings."¹ The Paraclete was a figure at once recognized by our Lord's disciples, when He assigned this rôle to the Holy Spirit as

¹ ἀναγκαῖον γὰρ ἦν τὸν ἱερωμένον τῷ τοῦ κόσμου πατρὶ παρακλήτῳ χρῆσθαι τελειοτάτῳ τὴν ἀρετὴν υἱῷ, πρὸς τε ἀμνηστίαν ἀμαρτημάτων καὶ χορηγίαν ἀφθονωτάτων ἀγαθῶν.

His representative and His Church's patron and defender in face of the accusing world; its fitness is equally manifest when the like part is ascribed to the Lord Himself, intervening in the Father's presence as the spokesman of His offending brethren. Our Lord's disciples had known Him in the days of His flesh as their *παράκλητος πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα*: the prayer reported in the 17th chapter of John's Gospel was only the last of many such pleadings on their account; and on the cross, when He prayed for His executioners, "Father, forgive them," it was seen how widely His intercession extended to a "whole world" of sinners. What He had been upon earth, they knew Him still to be now that He is "with the Father"—Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day, "who also maketh intercession for us." St. John's "Paraclete" is synonymous, therefore, with the "High Priest after the order of Melchizedek," who forms the chief subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews¹; and all that is set forth in that lofty argument respecting the character and functions of "the great Priest who hath passed through the heavens," who hath "entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained an eternal redemption," may be carried over to the account of the "Advocate" here in view.

This rarer title, however, brings the Mediator in some sense nearer to us. The High Priest is a grand exalted person, clothed with a solitary and solemn dignity, "holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," and all this is true of our Paraclete; but under St. John's designation He is pictured as friendly, approachable, intimate, entering into and associating Himself with the case of the accused. While the High Priest, in His public duty and acting upon

¹ With Philo Judæus the High Priest is the *παράκλητος* of Israel before God; cf. Heb. v. 1, etc.

His own initiative, offers His sacrifice and makes intercession for the people's sins, the Advocate listens to each sinner's confession and meets the specific accusations under which he labours. The relationship between advocate and client constituted a personal tie of a settled character, involving acquaintanceship and often kinship between the two. The *παράκλητος* of the old jurisprudence, and in the best times of antiquity, was no mere hired pleader connected with his client for the occasion by his brief and his fee; he was his patron and standing counsel, the head of the order or the clan to which the accused belonged, bound by the claims of honour and family association to stand by his humble dependent and to see him through when his legal standing was imperilled; he was, in fact, his client's natural protector and the appointed captain of his salvation. Such a Paraclete "we have"—"a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God," but more than this, an interested, brotherly Pleader, who enters thoroughly into the conditions of each case and makes our suit personally His own. There is this difference further, that while the Priest as such is concerned only to interpose with His offering for sin, the Advocate takes into his account the entire situation and needs of his clansman. Any danger, any grave necessity or liability to which the client is exposed, calls forth his sympathy and constitutes a claim for counsel and aid.

There are two personal conditions determining the success of an advocate in such a pleading as is here supposed. (1) There must be *character and competency* in the paraclete. He is described as "Jesus Christ the righteous." His name, with the record lying behind it, guarantees the worth of the person and His standing and interest with the Father; it is a pledge of kindness, skill, authority, of human affinity and Divine prerogative, of power and merit and suitability, of all that can give value to the intercession that He carries

on for sinners. If Jesus Christ speaks for us—being all that the gospel reports of Him, all that St. John and his readers knew and had proved Him to be—we may trust and not be afraid. A gracious hand is stretched out, a mighty voice uplifted on behalf of sinning, suffering men. He is wise no less than pitiful. He will not embark on a lost cause, nor undertake an impracticable task. But the peculiar ground of confidence present to the Apostle's mind lies in the epithet *δικαιος*: our Advocate for the brother whose sin we deplore, is "Jesus Christ the righteous!" This assures us not merely of the rectitude of our Mediator, but of His status and effective right as the sinless to plead for the sinful,—nay more, as the approved Son of God, "The Word with God"; it implies the righteousness of His action in the matter in hand and the soundness of the plea He advances. He is master of the law, knowing and fulfilling all its conditions; He sues in the name of law and right; His character and antecedents warrant us in assuming that He will urge no argument, He will take up no position in representing our case, which justice does not approve while compassion prompts it. What the Apostle Paul said of God, the Acquitter of sinful men, that in the forgiveness of the Gospel He is "*just Himself* and the justifier of him that is of faith in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 26), is equally true *mutatis mutandis* of the sinner's Advocate: He is righteous Him- and righteously pleads the cause of transgressors. This quality in the Paraclete makes our confidence perfect, and makes the remission He gains for us safe and sure. Pardon is not wrested from justice by some overpowering appeal to pity, nor enforced by regard for the person of the Pleader; it is grounded upon strict right. The case is won by a Paraclete who could not lower Himself to advocate an unjust suit; while the Judge, though Father, is of such integrity that He will only forgive when and so far as He can be "faithful and righteous" (i. 9) in doing so. This is a

vital point in St. John's doctrine of Redemption. The realization of it gives a security, and a moral grandeur and power, to the salvation of the Gospel, which is wanting when it is presented in a one-sided and sentimental way, as though the love which actuates it were disregarding of God's declared law and of the moral order of the universe.

2. The other encouraging condition of Jesus Christ's advocacy, as it is here viewed, is afforded by *the name of Him to whom it is addressed*. The Paraclete on our behalf appeals to "the Father." Drawing near through Christ with our confessions, we find the Father in God where we expected only the Judge. *The Father—His Father and ours—cannot be implacable, hard to persuade, or ready to raise occasions against us and to press the points of law to our disfavour.* Where the judge is absolutely just and can come only to one conclusion, much still depends for the form of his decision and the mode of execution that may be prescribed on the kindness or otherwise of his disposition. When St. John declares that "we have a righteous Advocate *before the Father*" it is not love pleading with justice—so the gospel has often been distorted—it is *justice pleading with love* for our release!

Here lies the key—one key, at least, of many—to the Apostle Paul's rich doctrine of Justification by grace through faith, in the fact that God is one, is Himself, and His *whole* self, in each act of His administration towards mankind. He is not divided into Judge and Father—righteousness and mercy, law and love—acting now in one quality or office and now in another. He would not be just in His attitude and dealings with guilty men, not just either to them or to Himself, if He did not remember His paternal character, if the considerations, the mutual claims and responsibilities, attaching to fatherhood and filiation did not enter into His estimate and supply

the factors upon which His judgements of condemnation or acquittal, of favour or penalty, are based. The two "forensic" Epistles of Paul, those in which he argues out his doctrine of Justification in legal and dialectic terms, are prefaced by the wish of "Grace and peace from God our Father" (Rom. i. 7) and by the assurance of deliverance from an evil world "according to the will of God our Father" (Gal. i. 4). The Apostle has not forgotten these ascriptions, nor divested God of His essential Fatherhood, when he lays down his great thesis that "the *righteousness* of God is revealed" in the gospel, "of faith, for faith" (Rom. i. 17). It is an artificial theology which divorces the juridical and paternal relationships in the Godhead, and makes the Divine Fatherhood less fundamental to the teaching of the Epistles than it is to the message of Jesus in the Gospels. For John at any rate, this text is sufficient to forbid the assumption of any such schism in the Godhead or discrepancy in apostolic doctrine. The advocacy that Christ exercises, the "propitiation" He presents, are offered to "the Father." The nature of that expiation, the form and matter of the Advocate's defence, are such as the Father justly requires, such as will satisfy Him when He meets His guilty and sin-confessing children, such that on the ground thus afforded, and in answer to the pleas advanced and the reasons given, He may righteously and faithfully forgive (i. 9).

3. The competence of the Advocate being established, and the favourable conditions evident under which He appears, it is necessary to examine the ground on which He presents Himself before the Father-judge. Pardon, most certainly, is not to be obtained for the guilty on the mere asking, nor because of the interest and personal merit of the Suitor. Otherwise it had been enough to say, "We have an Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous,—let Him only speak, and our suit is won!" The complementary sen-

tence, "He is the propitiation for our sins," would then have been mere surplusage. This some of us, with our light and easy notions about sin, may be ready to suppose; but neither Christ Himself nor His Apostles were of this way of thinking. The general institutions of religion, the analogies of human justice at its best and strongest, the deep instincts of conscience, dictate the axiom that the priest approaching God on behalf of guilty men *must have somewhat to offer*. The Pleader is simply "out of court" unless He brings in His hand a propitiation,—some satisfaction to the outraged character of God or (to put the same thing from another point of view) to the violated law of the universe, and some guarantee thereby afforded on the sinner's part that his offence shall cease. That is to say, the Paraclete must bring the propitiation with Him, or His best pleading is null and void. God the Father is "faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, if we confess"—there is the only condition required upon our part; but it suffices in virtue of the pre-condition established by the sacrifice of the cross and on the ground of the expiation made by "the blood of Jesus" (i. 7, 9). This fundamental condition of Jesus Christ's successful mediation it depended altogether on Himself to supply. There was no ground in humanity outside of Him, upon which the Advocate could base a sufficient plea. The old ritual propitiations were unavailing, as the writer to the Hebrews so pathetically shows; these offerings did but express the need for some real sin-offering; they appealed for, while they foreshadowed, its accomplishment. "He is the propitiation"—He and none else, none less—even "Jesus Christ the righteous."

The word *ἱλασμός* [Hebrew כַּפְּרָאִים, כַּפְּרָא], *cover*] is one about the meaning of which there should not be much dispute.¹ This precise term is employed but twice in the

¹ See the art. *Propitiation*, by S. R. Driver, in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*. *ἱλασμός* signifies etymologically the *act* or *process* of propitiating;

New Testament, here and in chap. iv. 10 of this Epistle, where it has the same application to the person of the Redeemer: God "loved us," the Apostle writes, "and sent His Son a propitiation for our sins." It is a term purely religious (as the verb *ἰλάσκομαι*, on which it rests, is principally), used in classical Greek of the sacrifices or prayers which are the means of *appeasing*, or *making propitiuous* [*ἴλεως*, *ἰλάσκομαι*], the offended gods. In the Greek Old Testament, *ἰλάσκομαι* or *ἐξιλάσκομαι*, and their derivatives, come into play chiefly and most distinctively as the equivalents of the verb כָּפַר, with its group of dependent nouns. It is fairly certain that this Hebrew word has not departed far from its radical meaning, *to cover*, and that the root-idea of propitiation as expressed in the Jewish ritual was that of *covering* sin from the eyes of God, of interposing between His wrath and the offensive object that provoked it, so that the punitive anger which otherwise must strike, should be averted and turned to favour. There is this far-reaching difference, however, between the conception of Atonement presented in revelation and that prevailing in Gentile religions, that while men elsewhere are driven under the pressure of their guilt to invent appeasements for their gods, God Himself prescribes and furnishes to Israel the propitiations which He deems to be necessary. Mercy was no less patent than justice in the forms of sacrifice instituted by the Mosaic covenant; if the God of Israel required to be placated, He was eminently placable, making overtures to transgressors and paving the way for their restored access to His sanctuary. While "propitiation" connotes anger in God, a just displeasure against sin carrying with it penal consequences, and this implication cannot be eliminated by any fair dealing with the word, Biblical Greek carefully avoids making *God* the object of *ἰλάσκεσθαι*, then, like some other nouns in *-μος*, the *means* or *agency* effecting propitiation.

ἰλασμός, or the like,—the obvious construction in the terminology of natural religion. The Holy One of Israel is not *made* gracious by the satisfaction offered Him; in His very anger He *is* gracious; the appeasement He gives order for, and invites from His sinning people, proves His pity for them.

The appointment of the Son of God under the new covenant as Priest and Mediator for the race, and the provision which constitutes Him the sacrificial Lamb of God, develop this unique element of Old Testament expiation in the most astonishing way; the idea of propitiation, which assumed in the ethnic cults gloomy and revolting forms, is touched with a glorious light of Divine grace and condescension. It is largely expounded in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "At the consummation of the ages" One "hath been manifested" who comes "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"—a Being far above the angels and whose throne is for ever, yet "in all things made like to His brethren, that He might prove Himself a merciful and faithful High Priest in the things pertaining to God." Thus the Son of God qualifies Himself "to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Heb. ii. 17); and the sacrifice of the Cross is the goal of all God's earlier revelations of Himself. St. Paul coincides with St. John in this interpretation of the death of Jesus, using in his classical passage on the Atonement (Rom. iii. 23-26) the term ἰλαστήριον where the latter has ἰλασμός: "Whom God set forth, in His blood, a propitiatory (victim) through faith."¹ The heathen notion,

¹ ἰλαστήριον is the more concrete expression, construed as accusative masculine (see Sanday and Headlam's Note *ad loc.*)—"a propitiatory person," "in a propitiatory character"; ἰλασμός, the more abstract—"a (means of) propitiation," one in whom propitiation is realized. It may be convenient here to note the distinction between ἰλασμός and its synonyms, well stated by Driver in the article above referred to: "The death of Christ is represented in the New Testament under three main aspects, as a *λύτρον*, *ραν-*

natural to man's guilty conscience, of the hostility of the gods who seek to avenge themselves on evil men and plan their ruin, is confounded by this disclosure. Wrath against sin, indeed, there is in the Godhead—the antipathy of the absolute Holiness to the false and impure, which burns everlastingly to consume its opposite. Propitiation cannot be forgone; God cannot deny Himself, nor the Fountain of law make terms with “lawlessness” (iii. 4). But in wrath He remembers mercy toward His offspring. Beneath the very fire of His anger there glows the fire of His love. If He requires a moral expiation, He shall provide it. If sin must be branded with a condemnation that otherwise would crush and consume the sinner, there is the Son of His love who will bear the weight of that sentence, who will die the death which transgression entails; and the Father “did not spare His own Son,” when confronting this liability and humbling Himself unto the death of the cross; He “gave Him up for us all.” There is a paradox for human language, a mystery of the depths of God beyond all our soundings, in the double aspect of the Christian *ἰλασμός*, in the unity of the Divine wrath and love, the coincidence of mercy and penalty, judicial infliction and fatherly restoration, meeting in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Modern thought stumbles and struggles hard against this offence, which is its peculiar *σκάνδαλον τοῦ σταυροῦ*, its cross in the Cross; but no stumbling at it will displace it. With whatever subtlety such words as “propitiation” and “reconciliation” are explained away, there they remain in the lexicon of the New Testament to assert the stern element of sin-avenging justice in the character of God. The death of Jesus Christ attests for all time and to

coming from the power of sin and spiritual death; as a *καταλλαγή*, setting ‘at one,’ or *reconciling* God and man, and bringing to an end the alienation between them; and as a *ἰλασμός*, a *propitiation* breaking down the barrier which sin interposes between God and man, and enabling God again to enter into fellowship with him.”

all mankind the fearful consequences which the sin of our race, under the operation of Divine law, brings upon all who are entangled in it.

The Apostle's language recalls the scene of the Israelite "day of Atonement" (יּוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים, ἡμέρα ἐξίλασμού), the day of "affliction" for the sins of Israel. We see the high priest, after he has first filled the shrine with the smoke of incense, bearing the blood of the bullock slain for himself and his family to present it in the Most Holy Place (such sacrifice for *Himself*, the writer to the Hebrews explains in chap. vii. 26-28, our High Priest had no need to make), then killing the goat which represented the guilty people in the sight of Jehovah, and carrying its blood in turn before the Presence. This blood of the sin-offering he sprinkled once on the golden lid of the ark which held the law (designated for this reason the "mercy-seat," כַּפֶּרֶת, ἱλαστήριον; see Heb. ix. 5), and seven times in the vacant space before it (Lev. xvi., xxiii. 28-32), which "blood of sprinkling" was called emblematically the כַּפּוּרִים, the *covering* of the people's sins from before the face of God. This was the culminating office of the high-priestly service; its occasion was the one day of the year in which Aaron or his successor entered the Holy of holies—alone, and "not without blood"—to "make reconciliation for the sins of the people." The renewal of the favour of God toward Israel, and the maintenance of His covenant of grace with His people and of its status of adoption and privilege, were made conditional upon this yearly propitiation; the lesser, current sin-offerings and sacrifices, negotiated through other priests, were auxiliary and supplementary thereto, realizing for individuals and for minor occasions what was wrought in the solemn and collective expiation made by the High Priest once in each year. "The blood of Jesus, God's Son," of which the Apostle spoke in such arresting words in chap. i. 7, is the substance, for "the whole world," of that true ἱλασμός

which the blood of the animal victim slain by Aaron on the Day of Atonement represented typically for the nation of Israel. This blood "cleanseth from all sin," while that serves rather as "a remembrance made of sins year by year" (Heb. x. 1-3).

St. John's "propitiation" (*ἱλασμός*) is synonymous with St. Paul's "atonement" or "reconciliation" (*καταλλαγῆ*, Rom. v. 1-11, etc.); both terms are associated with the Hebrew *כִּפּוּר* and its congeners and equivalents. But while the Pauline expression signifies the *restoring of peace* between parties estranged and striving with each other, the Johannine imports the *restoring of favour* toward the condemned and banished; with Paul rebels, with John culprits are forgiven. The one Apostle sees those who were in the enemy's camp brought over and received on amnesty into the service against which formerly they had borne arms—"translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God's love," like himself who was "before a blasphemer and persecutor and wanton injurer" of his Lord, but "had obtained mercy"; the other Apostle looks on a company of the sin-stained, the filthy and leprous, thrust far away from the sanctuary with the "dogs" that "are without," but who "have washed their robes and made them white in the Lamb's blood," and now "have the right to come to the tree of life, and to enter by the gates into the city (Rev. xxii. 14, 15).

But how great the cost at which this right was won by our Advocate! Here was the task and labour of His mission—to "take away the sin of the world." Other aid, it appears, our heavenly Friend could render to men with comparative ease. Hunger, disease, madness, even death, as the record tells, He had power in the days of His flesh to remove or reverse by a mere stroke of His authority. But a lifting of the eyes to heaven, a sentence of blessing,

—and five loaves become food for five thousand men ; but a word of rebuke,—and wind and waves lay down hushed at His feet and the storm is gone ; a word from the holy lips of Jesus,—and the demons of madness fled from their tormented prey, the convulsed frame and frenzied brain are restored to sanity ; a single word, “ Lazarus, come forth ! ” —and the sheeted dead issues from the tomb where he had lain four days, and gropes his way back a living, breathing man. These things were no such great achievement for our Paraclete, seeing He was the Lord of nature from eternity, one with the world’s Creator. But when it came to the putting away of sin, ah, this was a different matter. Mere power is of no avail in moral affairs, in what touches conscience and character ; nor is goodwill, at its best, of any efficacy unseconded by wisdom and a just direction of its impulses. Here lay the Redeemer’s problem, the *quaestio vexata* of the ages—how to set guilty and evil men right with God. Let those who make light of sin, who regard human transgression as venial and excusable and suppose that our heavenly Father, being gracious and sovereign, might easily condone, out of mere prerogative and decree and by way of generous compassion and magnanimity, the offences of His weak and foolish creatures, let those who so regard the Divine government and turn the grace of God into a soft indulgence, consider what befell our Advocate in adopting the cause of sinners and dealing for them with the eternal Righteousness.

The laws of physical nature, which express one side of the Divine character and embody certain great principles of its working, are not gentle in their treatment of misdoers, nor in their treatment of those involved in the misdoing of others. Mechanics, chemistry, physiology, biology proclaim the fact that “ the ways of transgressors are hard ”—hard for themselves, and for all who tread in their steps.

Throughout the regions of natural law, sloping upward toward the moral, "every transgression and disobedience receiveth a just recompence of reward," and "the mills of God" grind, swiftly or slowly, retribution with the most exact and infallible certainty of sequence. No defiance, no negligence, is overlooked or fails of its amercement. In all these vast provinces of His kingdom lawlessness is searched out and visited with a sleepless and exemplary chastisement. When one enters into the spiritual sphere of existence, new forces of love and remedial grace come into play; but they do not neutralize nor supersede the action of retributive law which runs through the government of God; lower laws may be subordinated, they are not overridden or set at nought when we pass into the higher and more complex conditions of life. From the fall of a stone, flung heedlessly, which maims a child, or the flight of an arrow pointed by hatred at an enemy's breast, up to the sufferings of the Redeemer under the load of a world's sin, there is one God, one law, one element of righteousness and truth, that fills the universe of being and "worketh all things in all."

When our Advocate steps forth to shield transgressors, when He "comes into the world to save sinners," He engages Himself to a work of inconceivable pain and difficulty. There is a satisfaction to be made, a "chastisement of our peace" to be laid upon Him, without which God cannot be truly reconciled to the world, nor the world to God. Neither the Divine nature nor the human conscience, in the last resort, would allow this obligation to be evaded. The Paraclete, if He is really to stand by us and go through with our case, though He be the eternal Son of God, cannot get away from this necessity; no favour, no prerogative exempts Him from the consequences, when He has once become the surety for sinners. He must *pay the price* of our redemption. And God Himself,

the Father, will not spare the Son of His love the shame and suffering thus incurred—cannot spare Him, in His utter love and pity, since the law that yokes these consequences to transgression and determines such effects from such causes is integral with His own being. In the consent of the Son thus to endure the cross to which men's sin brought Him, the Father sees the very image of His own righteousness and mercy; He recognizes the oneness of love and justice which inheres in His own holiness, and which, presented in the offering of Calvary, constitutes it the "perfect sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." In virtue of this complete accord between the act of Jesus in yielding Himself to the cross, and the laws of moral being that centre in and proceed from the nature of God Himself, this sacrifice became (to use St. Paul's strong expression) "an odour of sweet smell," a veritable and on all accounts just and fitting propitiation in the estimate of God.

Having espoused our cause, the righteous Advocate goes to all lengths with it. He will hold back from no exertion, no cost that the case demands. His honour, His blood are at His brethren's service; "the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep," He "emptied Himself" in descending from His seat with the Father to a bondman's place; lower still, "He humbled Himself even to the death of the cross,"—to the nethermost of ignominy and anguish. What the sacrifice cost Him, what it cost to God who "spared not His own Son," is a reckoning infinitely beyond our moral calculus. The scene of Gethsemane allows a moment's glance into the mystery of Divine grief over human sin. There the Redeemer wrestles with His task, now forcing itself in its appalling weight upon His human consciousness. He shrinks from the cross in such horror that, if we read the story aright, the very blood forced itself from His tortured veins. "Father,"

He cries, "if it be possible let this cup pass!" Thrice the challenge is addressed to the All-righteous and All-merciful by the Son of His good pleasure. Was the Father deaf, think you, to the entreaty of those quivering lips? If there had been any other way, if it had been possible upon any less exacting terms to cancel man's transgression, would not that way have been discovered? No; it was not possible with God to pass over sin without atonement, to accept the plea of our Advocate without propitiation rendered.

The Priest must become Himself the victim, for His intercession to prevail. He must lay upon the altar no goats or calves of the stall—this was only a prelude and symbolizing of sacrifice—but in good earnest He must *by Himself* purge our sins, and "enter in the right of *His own blood* once for all into the Holy Place, obtaining eternal redemption for us." "HIMSELF the propitiation for our sins"—*αὐτὸς ἰλασμός ἐστιν*: this is the triumph and wonder of St. John's sentence! The Advocate flings His own life into the plea; He speaks by His blood. He steps, as one should say, from the pleaders' bench into the dock to cover the prisoner's person with His own; He puts His unspotted holiness and the wealth of His being at the service and in the actual place of the unworthy criminal, that He may bear in his stead the brunt of condemnation and by sharing his penalty, in such form as is possible and fitting to innocence, may save him from its fatal issue and recover him for goodness and for God.

Such a propitiation can be of no mere local validity, of no bounded or national interest and operation. The grandeur of the person, the moral glory and essential humanity of the sacrifice, bespeak for it a universal scope. A "propitiation," St. John writes, "not for our sins only, but indeed *touching the whole world.*" The Church's Paraclete is the world's Redeemer. Jesus Christ the righteous

is the champion and vindicator of our race, the High Priest of mankind. His sin-offering, presented by the Son of God and Son of man, avails without limit; it covers in its merit and significance all the families of man and the ages of time; He has "obtained an eternal" and a world-embracing "redemption"; even as "there is one God"—so, St. Paul argues (1 Tim. ii. 5-7), "there is one Mediator between God and men, Himself man, viz. Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all." The universal expiation of sin has been made, one that countervails and counteracts sin in its essence and innermost working—not as a specific Jewish liability, but as a common attribute of human nature. So this Paraclete stands forth as the Friend and Healer of His kind everywhere and always, the Sin-bearer of humanity. He wears on his official breastplate not the names of the twelve tribes of Israel any longer, but of every tribe and kindred over the face of the wide earth. In His perpetual intercession Jesus Christ bears the weight of the whole world's cares and sins before the Father of men. His earthly experience, in life and death, has made Him competent to be "a priest for ever" and for the whole body of mankind.

The words that first directed the Apostle John to his Master were those spoken in his hearing by the Baptist on the Jordan banks—startling words, which looked already beyond the Jewish horizon, which showed a faith outleaping the narrow bounds of the speaker's ancestry and rearing, and a knowledge in him of things revealed otherwise than by flesh and blood: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away *the sin of the world!*" That patient Lamb of God, then submitting meekly to the Baptist's ordination, had filled the Apostle's life with His presence. He had displayed many an unlooked-for attribute of power, and received many a new name of honour from His disciples' lips since that day. But this is still His distinctive glory, this the

act on which the kingship of Jesus Christ for ever rests, that by His righteous sacrifice of love He has "taken away the sin of the world." The eternal song of angels and of men is that which St. John heard in his Apocalypse: "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain, to receive the power and riches and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!"

GEORGE G. FINDLAY.

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD.

I.

THE EVANGELIC TESTIMONY.

THE New Testament constantly declares, and the Church all down the centuries has believed, that on the third day after He had been crucified on Calvary and laid, a mangled corpse, in Joseph's Sepulchre, Jesus revived, came forth, appeared to His disciples, and finally returned to His glory. The disciples saw the empty Sepulchre; they saw the wound-prints on His hands and feet and side; and at this hour, if the testimony of the New Testament be true, He is not a bodiless spirit in the Father's House but wears the form which He wore on earth, glorified but still scarred by His sore Passion. In the midst of the Throne He is still a Lamb as though it had been slain (Rev. v. 6).

This is a stupendous affirmation, and it is no marvel that all down the centuries it has been the jest of unbelievers and to believers an exceeding mystery. It looks on the face of it so incredible, so impossible, nay, so absurd. Nevertheless the New Testament writers advance it with unflinching emphasis, fully realizing how incredible it must appear, yet asserting it without hesitation or doubt as a most certain and incontrovertible fact; and they deliberately hang upon it the most momentous issues. On the fact of the Resurrection they stake not only their own